

Dear Families,

8/23/16

You may have heard last year that I was out sick for 10 weeks. After countless tests and procedures, I was diagnosed with Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS). For me, POTS was caused by a severe GI infection the year before. So what does this mean? Well, POTS is different for each patient, so it isn't simple to explain. In a nutshell, and in my case, this basically means that my brain is telling my heart to not pump enough blood and oxygen into my brain. This causes immense headaches, dizziness, light-headedness, extreme brain fog, nauseated feelings, and more! When I'm up my blood pressure goes WAY down and my heart rate goes WAY up. Fortunately, I only passed out once--in my kitchen, after I was on medical leave, and before I knew what was wrong. One-third of POTS patients faint frequently. Fortunately, my diagnosis came in February, and I'm undergoing treatment. I returned to work after spring break ½ time for three weeks, and ended the year working 3.5 days/week. I have come a **LONG** way in recovery; but the recovery process (in my case) is projected to be 1-2 years.

Here are some of the current steps in my recovery plan:

- Complete my cardiac rehab diligently (to train the valve to pump that blood)! Now I'm up to walking 4 times/week for 45 minutes. In January, walking for 2 minutes would make me feel dizzy and lightheaded.
- Drink 3-4 liters of water a day. Students can help me with this by reminding me to keep drinking.
- Increase my salt intake to 3,000 - 5,000 mg/day. (This one is hard!)
- Wear compression socks. (This one is hard as well, especially when it's hot. The neurologist said it's ok not wearing them in the heat.)
- Take the medications prescribed to help all of this.
- Go to **lots** of appointments. I have/will scheduled many before or after school, but it's not always possible. So there will be some random days I'll be out for follow up appointments.
- Get infusions every week the first 2 months of school. The infusions are an hour in length now. (When I was first diagnosed, they were 2.5 hours). The infusion appointments cannot be scheduled before or after school; so unfortunately, I'll have to take some ½ days. The good news is that the infusions make a BIG difference.
  - I did not want to take a ½ day the first week of school. The infusion department agreed to stay later for this one appointment since it's the first week of school -- and Mr. Robinson offered to lead the class from 2:25 until the end of the day.
  - I have infusions scheduled for 2:00 on: 8/31, 9/7, 9/14, and 9/21. I will be out ALL day on 9/14 for 2 other follow up appointments, and will leave at lunch the other 3 days. Fortunately, Mrs. Stephanie Eagleton, a retired Boulevard teacher and a frequent beloved substitute, has agreed to sub all 4 days.
  - I'm hoping by 9/21 I can go every other week for infusions through October, and then be done.

I'll keep you posted on my progress. I believe in being upfront and honest about my life. After all, I spend a all day with your child! 😊



Thanks,

Mrs. Melissa Becerra

