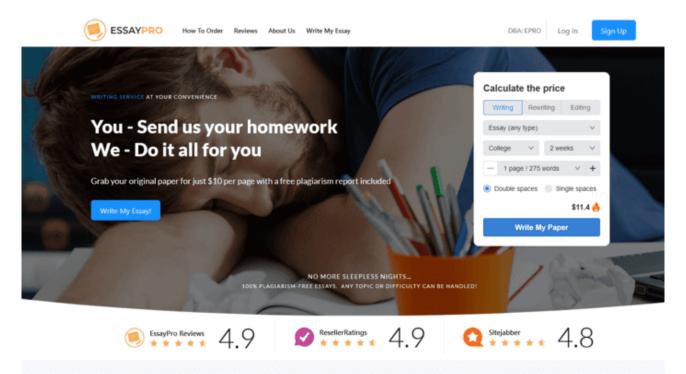
Overcoming Physical Challenges



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Overcoming Physical Challenges

I'm 17-years-old and I feel like I'm about twice my age. I have had a strange childhood and have gone through a lot. The reason is due to several medical conditions I have. I prefer calling them physical challenges rather than handicaps or anything like that.

I would have to say this all started when I was 11-years-old. My legs just started giving me trouble. I was having a lot of trouble doing my dancing and baton classes because my knees kept feeling like they were popping out. I ignored it for a while, but eventually it came to be too much so I had to go see a doctor. After my exam, my doctor diagnosed me with sublexing patellas, which means my kneecaps pop out of place. This was just the beginning of my trouble.

About a year later, my muscles started to atrophy in my legs and I lost all muscle tone. I was devastated emotionally and physically. I could no longer walk, so I was put in a wheelchair. With this I lost not only my physical mobility but also my dreams of being a professional dancer. My mom stood strong and took me to see the best doctors she could find and this led me to the Shriners' Hospital in Montreal, Canada. Here is where I received

my first ray of hope. By the time I left I was walking with a walker and then just a <u>cane</u>. They were like miracle workers. I slowly gained back my muscle tone, but it was a long process and sometimes I just felt like giving up. I had many supporters who helped me and gave me the strength and courage I needed.

I thought this would be an end to my medical problems, but then one summer I stopped breathing for no understandable reason. My mom revived me and then I was taken to the doctors to find out I had acquired costochronditis, which is the inflammation of the muscles near your sternum. My breathing troubles continued and they also decided to try some medications on me, but none worked, so we let things go.

Then just when I thought my life was floating back to normal for the average 13-year-old, I again encountered a new medical diagnosis. This time I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, which affects all the muscles and bones in my body and explains some of my earlier trouble.

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