

5 Things a Burn Survivor Wants You to Know

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I've been a burn survivor for the majority of my life. Over the years, I've been in many scenarios where the person I was talking to found themselves at a loss for words...or just chose the wrong words.

Here are a few things I wish they'd known:

1) I Am a Human, and I Don't Want to Be Treated Like an Outsider.

For burn survivors, our "new" appearance is something we have no choice but to face. Imagine you looked one way on Monday, then you get into an accident and wake up on Sunday looking nothing like you did before. This can be a lifelong struggle for some burn survivors. It helps to be treated as the human beings we are.

2) It's Okay to Ask Me How My Injury Happened.

If you're curious about my scars, I'd prefer you to approach me and ask — instead of staring at me and making me feel uncomfortable. But it is all in the delivery. Some people ask because they truly want to hear my story. Others just ask, with no intent on educating themselves about people living with burn injuries.

3) I'm a Survivor, Not a Victim.

When I interact with someone new and share my story with them, I really do not want them to pity me. Yes, my story is sad, but my story does not end with my accident. Having my own self confidence was essential in living day to day. I had to get comfortable in my new skin and take the time I needed to get myself back in my old routines. Now? I have a whole life in front of me.

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4) I Am a Fully Functioning, Successful Adult.

I have been in job interviews where the person interviewing me seemed hesitant to offer me the position due to my scars. They assumed because I had scars, I would not be able to perform the job successfully.

5) For Most Survivors, Every Day is Not a Bad Day.

Many of us have loving friends and families, who are there to help pick us up when we don't feel our best or when we don't want to share our stories.

Burn survivors are fighters. We fought our injuries and we fight to overcome our daily struggles. The scars we wear on our outside don't indicate our personalities, the way we interact with others, or any limitations. Our appearance might be changed, but our personalities still shine bright. We do not let our scars define who we are.