

## Meet Juliana



Hi! My name is Juliana and I am 17 years old. I was diagnosed with scoliosis when I was about 13 years old with an x-ray that measured about 43 degrees on the top and 27 on the bottom. Before the x-ray was taken, I had no idea what scoliosis even was! My doctor had never checked for it, in fact I found out because I was having some pain. My family did not know much about scoliosis, so we, especially my mom, started researching and talking to people. We found out many new things and began to realize that scoliosis can be pretty common, especially in girls.

Looking at the x-ray was pretty shocking, but I still felt like a normal girl who had a problem just like everyone else. I know that because I have not taken scoliosis as hard as others. The Curvy Girls support group is a great way to reach and to help others who are having troubles. This way, I can help people to see things from a positive perspective like I do. I have gone through 1 year of eighth grade and 3 years of high school wearing a Rigo-Cheneau brace for 21-23 hours a day, and let me tell you, it has not been easy! Changing in the locker room for gym class and getting all those stares was not exactly the most comfortable feeling. I managed to get through times like those by telling people about scoliosis and why I have to wear the brace. Although many people might not feel comfortable telling people, it was the only way I could get by without people wondering what I was wearing on my back. What was the worst part of all this? Clothing! I'm a girl... I love to shop! And trying to find clothes that fit over the brace was not the most fun thing to do, in fact it got pretty frustrating at points. Looking at things positively was the most important aspect that got me through this process, which is why I would love to help others with scoliosis who experience some of these frustrating times.

I currently wear a night brace for 10 hours and I am ecstatic for next year when I don't have to wear it at all. Although the brace might not be the most comfortable thing, I have to say that it has helped my back so much and I don't know what I would have done without it. Same thing goes for the exercises. The exercises are so important for strengthening and elongating. It has definitely improved my physical appearance and has prevented my spine from getting worse. I really believe that the usage of the brace and doing the Schroth exercises regularly is the most ideal combination for great results. I have been doing the exercises for almost



four years and wearing the brace for about three and a half. I have even seen a satisfying improvement in my x-rays from day 1 until now. Due to growth, I have gone through about four or five braces, which means lots of visits to the brace maker! I have also participated in an intensive Schroth program for two weeks in Ottawa, and have spent several weeks in Barcelona, Spain learning these exercises.

Joining this support group allows me to help others from personal experience so they can be as happy as possible during these rough times. Overall, my goal is to encourage and motivate others to feel comfortable with how they look and to have someone to talk to when they are feeling down. It might feel like the worst thing in the world at the moment, but we're not alone and we can get through this together.