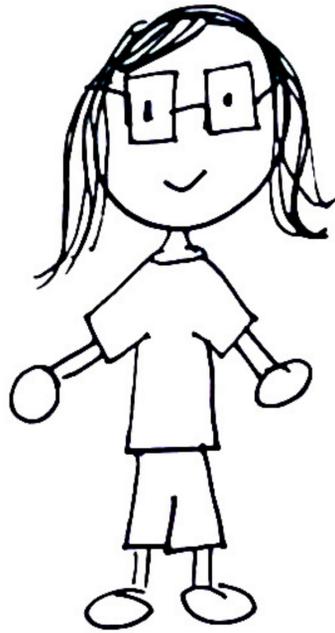


My life,  
My Health,  
and My  
Service Dog



# My Health, My life, and My Service Dog

By: Cecilia Hernandez

I woke up to the worst pain in my life...

With RA, pain is normal. My brain blocks it out...

hospital!

That's how my parents knew it was bad.

Condensed version of events:

assume it is appendix (@ 9am) → get a scan (found cyst @ 9pm) → moved to bigger hospital (arrived @ 8pm) → See surgeon (midnight) → emergency surgery (9am)

It was a full 24 hrs w/o food.

Post surgery:

surprise it's endo! → click!

It should have been a shock yet the puzzle pieces aligned

Endo, or endometriosis, is when the tissue inside the uterus grows outside and causes immense pain

When the invisible isn't visible, it is easy to assume it is normal.

There is no cure... only medicine to prevent the growth and symptoms.

I'll be back.

Surgery can help clear tissue, but it will grow back.

The only way to be diagnosed is through surgery

In a way, I was lucky to have a cyst. I got diagnosed.

This, along with my other conditions, led to me getting a service dog.

Diagram of Service Dog Functions:

Service Dog

Canela

With endo, it is hard to distinguish hunger and pain. Both feelings present in the same area

11:00am

IFLS or UP

Since the pain is dull, it isn't obvious which I'm feeling and what to take.

With Canela, she is able to help me...

