Make Halloween More Enjoyable for You and Your Kids

by BARBARA LEECH

Surviving Halloween With Lupus

Halloween is just about here, so costumes and trick-or-treating are on the calendar as they have been each year for me, for many years. I decided that this year, I should dress up like little red riding hood because the big bad wolf (AKA lupus) is always in hot pursuit of me.

Plus, the costume is warm — my body cannot take the cold weather changes of late October in Maine. Some years there is already a dusting of snow at this time!

Let’s face it, Halloween can offer up more of a challenge for moms like myself who also are battling lupus, but I am tired of being scared of the big bad wolf.

In the past I have tried to make costumes. I am pretty crafty by nature, but honestly, when in a full-blown flare like I am in now, I don’t have the energy to make that happen.

Feeling as I do, I know I would create something that did not live up to my kids' expectations. Truth be told, rather than looking forward to the night of silly costumes and going door to door, I kind of dread it this year.

It will be cold. I may be dragging myself around and wondering how many more doors I can go to before I have to call it a night. I will feel guilty that no matter how much I push myself to do, it feels like it is not enough; it is not as much as other moms are doing. Lupus makes me fall short of the mom I wish to be.

Trick-or-Treating Tips for Lupus Warriors

So how do we make the most of the holiday for our kid’s sake? Buck-up little pumpkin, here are a few of my strategies for Halloween survival:

- **Quality not quantity –** I really try and make the focus of the night be on the fact that we did it, rather than how long we stayed out or how much candy we collected. I make the dressing up part be as special as possible. We accessorize. We take pictures. We have a family pizza and costume party before we head out.

- **Set expectations –** Kids hate surprise/abrupt endings to fun. I explain before we head out that if it gets to be too cold or after a certain amount of time, we will call it a night and go home to check out our bounty of candy. I let them know when I am starting to wear down and say, “Five more houses and we are done.” Warnings ease the whining.
- **Buy candy to supplement –** If I won’t be able to stay out a long period of time, I hide extra candy around the house/yard before we head out trick or treating, so when the kids get back home they get to do a candy hunt with flashlights — almost as fun as trick or treating. I can watch from inside where it is warm!
- **Accept help –** If I am really too sick or in too much pain to do this myself, I get help. Last year it was

raining and very cold and I drove the SUV around, heat blasting, following the kids through the neighborhoods and parking at the end of each driveway. My sister-in-law walked with them since she offered to take them with her own kids. I accepted help. I saw everything, and heard their stories as they came back periodically to warm up and dry off for a bit. I missed very little, but stayed out of the weather.

The trick to dealing with these annual expectations is to alter your plans a bit and make them as lupus-friendly as possible. If you are like me, you want to make these memories, but not at the expense of your health. Accommodating your lupus can make these challenges a little less scary.