

Biog:

I'm **Maartje Roskams**, 23 years old and currently living with type 1 diabetes for 8 years and 13 years with epilepsy. 3 years ago, I graduated in the field of Orthopedagogy with a special interest to help people of socially vulnerable groups. By September I'm a 4th year nursing student with the goal to become a diabetes educator. In my day to day life, I try to be as energetic and cheerful as possible and further I'm Co-chair of the diabetes youth association in Flanders (Belgium) and a Young Leader in Diabetes graduate (IDF).

Summary of my address:

As a young woman, I thrive to bring an honest, but original and maybe extra-ordinary patient narrative. When I was a teenager with multiple chronic diseases, I struggle a lot with myself, my environment, stigmatization, over-protective behavior and people seeing me as a walking danger 'of fainting every minute of the day'. My environment stopped me from a lot of things in life and at a certain point, I just stopped being-me because I only saw myself as a patient. A patient that blocked all her friends, family and even healthcare (professionals) because of a destructive self-esteem/image. My life radically changed when I went on my first diabetes camp, which later evolved in a position of the youth committee where I growth so much and saw myself for the first time as a capable person with a clear vision and a thrive to spread the (awareness) word and become a diabetes educator to help other people with diabetes (and their own struggle).

In January 2017 I signed myself in for a unique sports program to cycle in the mountains of Vosges (France) with professional guidance for people with diabetes. That moment that I discovered the benefits of sports and nutrition and the importance of a well-grounded support system of healthcare professionals, family, friends to make it to every great (and low) point in your life. Along the way I discovered my self-worth again and only the sky was the limit. Later on, I started the Youth Leadership Program of IDF in Abu Dhabi (2017) and built an awareness project 'Road To Barcelona' where I cycled 1700 km from Antwerp (Belgium) to Barcelona to raise money and show society that you are capable of achieving any of your own goals with (multiple) chronic disease(s) by being a patient, but not being owned by a chronic disease.