LIVING FULLY

My Journey with Peritoneal Dialysis

By Dwan Dobson,
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When I was first diagnosed with kidney failure in 2005, it felt like my life had been turned upside down overnight. One day I was working two jobs as a teacher and tutor at a detention center, and the next, I was in the hospital learning that my kidneys had stopped working. Like so many others, I didn't know what to expect, but I was determined to stay positive and keep moving forward.

At first, I began emergency dialysis through a chest port. Once I adjusted, I transitioned to peritoneal dialysis (PD) at home. PD gave me flexibility. I could continue teaching, mentoring, and doing what I loved, all while managing my treatments in a way that fit my lifestyle. In 2015, I was blessed to receive a kidney transplant. For nearly 10 years, that gift gave me a second chance at normalcy.

Unfortunately, in 2023, my transplanted kidney began to fail. I knew what that meant, it was time to start PD again. I began again in late 2024, and while the process wasn't easy, I reminded myself of the lessons I had learned: stay diligent, stay graceful, and keep living life. PD once again allows me to manage my treatments on my own schedule and maintain my independence while I wait for another transplant.

Even with dialysis, I've never let my condition hold me back. I've traveled to Dubai, gone on cruises, and visited Las Vegas all while on PD. The ability to order my supplies remotely has made it possible to keep exploring, though sometimes that means carrying boxes of supplies with me overseas. Most of my coworkers don't even know I'm on dialysis, I just focus on my work and keeping a positive outlook.

Finding a living donor hasn't been easy. Several friends and family members have tried to donate, but health issues like diabetes or low kidney function prevented it. Still, I remain hopeful. My faith and support of my community keep me grounded, and I'm on the transplant list again, ready for the next chapter.

I've also learned a lot about taking care of myself. When I reflect on my first transplant, I realize I wasn't always as consistent with my medications as I should have been. That experience taught me the importance of staying disciplined, taking medications on time, eating healthy, and monitoring phosphorous and fluid levels. These habits make all the difference.

For anyone newly diagnosed, my advice is simple: don't give up. Dialysis is not the end of your life, it's a way to keep living. Whether it's PD at home or in-center hemodialysis, find the treatment that fits your lifestyle and gives you the best quality of life. Stay positive, stay informed, and never be afraid to ask for help or share your story.

Kidney disease has taught me that attitude matters just as much as treatment. Every day I wake up thankful – for my care, my students, and the opportunities I still have to live life to the fullest. My journey isn't over yet, but I'm facing it head-on with hope, strength, and diligence.