A boop for pain

Or a paw to get my attention to prepare for a big flare up

So I can take meds in advance

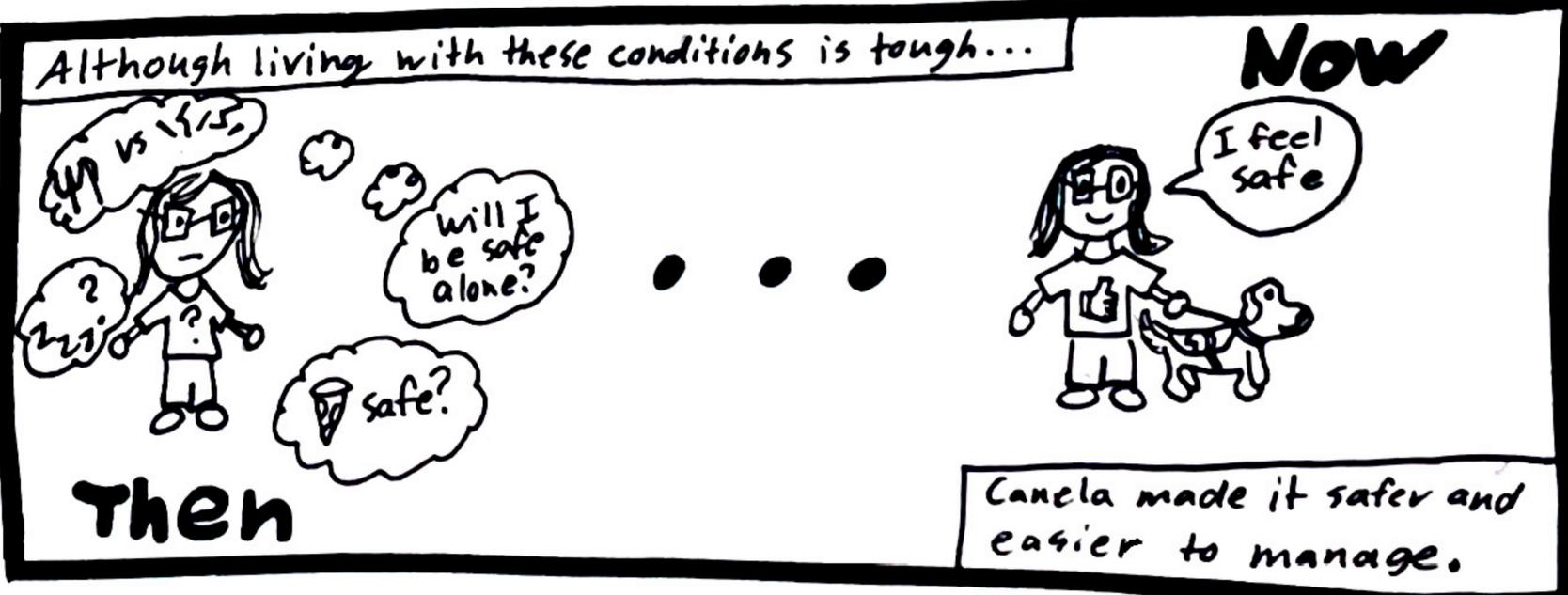
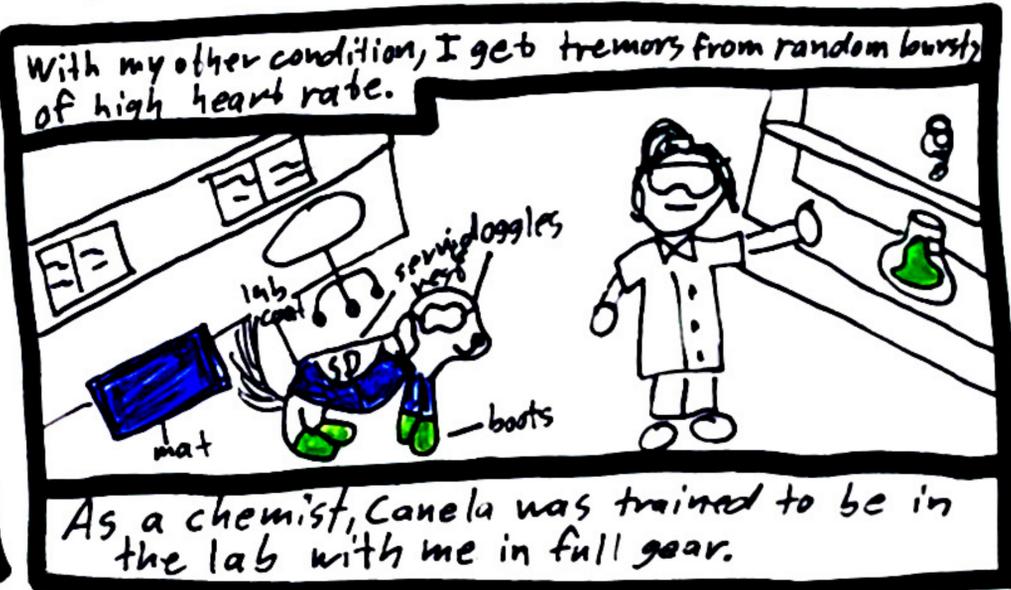
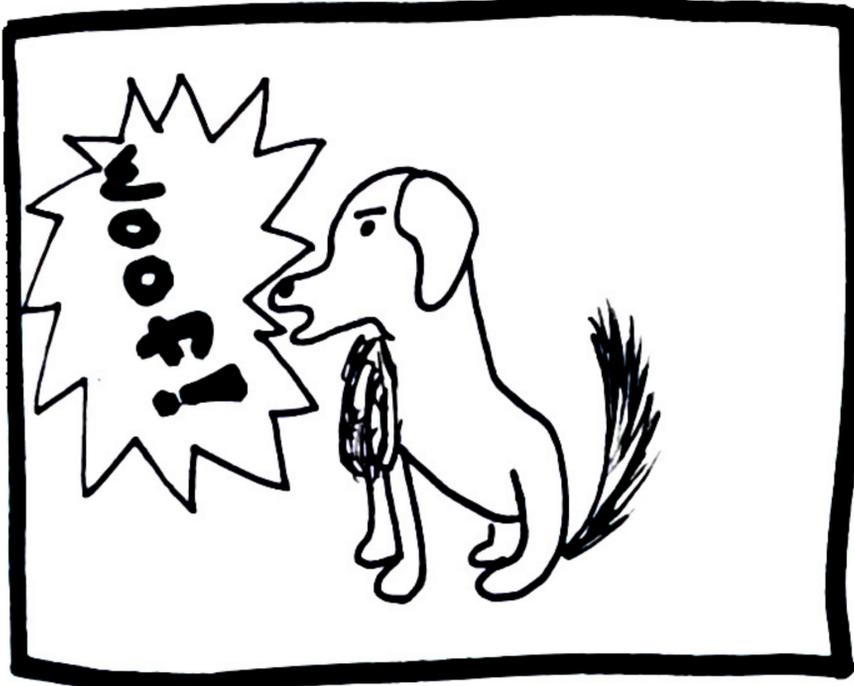
I also get randomly fatigued. Without realizing, I push myself too hard.

