Today I have the pleasure of writing this to you from Pilzen in the Czech Republic. I arrived here yesterday from Germany, where I live, and will be spending the week here at our annual European Employee Representative Congress. And I think it's beneficial if I mention this because this just illustrates how I thrive with Moebius. But let's start from the beginning.

When Jenny Whitman kindly asked me if I would like to write a few words about how I thrived with Moebius, I felt very honoured. I also wondered, “Where do I start?” But I think it all boils down to openness, curiosity, and finding meaning, finding purpose in your life. And, oh yes, a massive dose of self-respect and self-acceptance. A confidence that comes from within and cannot be torn down, no matter what people may say to you.

From my personal experience and also in coaching people, I’ve found that developing a sense of purpose is crucial to your self-esteem. My first question is: what are you interested in? What brings you joy? Can you get involved in related activities? Or just investigate on your own at first?

We, as humans, all want to belong and contribute in some way to society. That is an essential need we all have, and people with Moebius are no exception. There will be times when people may tell you that you don’t belong. That certainly happened to me a lot. Fortunately, I had other people in my life telling me that this was nonsense. And I am telling you now. If somebody thinks you don’t belong and you cannot contribute, ask yourself whether that is really the right attitude or whether that person might be a bit uncertain because they’ve never met somebody with Moebius before. There were times when I would just ignore people like that and do my thing anyway. And there were other times when I could be more proactive and show right away that I was a force to be reckoned with.

But back to the topic of finding your interest or your purpose. This is how so much started for me in life. I saw something (such as employee representation), and I felt drawn to try it out. Sometimes, it was hugely challenging, but because I was interested and had a strong desire to see things done fairly, I did my best and stuck to it. I’ve had to learn negotiation, standing up for the interests of the people I represent, and giving presentations in front of up to 300 people. And over time, just by taking things one at a time, I’ve learned and grown so much in ways that I could never have imagined initially. And what I now hear so often, inside and outside the company, is: “You are so courageous.” That is in fact a massive compliment, because there were many times when I was scared or nervous. But my desire to learn something new, to be of service, and to contribute were just greater than my fear. That’s how important finding your joy or your purpose is to me. And for any of you who might be thinking, “I was just lucky”, I’d like to share that I was bullied and

undermined at work for several years. It got so bad that I had to seriously consider leaving, and I had a fair bit of time on sick leave because of the stress and other physical issues. I had two weird bosses (both were later disciplined or fired, by the way) who tried to tear me down, who, as far as I could tell, did their best to take my self-esteem away. Fortunately for me, I had started listening to a podcast on self-care and powerful morning routines, and this actually strengthened my resolve to overcome this situation, one way or another.

Practices such as journalling my thoughts on challenges, meditation, mindfulness, and exercise are key to me today. I find these practices highly valuable because they give me the chance to focus on the positive and to ground me in my busy daily schedule. They also support me in finding peace and emotional mastery, especially for example, when I've possibly had a not-so-pleasant encounter with somebody. These practices remind me to focus on my strengths and what is great in life rather than dwelling on the negative.

I'd like to close with emphasizing the importance of self-care. Protecting your energy levels, with great sleep, and treating yourself to things that are good for you (exercise that you enjoy, healthy food, music, etc.) is crucial to me in how I cope in my busy daily schedule, and how I cope with people who are frightened of me. We as people with Moebius do need to develop a higher level of resiliency than others, and I feel we do need to be much more emotionally mature than others to get the best out of life.

This was illustrated again big-time in August for me. My partner and I were treating ourselves to a night in a five-star hotel, and the next morning, before a short pre-breakfast walk, I found myself alone in an elevator with a mother and daughter who were exchanging very meaningful glances at each other when I got in. I could have ignored them, as I often do, but because I was in a fantastic mood, I decided to explain why I looked the way I looked. I did not antagonize them, I just thought I might be able to lessen their discomfort by being open and offering information. They were initially shocked to hear about facial paralysis, but I think we parted on a very positive note, and it certainly gave them something to think about! And I was reminded again how important it is to protect your energy levels if you want to thrive, rather than survive, with Moebius.

Zoe Cross