The Cost of Instagram

I want to inspire, yes, but I'm also so much more than my disease.

July 31, 2019 By Jen Hodson

First and foremost, I would like to say how grateful I am for the community I have found on Instagram. It's the main reason I continue to use it so often and it was the first app I opened after I was diagnosed (not kidding — I searched #breastcancer). That being said, Instagram is a big old mindfuck sometimes. Or all the time. And now that I'm somewhat "removed" from active treatment, there's a bit of an identity crisis happening for me. The crisis has taken a mental toll.

When I first started sharing my cancer journey, I had a few hundred followers of friends and family, and since 2017, it's ballooned into what I would say is "minor minor influencer" status. I have more IG friends than I know what to do with, I've been presented with amazing partnership opportunities (like New Balance and Clean Slate) and friendships that are so very real and true.

But there are downsides to this. The biggest one being, that my IG account doesn't really feel like mine anymore. I've lost a little bit of what I want to share with my loved ones, and gotten a bit lost in what I feel like I SHOULD be sharing. I've checked likes and felt horribly disappointed that a picture with my friends doesn't compare to me bald in a bed, even though one is filled with happiness and the other despair. I've also had criticisms, comments I've taken personally and my least favorite… unsolicited dick pics.

There's also the "cancer influencer" tag which many attribute to my efforts but that I feel guilty having and working towards… I want to inspire, yes, but I'm also so much more than my disease. I'm an aunt, I'm a friend, I'm a daughter and sister, I'm a professional, I'm a homeowner, I'm a dog mom, I'm a reader, I'm a runner, I'm dating. And I'm scared to share those aspects of my life because I am so very concerned I will lose the community I've gained.

Mentally, I've done a lot of work on this. And I've realized that likes/follows/unfollows and curating feeds/posting at the right time/creating content regularly may work for some (and their businesses) but it's not for me. And my fears that others are judging me for how many likes I'm getting is completely on me. And it's ok to recognize that and choose to remove that fear from my life. Which is what I've been doing.

I love posting on there, being silly, talking about my life as it is. And I hope you will stay around. I hope you will be there when I discuss cancer, but also when I discuss travel, running, decorating my house, hanging with my dog, trying to wake up in the morning and maybe someday finding the love of my life. I'm letting the pressure of maintaining this account go and getting back to just

doing whatever the fuck I want with it. It’s a promise I’m making to myself.

<p">And since anyone who reads this comes from IG-land: I’m not the best at replying to comments, scrolling through my feed or replying to DMs but I promise you I see it and I know it and I cherish it… so thank you.

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