Loneliness in CancerLand, Part 2

What I wish you knew — the flip side

September 12, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

This is part 2 of what I wish you knew — you can read part 1 here.

This isn't complaints, though — far from it — this is my rejoicing — my testament of what it means to be truly sick…

There is beauty in illness — not for when you look in the mirror because in the mirror is hideous disfigurement (at first) until you realize something(s) I wish you knew NOW…

1. Your body is amazing — I love my body more than I ever did in my life and it's ridiculous because I look like a Monster High Doll — where my right breast was is now a jagged scar line flat across the chest and into the armpit with a hole where the drains were… and yet, I recognize and respect this body — it took me through 2 childbirths I have a scar from my c-section, acne scars here there and everywhere and teeth that just don't line up and I can go on and on but I know in my heart that I am beautiful, you are beautiful we ALL are beautiful. No, you don't need to lose 5 pounds to say it. No, you don't need to change your face to say it. We are all amazing what we do on a daily basis with these bodies is nothing short of miraculous.

1a. On the subject of bodies I will say that I did have to lose weight — my cancer was hormone driven and a specialist at Sloan told me that hormones hide in fat and that my stomach was just too fatty (best doctor appt everrrrrr not!) he told me a weight I needed to be and I did it… BUT it was hard af. I'm in menopause and if I look at food, it's over so I had to basically relearn how to feed my body, how to move my body and how to keep it at a certain "number."

2. I wish you knew that your stress your worries your constant anxiety is not helping you live it is quite literally helping you die. I spent years panicking, anxious and afraid and that was before I was diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening illness. I realized that I could continue living that way and probably die like immediately just from a panic attack or I could find a way to stop being a prisoner to worries. You know I am chuckling right now that it took having something to really worry about to teach me to stop worrying. I recognize this is so hard to do but I see you stressed out losing it because of let's say homework or bills or your friends and I will validate each and every thing but I will say does it change your life radically if any one of those things gets left off your list? Tomorrow when you wake up and the homework isn't done or the bill isn't paid yes there are consequences I'm not stupid but will you still have your health? And bam, mic drop. See for me, I can only hope and pray I have my health — as far as I know I'm "ok" but I still very recently

was a cancer patient and I would give anything to go back in time to before I heard the words, “you have cancer” and bitch slap myself to death for being such a tool — for worrying so much about stuff that ultimately did not matter (stupid Lisa).

3. Enjoy every minute — don’t wait to be happy. If you’re unhappy try with all of your might to do at least one thing a day to make you happy. