

Mary Ann M.

Common Factors® Advocate

*My life at a glance*

I live on the Gulf Coast of Florida and am a mother of two, Kathleen and Jay. I'm a pediatric oncology social worker and the Executive Director of the 1Voice Foundation, where I provide support for families who are dealing with childhood cancer. In addition to my degree in social work, I'm currently enrolled in a master's/PhD program for bereavement counseling.

During my free time, I enjoy an active personal life. My favorite activities include running in marathons, competing in triathlons, and practicing yoga. I also love to travel around the world!

I have mild Type 1 VWD. Growing up, I had all the symptoms of VWD. When I was working at the hemophilia treatment center at the University of South Florida at the age of 32, I read about VWD and recognized the symptoms. The hematologist there ordered labs and confirmed my diagnosis.

As a speaker, preferred topics include

Before I was diagnosed, I had to live with my symptoms. I ran marathons while having joint bleeds. Excessive bleeding kept me from practicing with my swim team in college, and I ended up losing my swimming scholarship.

When I speak, I use my stories as examples of why treatment, diagnosis, and education are so important today. People with VWD have options now. They don't have to endure what I endured. I emphasize the importance of staying fit when you have a bleeding disorder and keeping joints active.

I've found that discussions about the challenges of sexual intimacy with VWD help people feel more comfortable in their own skin. People want to talk about these topics, but they don't know how to do it. To help people get over their shyness, I give everyone a chance to write down their questions and put them in a basket if they don't feel comfortable asking them aloud. This way, everyone gets a chance to be heard. I always tell people I hope they continue to share with each other long after the talk has ended.

My message to you

"Stay healthy and fit. A bleeding disorder may be part of your life, but it is not your whole life. Try to keep that in perspective, and live to the fullest."

*-Mary Ann***Common
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