

The Hidden Costs of Cancer Visibility: A Survivor's Perspective

You are allowed to choose sustainability over visibility, Megan-Claire Chase writes, even when visibility feels like the dream.

July 27, 2026 By [Megan-Claire Chase](#)

Once you receive a cancer diagnosis, you become hyper-aware of every awareness month, every ribbon, every story. It's no longer just about your cancer; it's about all of us in this unexpected club called cancerland.

That part of me hasn't changed.

I still crave learning.

I still seek connection.

I still find comfort, humor, and moments of belonging in conversations with people whose diagnoses look nothing like mine, but whose experiences feel deeply familiar.

But what has changed... is what happens when the world starts to see you.

Back then, I wrote about how easy it was to start thinning myself out—saying yes to every breast cancer event, every request, every opportunity—until something that once felt meaningful started to feel like obligation.

That truth still stands.

But now? The opportunities look different.

Now I'm being invited into rooms I once dreamed about.

I crave opportunities to perform, whether that's leading a conference session, sitting on a panel, or stepping onto a stage like *Stories from the Stage* (yes, your girl aired on PBS and is still floating about on World Channel).

And this year? Whew.

- [ASCO Voices](#) (Chicago, May 29–June 2)

- [AOSW Annual Conference](#) presenting session w/ Dr. Lisa Nelson (Portland, June 10-12)
- [COSMO](#) panelist (Chicago, August 7-8)
- [International ILC Breast Cancer Symposium](#) moderator (San Francisco, September 23-25)

This is the life I once hoped for.

The visibility.

The impact.

The chance to use my voice in rooms that matter.

And yet...

I wish this could be my life every single day.

Because behind all of this is a reality that doesn't make it onto the stage.

I am managing unmanageable pain.

Multiple layers of post-cancer chronic illness.

Unpredictable energy levels that shift daily, hourly, honestly.

I'm also a caregiver for my mother, who has a blood cancer.

And as an only child, there is no buffer. No built-in backup. It's just me.

Add to that being single, working full-time, paying bills and a mortgage, managing a never-ending list of doctor's appointments to maintain my long-term relationship with NED (no evidence of disease)...

...and somehow still trying to keep my lair clean, laundry folded, and life somewhat together.

It is a ton of pressure to be the sole provider of everything, especially when your energy is limited and unpredictable.

And let's not forget: my naturally dramatic, expressive, "extra" personality?

When Nut-Meg takes the stage, the energy doesn't come with an off switch.

So even when I try to pace myself... I still end up pouring out more than I should.

That's the thinning.

Not just from saying yes to things that drain me,

but from giving everything I have to the things I love, too.

Because here's the complicated truth:

Even the right opportunities can deplete you if your body can't sustain them.

People still say, "You don't look sick. You look full of energy."

And I still think...

Do you have any idea what it costs me to look like this?

What it costs to show up polished, passionate, and powerful,
and then collapse into silence, pain, and exhaustion afterward?

Fatigue for me isn't "I need a nap."

It's no recovery.

It's pain layered on top of depletion.

It's waking up already behind.

So now, the lesson hits differently than it did years ago.

It's not just about saying no to things that don't serve me.

It's about being intentional with the yeses—even the beautiful ones.

It's about accepting that I can't build a life that looks like everyone else's.

And maybe... I'm not supposed to.

There's also something I've had to learn the hard way:

There's a difference between being alone... and being lonely.

Because yes, I'm doing a lot of this on my own.

But that doesn't mean my life isn't full of meaning, connection, and purpose.

It just means I need support in ways I don't always have.

And that truth deserves to be said out loud.

So, this is your reminder and mine:

Don't thin yourself out trying to prove your worth.

Don't overextend just because the opportunity is shiny.

Don't let people confuse your light for limitless capacity.

You are allowed to protect your energy.

You are allowed to need help.

You are allowed to choose sustainability over visibility, even when visibility feels like the dream.

Because the dream isn't just being seen.

It's being well enough to live.

Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

[The post](#) was originally published on [Life on the Cancer Train](#).

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<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/hidden-costs-cancer-visibility-survivors-perspective>