30 Days of Gratitude Challenge Day 25 — My Cancerversary

Knowing your body, being proactive in your screenings for cancer — even without a family history or lump or anything (like me) — could save your life.

November 25, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

In the past 2 years, I have been lucky enough to share my story in various websites, news publications & more — check out some of it here.

It feels like 10 or more years ago but it was really just two years ago today that I was told the words that would forever change my life and my thoughts and my path and … well, you get the idea.

2 years ago today, I had a biopsy done on my right breast after having a minor, microscopic calcification in April 2016 (98% chance of staying benign) which put me on the six-month "squeeze" plan… In November 2016, it was checked and I was asked to come in for a biopsy, which I promptly scheduled for my next day off from work, the day after Thanksgiving.

My mom came with me — my husband wanted to but we ladies know men cannot go past the outer waiting room as we all sit and wait together in our robes. As I sat in the exam room and was told that I should "expect the call that it is cancer." My mom was working on her Christmas list, my husband was home waiting, my kids were watching cartoons (hey, they were 6 and 9) and I was watching my world explode.

Cancer? What does that even mean? The only person I knew who had had cancer was my father-in-law, may his soul rest in peace, and he died of it… Oh, and his sister, and now I am cycling through the fact that my kids have cancer on BOTH sides of their family tree now with ME newly "diagnosed."

No one believed it was true, except me. I did not tell my kids right away, of course, but my husband, mom, dad, etc. all thought it was bull and that I should wait for the actual biopsy results, which would prove this to be all a mistake.

I count this day as my cancerversary, though, because it is when I found out that I had cancer. It forced me to change, to adapt and to be smart about what I spend my time on, what I worry about and how. It rocked my children's foundation and the illusion of safety and "perfection" they had known their whole lives but it left us in a different place — one not "bad" per se — just very

different.

I know now things I did not know I was capable of — I know things they are capable of, my husband, my friends, my family — those who were once friends but are now family… It IS one hell of a ride being admitted to the world of “cancer patient” and one I wish would NEVER happen to anyone else again — but it does happen and the educator in me cannot help but try to help by sharing my story, getting the information out that you can do more than you think you can and that knowing your body, being proactive in your screenings for cancer — even without a family history or lump or anything (like me) — can potentially save your life. No one is too “young” for any particular type of cancer — it sneaks in like a thief in the night. Bear this in mind — I had no lump, perfect blood work (taken during my genetic testing and after my diagnosis), and yet I had stage 3A breast cancer.

So today, I am grateful for my cancerversary (but not for my cancer, never for that). I am at two years and though it oftentimes feels like a decade ago, it also feels like yesterday. If you are newly diagnosed and need someone to talk to, reach out to me anytime. Cancer sucks.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/30-days-gratitude-challenge-day-25-cancerversary