A Letter to Myself, On the Day I Was Diagnosed With Cancer.

You will be amazed what you can accomplish when you take it one day at a time (sometimes just one minute at a time), and one challenge at time.

September 28, 2018 By Lindsay Norris

Hey,

Ok — I know today didn't turn out like you expected. Ugh. This sucks.

I'm trying to remember what even happened on that day before THE appointment… I have no idea if the kids were being good that morning or if you were running around like crazy trying to get out the door on time. I have no idea if it was nice outside or rainy and cold. I can't remember if you heard some good songs on the radio on your way to work or if you needed to stop for gas. I have no idea what you had for breakfast or if you got a good parking spot. I do remember you wore a green shirt and joked with Camden over text about the embarrassing exam you were going to have to do that day. I remember you snuck over to the appointment on the other side of the building during work and were answering emails while waiting in the exam room. And yeah — I remember when you were told you have cancer. But what am I telling you this for — you just lived it. If I timed my letter right — you're home now, and you're sitting in the chair with Evelyn at bedtime. I remember when you took that picture holding your baby girl tight and truly wondering if these kind of old pictures would be the only evidence of you she'd have. I can see the fear and sadness in your eyes. I remember you sat there with her forever, way longer than it took her to fall asleep. I remember you laid by Harrison for what seemed like hours just wondering how the hell you were going to help him make sense of this. I remember you and Camden staring at each other, lost, without words. Look, I know you're in shock, and a strange mix of angry and depressed — but I want to give you a little pep talk.

In a few days you'll get the confirmation of what specific type of cancer this is and you'll feel better just knowing. Early next week you'll find out that it's stage 3c, but nowhere else in your body — and for the first time you'll feel like you might actually have a shot against this. In the coming weeks you'll meet with the rest of the doctors who will let you know the plan they've come up with just for you and you'll realize you already have an army that's ready to do this thing with you. Not every day is going to be easy, you're going to want to quit, crawl in a hole, or just cry — but you will march through this because you have to. This might sound harsh, but you don't have a choice. You can obsess about why this happened all you want but it doesn't change anything.

You're going to get up every day and do whatever you can to get through it. Listen to me — having cancer does not give you a pass to feel sorry for yourself and quit living your life, do not let this define who you are — but do let it help shape who you become. It does not give you a pass to be lazy and not take care of yourself. And it does not give you a pass to be a jerk to others or shut them out just because they don't understand what you're going through or say the wrong thing. Life doesn't owe you anything. You are not a victim. It's your decision whether you act like things are happening to you, or for you. You have complete control over how you move forward from this.

You will be amazed what you can accomplish when you take it one day at a time (sometimes just one minute at a time), and one challenge at time. I don't mean you don't get to take naps when you need them, or should push yourself to exhaustion — I just mean that you have to keep that forward momentum to help when you can't push any longer. Be more intentional every day and learn to focus your energy on things that lift you up (sorry — you should be warned you start reading self-help books in the future and start using phrases with "intentional" and "best life" in them). I know it's so hard to not focus on the outcomes, the what-ifs, or stress about how this all ends — but you will never know those answers. Once you learn to take pride in the process, knowing you've done whatever you can each day to make the best of your gifts … you've already won — no matter what happens later.

I want you to know the kids will be just fine, your marriage will become even stronger, work just keeps getting better and better, and your family and friends will surround you with love. I want you to know that some truly beautiful new relationships and opportunities can grow from this mess — so don't be afraid to say yes to new things. I'm not telling you these things because I want to downplay what you're up against or put pressure on you to react to every challenge perfectly. I tell you this because I want to put a fire in you, because I know what you're capable of, and also simply because I know if someone had come and told me (well you) on that first day that I would be here exactly two years later, relaxing in that same chair, cancer free… that would've made me feel like I could do anything.

And you can.

You're going to be fine…

I love you,

me

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