



Driving with MS

Featuring: Dr. Anthony Feinstein, Rhondell Domilici and Maria Reyes

Rhondell

So the driving thing was a really hard one. I will probably get emotional talking about it. Um, so we've always had a car in the city. We've always enjoyed the idea of having that freedom, you know, when you're a New Yorker, you love New York. But it's also nice to have the ability to escape the city when you need to, once or twice a month. Um, and with his family so close, we do that on a regular basis.

I got to a point where I was starting to feel uncomfortable in the car driving with him. And I think, I think it was both physical and cognitive. With the tremor he has in his right side, I was always very nervous that, you know, what if, you know, he gets a sudden tremor in his leg and slams on the brake, or, you know, what if his hand starts going, and he swerves? Um, and I do think his concentration level at that point, even though we hadn't really addressed or talked about it yet. I, I do think his concentration level at that point was starting to, you know, have some challenges.

So it took a while, but I finally put my foot down and said, "I, I, I don't feel safe in the car with you anymore while you're driving." And, um, that was a really, really hard one. There is so many things about MS that take away freedoms that you have, take away your ability to do things you want to do. And I think, you know, from that and many, in many ways, kind of emasculate them, but there is nothing like taking away your car to emasculate you. Um, and, uh, that, it, that was, and continues to be a hard one, I, I know, whether he says it or not, that every time Glenn gets in the car, it's still a hard thing to face that he's crawling into the passenger seat instead of being able to get behind the driver's wheel.

Maria

I used to drive a lot but one day coming from visiting my son in the city, I had driven there because he needed something and I, I was coming right back. I didn't spend more than half an hour there, um, and at one point I realized I didn't know where I was at all. And I could not understand either what the, the, uh, the GPS was telling me 'cause the GPS kept talking, kept talking and I kept looking at the GPS and I didn't know what they were saying. And I almost panicked. I had to control myself and think. I said, okay, relax, think, you know, calm down and the GPS will take you home if, if you can pay attention to it. So I, I actually called my son and kind of just to talk to him and it took me like two seconds

and then I kind of calmed down. I said, okay, I'm at this place and this is the point and then I come back. But that's one of the aha moments that tells you okay, you cannot do any, that anymore. You know, you cannot drive that far 'cause you can get into trouble, you know, if you do that.

Dr. Anthony Feinstein

Behavior change can affect people in a number of a different ways. It might compromise their ability to drive. So if you're cognitively impaired, if your thinking has slowed down, if your speed of information processing has been affected, if you don't have insight into that, if it's coupled with poor judgment and perhaps a degree of neurological impairment as well, then one can readily understand why driving might be hazardous for certain patients. So I think it's very important that when you have an individual with multiple sclerosis who is cognitively impaired, significant cognitive difficulties, and this might be coupled with a degree of physical compromise as well, you should address driving with your patients.