

I never felt like a “normal” kid growing up. I faced health problems that, at times, made it hard for me to go to school, hang out with friends, and do the thing I loved most in the world, play soccer. My parents and I were always seeking answers to the issues I was having and this took a real toll on my mental health. After many years of doctor appointments, hospital visits, and testing, doctors finally diagnosed me with Crohn’s Disease, a chronic inflammatory bowel disease, and PNES, a neurological disorder. Most of you have probably heard of Crohn’s. It’s pretty miserable until it’s treated and goes into remission. PNES (Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures) is less well known. It is caused by psychological factors, such as stress, trauma, or emotional issues, and/or by physiological factors, such as Crohn’s Disease. Emotional reactions are unconsciously converted into physical symptoms like loss of consciousness and shaking and my episodes look like actual seizures. Years of not knowing what was physically wrong with me and doctors always telling me my case was very complicated caused a lot of stress, anxiety, and trauma. My mental health affected my physical health and vice versa.

Dealing with chronic health issues can be exhausting and defeating, but I have learned how to live a full, purposeful life with chronic illness and I want to help others feel empowered to do the same! How did I find resilience in the midst of ongoing hardship? How do I live my healthiest life while having chronic illness? I learned the importance of lifestyle choices and the significant effect they have on a person’s physical and mental health. I now make nutrition, exercise, sleep, and relaxation-practices a priority because of the great benefits they have on my overall quality of life. One of my first college classes was Positive Psychology. This class taught me the power of our thoughts, good or bad. I learned to believe good can happen to me, despite all I’ve been through. I learned to move beyond surviving, to thriving! Most of all, I learned that finding my purpose is what helps me get out of bed every day. For years my purpose was soccer. Soccer kept me motivated to get better and keep persevering. One of my proudest accomplishments in life is becoming a college soccer player and having a successful career at UW-Stout. My new purpose in life is sharing my story and being a mentor to kids and young adults dealing with chronic illness. I wish I had known someone living with chronic illness that could have mentored me as a child. I would have felt a lot less alone and I think it would have motivated and inspired me.

I have a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a concentration in health and wellness coaching. I am passionate about nutrition and teaching people that food is our fuel and what we eat affects how we feel physically and mentally. I have been gluten and dairy free since kindergarten because I have Celiac Disease and a dairy intolerance, and I would love to help others with restricted diets. I truly value exercise and want to help people find an enjoyable activity that encourages daily movement and less screen time. I am passionate about positive psychology and focusing on the good in life. I am also passionate about helping others find their purpose. I want to be an example to the people I work with and show them that even though life can be difficult, challenges help shape us and teach us. I had days and weeks where I barely made it out of bed, but I relied on my true resilience over and over again, and I love to help others do the same.

In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with family and friends, walking my dog, playing sports, doing activities outside, going to my cabin, and playing games. I’ve always been drawn to working with kids of all ages. Throughout the years I have spent a lot of time nannying and coaching soccer. I’m outgoing and am always up for an adventure!