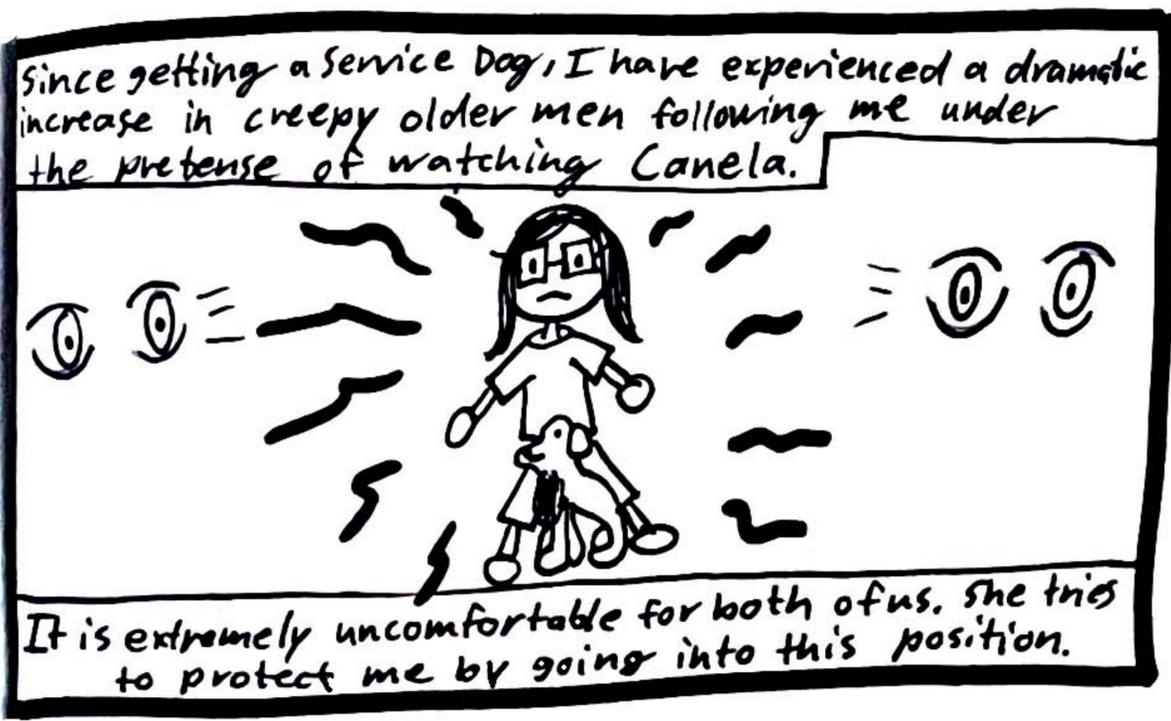
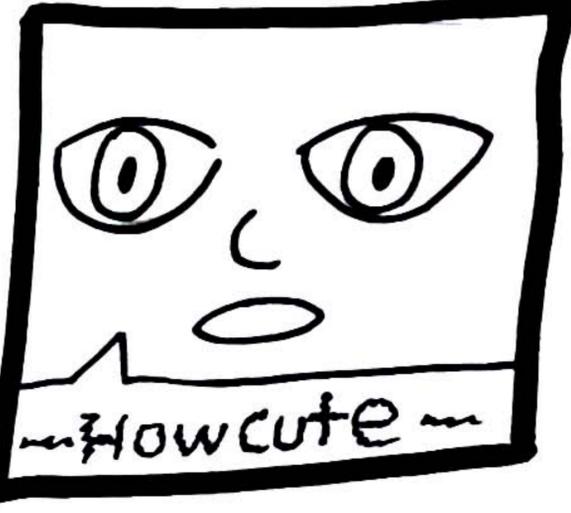
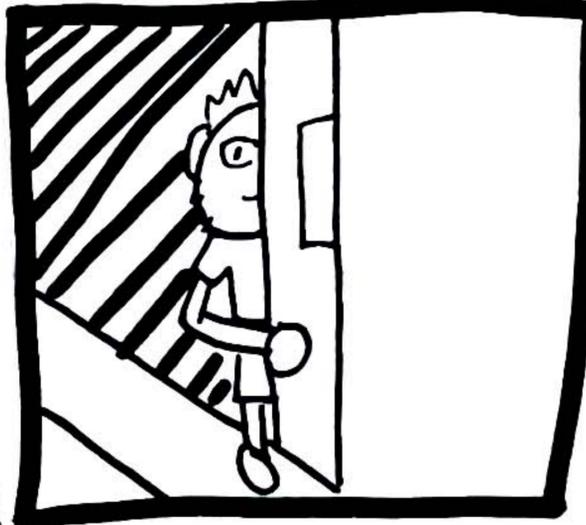
