’Here We Grow’ by Paige Davis

May 26, 2018 By Justin Birckbichler

Often times, when I get DMs from people I’ve never spoken to on Instagram, it’s usually someone who is offering to teach me how to mine for bitcoin, a Russian model who wants to accompany me to various locations in an unobtrusive manner (at least that’s what I think they mean by offering ‘discreet escort services’), or some other sort of spammer unrelated to cancer or testicles.

Luckily, this isn’t always the case. A few weeks ago, I received a DM from Paige Davis, a breast cancer survivor and the author of Here We Grow, a book about mindfulness while fighting cancer. She offered me a free advanced reader copy, and since I love free things, I said yes.

To be perfectly honest, I was skeptical when I read the back cover. I am not one to be into meditation, yoga, or anything of the sort. However, this book was not just a bunch of New Age mumbo jumbo. The following is an excerpt of the five-star review I left on Goodreads:

> “I found myself glued to the book from start to finish and realizing more and more that I use a number of mindfulness practices in my own daily life.
>
> Perhaps my favorite thing about this book was that it didn’t take an ‘either or’ approach in regards to medical practice versus alternative healing. Rather, it was about joining the two, which I think is an important message to any cancer patient.”

Beyond that brief snippet, the following three big concepts, along with specific quotes, resonated with me while reading this book.

Keep reading through to the end for a giveaway of the book!

Take a cancer journey one day at a time

“I am not naive; this will be a long journey. I want to celebrate the milestones of every step.”

Cancer can seem like a never-ending journey. Sometimes it literally lasts for years. In my case, active treatment lasted just over three months, but it involved chemotherapy nearly every single day. When I finished my first 10 (of 21 treatments) around Christmas 2016, I didn’t view it as “oh crap, I still have 11 to go.” I thought, “Whoa, we’re halfway there…. Whoaaaaa living on a prayer.”

“I just had major surgery; no one is expecting the impossible. I’m not doing this for [her]. I’m doing this for me. I need to know I can do this”

This part reminded me of when I had just had my orchiectomy and was determined to get up and walk a few days later. It was tough, but I had to prove to myself that I could do it… even if it was only walking around upstairs.

“I always assumed that fears were obstacles to be faced head on, but when it comes to situations with no tangible action to take, it’s a harsh reminder that I can’t control everything.”

I like to be in charge, but having testicular cancer definitely takes a lot of that away, in addition to your ball and your hair. I was at the mercy of my caregivers and medical team and had to give up control. It’s hard to accept that, but also a good reminder that letting someone else take the wheel isn’t necessarily a bad thing.

Visualize chemotherapy as a good thing

“This is a love journey, and [he] encourages me to see the chemo as a powerful friend fueled by love and light, doing what it needs to do and then gently leaving my system so new cells can emerge.”

Most people would say chemotherapy sucks and it’s poisoning your body, but both Paige and I would beg to differ. Chemotherapy is a way to heal your body from cancer, albeit a very brutal one. While the side effects can be very overwhelming, Paige advocates to see chemotherapy as a friend rather than an enemy. That being said…

“Stay ahead of the pain, or in this case, the nausea."

Towards the end of my chemotherapy treatment, my nausea was really bad, to the point where I was best friends with a bucket for five days straight. I learned a valuable lesson then — make the anti-nausea pills a part of your routine. This stuck with me even after active treatment, when I still had latent feelings of quesiness. If you stay ahead of the game, you’ll stop (or at least lessen) the pain or nausea before it even begins.

Accept that change after cancer is inevitable

“While on one level I know that I am irrevocably changed, another part of me wants the change to be minimal and controllable. But these are unrealistic expectations.”

I've said this time and time again, but I am far from the same person as I was before testicular cancer, besides lacking my left testicle. I'm more motivated to make up for lost time and accept and embrace that. However, at first, I thought everything was going to go back to my regularly scheduled programming when I returned to work. This wasn't the case, and if I had this book about a year ago I would have realized that not feeling normal was normal and my new normal would be normal now. Say normal one more time, Justin.

"I shifted my consciousness from one of doing and searching, from a place of fear and angst, to one of being and arriving at a place of stillness, connection, and listening to the deepest part of my soul."

The changes I made in my life allowed me to stop acting like a dog chasing a ball (a pun I've used numerous times in my writing and will never stop) and settle on one purpose (and settle for having one ball). I know at my core, I want to dedicate myself and my work to connecting with other people to spread the good word of testicular cancer.

"The divine experiences of our lives keep propelling us forward on our journey to greater self-awareness and consciousness."

This line speaks for itself… though I may include 'testicular cancer awareness' in addition to 'self-awareness.'

Want your own copy of Here We Grow?

The easiest, and most guaranteed way is to purchase a copy through Amazon. It released on May 22, so if you order today and have Amazon Prime, you'll have in two days (or less).

Finally, a thank you to Paige for giving me the opportunity to read and share my thoughts on this book. I recommend this book to any person touched by cancer (whether it's as a patient, survivor, caregiver, loved one, or friend — so basically everyone in the world), as this is truly an inspiring and relatable guide for what they may be facing and what's to come. I'm looking forward to the day I write my book and get your feedback on it, though mine will contain a ridiculous amount of ball-themed puns!

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