

**From: "Zeckenstich (Tick Bite)" by Vera Weld,
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Introduction

Outsiders sometimes go by appearance. As far as they're concerned, TBE patients appear healthy. They don't spare compliments and think that comments like *"you look good today"* or *"as far as I'm concerned you're better"* are a positive contribution to the patient's recovery.

At such moments, I felt more misunderstood than ever. Combating surging levels of bitterness, I would decide to end my relationship with the person or people responsible, before forgetting the thought the very next moment. Gradually, I simply found it easier to distance myself from the comments that compared TBE with BSE ("mad cow disease") *"since they've both got something to do with the animal protein virus, haven't they"?*

Appearances can be deceptive. At first glance, paralysis or sensory blockades aren't always noticeable. Over time, I've learned to cover up some of my defects. If, for instance, I fail to be able to recall the words with which I have started a sentence, to be able to bring it to a logical finish, then rather than being overcome with feelings of hopelessness, I have learned to just bravely start out on a new one.

I sometimes marvel at the patience of my husband when he has to repeat the same thing to me two or three times over. A sports physician once gave him the following advice. *"Don't feel any pity for your wife. In school, the learning process isn't encouraged through pity, but through continual challenge. Your wife needs new learning processes. If you feel pity, you prevent the mediation and encouragement of these learning processes".'*

TBE patients at my stage of development just want to withdraw from the outside world, but it's something we may not do. So what else is there left, but to somehow attempt to break down the state of painful hypersensitivity and to apply oneself to the struggle of rebuilding one's shattered self esteem? But how?

The goal of being able to free oneself from TBE, from finally moving beyond the after-effects of the illness is now, in truth, my next step.

But this is primarily a state of mind, since changing has to be something that you really want. And at any rate, achieving this goal has nothing to do with simply "pulling yourself together".

Innsbruck, in September 1996