

CF Roundtable

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Only I Can Look Into My Mirror

DECEMBER 11, 2017 ~ USACFA

Guest Blog By: Brennen Reeves

If I were to count all of the scars on my body, the ones visible to a bystander at the beach, I'd need your fingers and toes, plus mine. And someone to mark the tallies. Thirty-eight. I've counted. From my chest, to my stomach, up to my neck, and down to my ankles the grooves are endless it seems. I don't think I have any on my back but then again I cannot see my back and I still have trouble with sensation from the bilateral lung transplant I received in 2011, so I wouldn't be able to feel them either. Scars turned to scar tissue, a torso turned numb, and arms and wrists that make me queasy to think about. We can blame the ABG's, the thoracentesis', the picc lines, the ports, G-tubes, GJ-tubes, chest tubes, and epidural (that got infected). Did I mention the clam shell scar across my chest that was sutured by eighty something stiches? Well, that too. Surgeries, surgeries, surgeries. I stopped counting those after twenty-five, it wasn't worth my time.

You and me both, perhaps. Me and the bystander, maybe? We could all have the same amount of scars, grooves. I can definitely guarantee he has a story too. Who doesn't?

And...

I may know him and he may know me as well but he's never looked into my mirror. Only I can do that. And I've never looked into his mirror. Only he can do that.

I used to be self conscious. Both before and after my transplant. Before, I was 5'4" and weighed 90lbs, had a feeding tube, and a port. We're talking self image. I'm not going to talk about my nighttime upbringing: the feeds, the oxygen, the treatments before hanging out with friends. (Though I guess I just did). Today, I am 5'6" and weigh 122lbs. I have no feeding tube. I do still have a port and about fifteen more scars than I had before getting new lungs. It's taken me a long time to come around and have a positive self image, that's something I still work on to this day. Though I've never lacked confidence in my life. I've been big and bold until someone wants to go to the beach or pool or take the boat out. Goodbye confidence. It's strange why and how that happened for all of those years. If you were my friend you knew about me having CF and I had no problem showing those grooves, and pits but if you were a stranger and I did not know you, I would not let you into my life. The "no trespassing" sign would illuminate on my forehead. If we were going to the beach or the pool, I would say "I'm on this one specific medication that doesn't allow me to be in the sun." And then I could keep my shirt on. Because there was no way I was going to let you look into my mirror.

As the years pass, I try and try to build more muscle by going to the gym so when beach season cycles back around I'll be ready. But for the past 6 years (since my surgery), not much has worked to turn heads. If only my somewhat fleshy scars could be outlined by a six pack, we'd be in business. If only my port was blended by some pecs, that too would work. But as folks with CF may know, it's hard to gain (weight and muscle) but exceptionally easy to lose it. That's been my problem for my whole life.

I'm twenty-six. I've carried the same mirror my whole life. And only I can look into it. And you're the only one who can see into yours. Yes, there are times where I hope the next time I look into my mirror, I see Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson as my reflection but I'm a realist on most occasions and I don't believe that's going to happen. Because I'm me and he's him. And who knows maybe he's jealous of me and my life.

I used to say I was attacked by a shark because I don't want to have go through the CF spiel when people would ask why I have these scars. But I've stopped saying that. Because not only is it disrespectful to those who have been attacked but too, because I don't know much about sharks and how they attack. Now I do watch shark week.

In all honesty, I stopped saying things other than the truth because I'm happy, grateful, etc. Maybe me talking about my story can help me as well as my self image and to create a continuing buzz about CF.

At this moment in my life I am single. I want someone to like me, love me for me, for what I've been through. I don't need to look into "The Rocks" mirror. I want someone to look into my mirror with me and tell me my scars are apart of me and someone else. They stand for something. It's a story. It's progress. Someone to tell me I am indeed a human- just like them. I want to be able to look into her mirror. How about we create a mirror together?

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3 thoughts on "Only I Can Look Into My Mirror"

1. **Kathy Russell**

SAYS:

DECEMBER 11, 2017 AT 5:35 PM

Brennan,

I like your mirror description. What a great way to handle scars and questions.

I think of my scars as my decals from the travel of my life. When I was young, people used to get decals to put on their luggage or on their car windows that showed where they had traveled. You and I (and everyone else) are traveling around the sun once each year. All of our scars show where we've been and what we've been doing, during those years.

Keep on traveling and keep on seeing yourself in the good light of your mirror.

Reply.

1. **Brennen Reeves**

SAYS:

JANUARY 7, 2018 AT 6:09 PM

Hi Kathy,

Thank you so much for your comment. I love how you have compared your scars to other peoples decals- I've never heard it put that way!

Sorry for that lateness of this message back but thanks again for saying something. Very nice of you.

Happy 2018!

Brennen

Reply.

2. Pingback: [CFFC Facebook Posts – December 2017 – Part 2 |](#)