

I got a kidney transplant at fourteen. It was donated by my sweet older brother whose sacrificial love has been so prevalent throughout my whole life, but especially then. In the following years, I attended a summer camp for kids with various diseases. It didn't occur to me until that camp how many other kids can seem completely normal until you see their scars, and only then do you notice that they are not what you see as normal. I think it was probably the second or third day of this camp when we went swimming for the first time, and something I had never thought of happened. Every single one of these kids had scars. Many had 'second belly buttons' from catheters they had in their stomach, some had long scars that looked similar to mine up their sternum from heart transplants, many had kidney transplant scars (as that was the week that was mostly made up of kidney and liver kids), some had more obvious scars on their head that I had noticed before, but many it never occurred to me that the others were anything but completely normal.

I think that's the biggest thing I took with me from Camp Korey - scars are stories, whether they are in obvious places or they are small and faded, like a long-ago memory. I am proud of my kidney scar, not because it looks especially cool (even though it really does), but because it's a mark of a story and an experience that changed me forever. I don't think all the campers felt that way, some instinctively seemed to hide their scars at first. But, at such a special place where everyone had those scars, many opened up and were more comfortable around each other because they knew that we all were connected in that way.

I thank Camp Korey for that in those summers - they found a way to make many people who wanted to hide feel like they no longer had to.