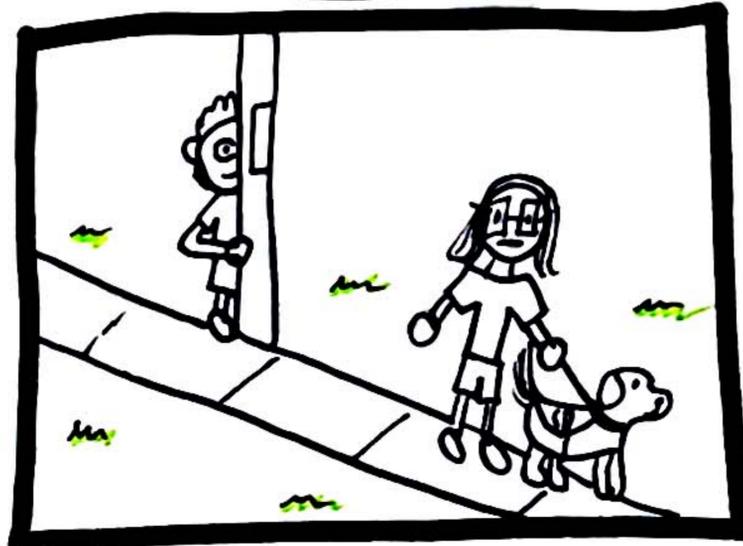
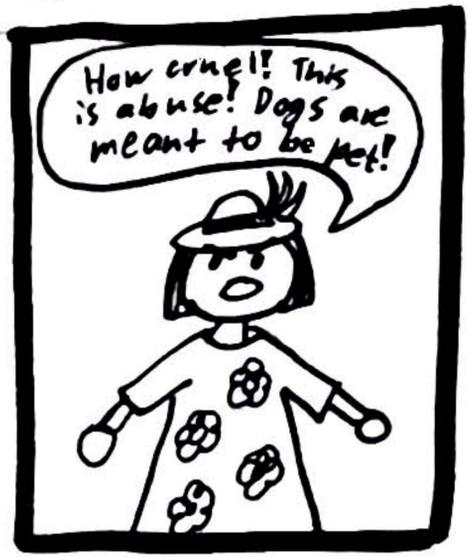
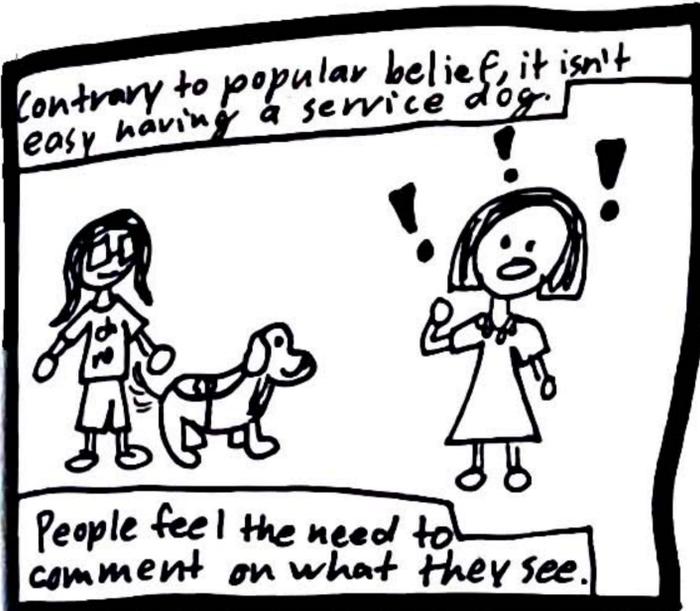
exercise → homework → meetings

