



# WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 4740, Auburn, CA 95604 • (888) 556-3356 • [info@pnhelp.org](mailto:info@pnhelp.org) • [www.pnhelp.org](http://www.pnhelp.org)

## **EMBARRASSED TO USE A CANE OR WALKER?** Katy Linddell, San Francisco, CA

I had a hard time using my first cane. I was afraid of being seen as old or disabled (even though I am!). People were used to me being very physically active - walking everywhere. But I had to go out, so I literally forced myself to pick up that cane and take it with me. I survived.

Next challenge: my neuropathy was getting worse, causing me to lose my balance. So, I bought a HurryCane®, a tripod cane with a bit more stabilization. That didn't last long as I lost confidence and began to be petrified to go out, much less cross a street.

Next came walking sticks. I thought that having two devices — one on each side — would be my miracle. Nope. I knew that probably 50% of my problem was psychological: I had lost confidence and literally shook when having to walk in public.

I decided to buy a walker. I purchased a fairly inexpensive one to see if I liked it. All of a sudden, I could walk with confidence! The walker made a huge difference in my life. I bought a little more expensive one in red, named it my red "corvette," and have been "driving" around out in public ever since.

I am so grateful for my walker. It has truly changed my life.

Yes, those friends who have not seen me in a while and are not aware of my challenges look at me with pity when they first see me. I hate it, but that's their issue, not mine. Once they see that I am doing well otherwise and still having fun, they are more comfortable with it. And the best part is that I am not holed up at home wanting to spread my wings and fearing what might happen.

The moral for me is: take care of yourself first, don't worry about what others will think. That is THEIR problem, not yours. Get out and enjoy life. Don't regret later that you held yourself prisoner.

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