



Hello, I want to introduce myself to you. I am Chris Lenart, and I have Cerebral Palsy. I have had a wonderful life so far, and I hope that you can be encouraged as I tell you a little bit about myself and what I have been doing the last two years. So let's get it started.

Growing Up

I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy around a year old. My mom knew about Cerebral Palsy somewhat, but my dad had never heard of it. So when they were heading home from the doctor, he asked my mom if I would get better. He didn't know what he was saying. This was around 1970. Since there were no computers, my parents had to learn about Cerebral Palsy by talking to people. I have Athetoid CP and am nonverbal.

I bet this sounds really familiar to your own story. My parents didn't say *poor us*, rather they worked really hard to give me the best life they could give me. I know some dads don't want to get involved with their child's life. I have an amazing dad who is a huge part of my life.

Feeding me was really difficult because I couldn't suck. My mom tried every kind of nipple she could find. Once they learned about CP, therapy became a huge part of my life. My mom took me to therapy twice a week until I went away to college. Dad built things like benches, scooters, and modified bikes for me.

I hear many parents express that they wish their spouses were more involved in their child's life. Based on my personal experience, I know that all parents handle these kinds of complex health diagnoses differently. Some parents get involved gradually; perhaps, they are scared or hesitant. I don't think my dad knew what to do at first, but once he started doing things for me, he became more and more involved in my life.



Education

Education was a nightmare for me, but not because I had a hard time learning. Rather, the teachers and the experts felt that kids with Cerebral Palsy had a limit of learning. My mom had battles with them and they hated her with a passion. She continued to fight until I was put in a better program. Once I was placed in a better program, I started improving a lot. When I reached high school, I was in all regular classes and was on the honor roll for all four years.

After high school, I went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I lived on campus and had personal care assistants to help me. If you are saying that your child won't go to college, my question for you is *why not?* When I was diagnosed having Cerebral Palsy, the doctor told my parents to just take me home and love me.

I received a bachelor's degree in Computer Science. After graduating in 1994, I found a programming position at Household International. I worked there for fourteen years until 2009. I loved the work and the employees accepted me for who I was. I lost my job in 2009 due to the economy.

After being let go, I could not find another job. I decided to move on my own, so I bought a condo in a place for people with disabilities. I have been on my own since 2011. I hire my own personal care assistants and pay them.



Developing Disability Awareness and Forming Connections

In 2013, one of my friends and I started to write a book about our lives with Cerebral Palsy. It took us two years. When the book was done, I felt like I had a lot to say, so I started a [YouTube channel](#) about disability awareness topics. I also developed a website called [Disability Awareness](#). I have bi-weekly blog posts, which are similar to my videos.

I have done several public speaking engagements over the last few years. I would really like to get more speaking engagements. I created an online course on how to hire, fire, and maintain personal care assistants. When I moved out on my own, I didn't know what to do. I thought many other people with disabilities would have the same trouble.

Lastly, I have a weekly newsletter about relevant topics. I hope you will sign up for the newsletter. The website has information on how to do this. It also has my contact information.

Remember one thing, things are hard at first, but it will get easier. If you have any questions, I am available to help you.



Check out the Disability Awareness Youtube channel:

Related Resources:

- [Misconceptions About Raising a Child with Cerebral Palsy](#)
- [Tips for Communicating with Your Child's Teacher](#)
- [Parent Support Groups & Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Other HIE Help Center Community Posts](#)



Chris Lenart

Chris Lenart is the founder of Disability Awareness, an organization that educates, supports, and advocates for individuals with disabilities