12 hrs.

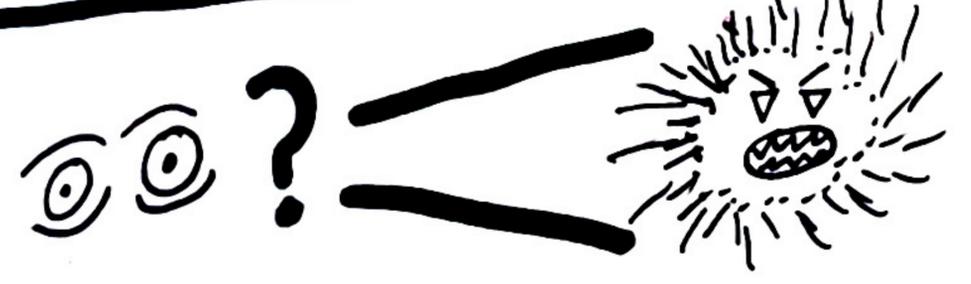
fatigue hits

By not resting during the day, I can worsen my condition. I can't think properly, so I keep going.





Living with an invisible disability is often confusing to people.



How can something we can't see... exist?

It is common for women to be told...

"The pain is normal."



The fact that an endo diagnosis can only be given through surgery doesn't feel shocking.



In that same way, it's hard to convey what life is like for me since others can't see it



There aren't many accurate media depictions, aside from the fluff.

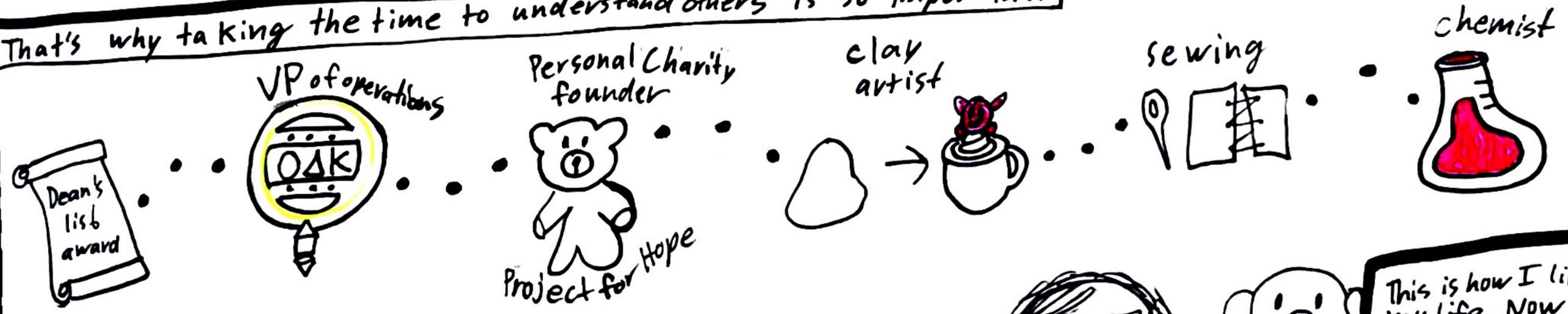


However, everyone's health experience is different and complex

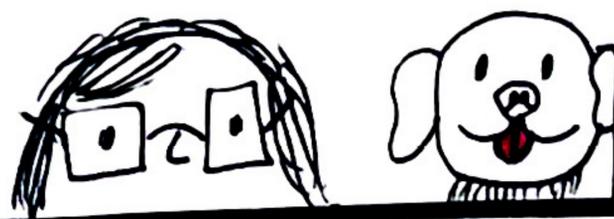


Like a maze with multiple exits. It's never the exact same.

That's why taking the time to understand others is so important.



There is more to me than my health and my service dog.



This is how I live my life. Now go live yours!