

*The following is excerpted from a post by Marcus Henriksen on his blog **Tanngrisenir** titled "Before and After". In it he describes living with his Expressed Extragenomic Metamorphosis (EEM) after suffering from Genomic Autoimmune Reaction Syndrome (GARS).*

...So as I got over the fever and back on my feet, the first week was okay. I felt like I had been hit by a bus which is kinda expected after a 107 fever. But every day was better than the last one. Beyond feeling shitty I didn't LOOK any different and I was back home and not in the hospital.

Then I started getting sick every time I ate. Vomiting, the runs, you name it. I started to get worried after someone I follow on FriendSpace posted about survivors getting rapid cancer after GARS. So I tried to see a doctor about it. Because the epidemic was still going on, the visit I got was about 5 minutes long and I was told that I had lactose intolerance. I cut out the dairy and things got better and not better at the same time. A week later and after no real improvement I got a second visit and they finally ran a DNA test.

Three days later I got a call from a very nervous researcher somewhere who said that he was sorry but my genome had been affected by GARS and they narrowed it down to a mix from *Capra aegagrus hircus*. For a terrifying minute I thought it was some sort of algae and I would end up like that tree-guy in Australia. I kinda lost it. Finally the kid on the phone got through to me that it was a goat; it was the genome of a regular, domestic goat that GARS had mixed me with.

For some reason, that didn't seem quite so bad, at least I wasn't some algae-guy (no offence if you happen to be an algae Exer).

There really was no guidance or information given in that call, just the results of the test. I got scheduled for a follow-up doctor's visit with specialists, FOUR MONTHS AWAY, later that afternoon. And that is all the help you get from this HMO, goat-boy! So I googled everything I could think of about goats and applied that to myself as best I could.

The first thing I did was change my diet. Let me tell you, all that stuff you hear about goats being able to eat anything is a load of crap! Now, I am not a ruminant, which makes me very happy because having to barf up my partially digested food and re-eat it all the time would SUCK! And because I'm not a ruminant with a four chambered stomach like an actual goat, I also don't have their ability to eat grass, leaves, sticks and

shit. But I figured that I would try eating a vegetarian, almost vegan diet for a week and see what happened. I cut out the big macs and what do you know, in a few days I was felling way better and keeping the food down. I later had it confirmed (by the specialists) that my digestive system can't handle animal proteins very well. So yeah, the first doctor was right about the lactose intolerance thing in a way.

The other changes didn't start in until a few weeks after my diagnosis, which isn't typical for most Exers, but that was the way it happened for me. I really didn't gain much in the way of perks or detriments. I think my sense of smell is a bit sharper, and maybe my hearing is better. Things seem to stink more and sound louder now, but it might be all in my head.

The biggest changes were to my looks, and even they weren't the huge, rapid changes that most Exers get when they become a furry or something. Mine took about a month. I'm grateful that I still mostly look the same as I did before... People who haven't seen me in years and don't know about my condition usually recognize me but they get that I look different... More than once I've been asked if I've had reconstructive surgery (ok, I can get that) or even cosmetic surgery, (which I don't get: "Yeah Doc, I wanna look a little more like a goat, ya know?").

If you look at my "before and after" pictures the changes should be pretty clear... BEFORE: Some Random Chubby Guy. AFTER: Hello Wilbur Whateley! As you can see, my face is a bit longer now, the nose a little broader and I'm thicker in the lips than before my EEM. My teeth have changed a lot too, but only my dentist gets a kick out of that.

I grew the beard initially as a joke and to see how it would look. I guess that if I shaved it I wouldn't have the "goat look" so bad, but as I'm not trying to hide my condition I kept it. I kind of think I look better with it anyway. Either way, the reactions I get from people who don't know me are more along the lines of "Oh, that guy kinda looks like a goat" rather than "EXER! EXER! GET A CAMMERA!"

As far as behavioral changes go, I don't think I've had any. Sure, I've changed since GARS but I kind of had to, like changing what I eat. Friends like to say that I'm more stubborn, curious or funny now than I was, but I think that they're just projecting their expectations. I was always the class clown, and as far as being more stubborn you just need to talk to my Mom or my Ex-Wife and you will find out that I have also always been stubborn. I think that the big difference with the "stubborn" thing these days is that now I have a lot more to be stubborn about!