

20 years ago during a routine prenatal ultrasound my parents heard the words cystic fibrosis not knowing what impact those words would have on their future.

Fast forward 20 years, I'm the product of a very loving home in Northwest Iowa. I have two amazing parents, an older brother, and two younger sisters. Not only do I have a family that stands by my side and is with me through all the ups and downs, I also have a network of amazing and supportive friends who love me and contribute so much to my life.

Now don't let this information lead you to conclude that my life is perfect because as you might have guessed those two words my parents were once confronted with became a big part of my future.

You see, during my mom's third trimester my parents were informed that I likely have a life threatening genetic disease called cystic fibrosis, which we have become all too familiar with and know as CF.

To help you better understand what it means to be a teenager with CF. Let me give you a glimpse of my day. From the moment I wake up, to the moment I go to bed CF demands to be a top priority.

A number of years ago I made a conscious decision to look at life's struggles as an opportunity to grow and this disease is no exception. I am not sharing this story to evoke pity, but today *I wanted to put a name to this **struggle*** and help others learn more about it.

CF has taught me so many lessons in life.

I've learned that life is short and living each day to the fullest is most important.

I've learned that holding grudges is a waste of what little time we have on this earth and to love and accept others unconditionally.

Within my lifetime I have been blessed to see many modern medications develop that have been nothing short of miraculous in my story. CF has been a driving factor in shaping me into who I am today and has given me the compassion and understanding to see the world in a different light compared with some that don't face these challenges.

Imagine a world where you had no challenges and everything was just handed to you? What if you always got what you wanted with no hard work? While this may sound appealing, I believe that having no battles to fight, can lead to weakness.

Struggle can push you in life to do great things. It can give you resilience to make a comeback when things get tough. You were given this life to live, and struggle will help you live life to the fullest. *I encourage you today to not think of the word struggle as a negative because struggle can make you stronger.*