2017 Can Bite Me

December 31, 2017 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

2017, you sucked. I am so glad you are (almost) over. This year, I missed out on so much because chemotherapy broke me, radiation burned me—but I also learned so much. I found I could get out there and unmask myself, show my bald head, tell my shame of getting sick of losing my job of being judged as being "too sick" and "not worth it" and showing the world that I am worth something, that even though I got cancer, I am still a person, someone who is not to be pitied or ignored or forgotten.

I watched my children learn the hard way how sometimes life is so unbelievably random and unpredictable. I watched them also learn how people can be so amazing and kind. I saw them worry about me dying and I was also worried about me dying and it is just too much to all be worried about death. I spent time hugging them and reassuring them and just all around trying to believe the hype, too.

I learned that cancer is something that never truly goes away but if you are lucky it will not kill you. I have always known that what does not kill you makes you stronger. I almost feel like I did not need this masterclass on this topic, but it is what it is and it can always be worse.

Usually, during New Year's Eve in my past, I would cry a little when the clock struck 12 and think about the time that passed and what I did or did not do. This year, I refuse to cry. I am finishing up a year that was spent primarily in treatment for cancer with the extra dollop of joy of being told I did not have a job for next year and other crazy stuff, like family members' health and being a caregiver even though I was not yet fully healed and more.

There are many things I want to focus on for 2018 and the most important thing is to not worry. You see worry is something that does not help anything. It does not change the trajectory of the future, it just ruins today. I am confident that I am healthy and will stay that way but sometimes, I worry. Right now, on the cusp of saying goodbye to 2017, I want to promise myself that I will not go down the road of "what ifs." I have been doing pretty well with not thinking about the possibilities, but so many people have been dying of cancer lately and it truly is a disease that is so misunderstood and sometimes, the thought does cross my mind that I could be a victim. I want to think it even less.

I know I need to find my "next step," my new path after the plot twist of cancer. I know this will help me to heal, to feel whole again. I also know I need to continue to doing what I am doing—practicing gratitude, exercising every day, eating super clean, taking vitamins, my clinical

trial, my hormone meds, my hypnosis, meditation, and writing. Writing above all. I would love to find a way to use my writing abilities to bring in an actual income. I am working on some things that might help me be able to do this but in the meanwhile it is a way for me to get out how I feel, to make and keep new friends who are also dealing with this crappy thing called cancer and to get out of my head. In writing it down, I theoretically can no longer hold it inside.

In 2018, I want health and wellness (and a cure for cancer). I want to be doing something meaningful in my charity work and also in my career. I want my children to be confident that I am not planning on going anywhere. I want to continue to share my story and hopefully help other cancer patients who feel the way I did know they are not alone. I want to have many years left to travel, to hang out with my friends, to watch my children grow up, to dance with my husband, to make inappropriate jokes and to just enjoy being alive.

I do not want to deal with pettiness and nastiness. I do not want stress. I do not want to worry about what happens if cancer does X or Y or Z. I want to "forget" cancer was in my body and instead focus on what I DID get from this heinous disease. I got the ability to try to live in the moment. To have grit. To show my toughness. I always knew I was tough but now I got my doctorate in it. I hope for all of us to have a healthy 2018 and beyond. For cancer to be a thing of the past.

What do you want to manifest in 2018? How do you manage cancer fears?

My "Poem" for 2017 (this is why I am not a poet…)

2017 I hated you so much
You had to come along and punch me in the gut
In 2016 I lost my boob
because cancer got caught there and made me a fool
after my mastectomy, I thought it would be easy
to get chemotherapy
ha I was so crazy
chemo was brutal
I worked through it full time
with a wig and a smile
I suffered without words
and lost my job with a sucker punch in the nads
after chemo came radiation
for 34 sessions
then I had follow ups and clinical trials, I ain't playing
I lost 50 pounds
in the hope that I will be
Cancer free forever you see
My kids they were scared
My husband and I were too

Because when cancer is something that happens to you
It screws you right up and scares you to death
I have no intention of giving up yet
I am here for good
With nowhere to go
I am a fighter, a survivor a lucky ass though
At the end of the day no one knows the future
The cancer is something that makes it much clearer

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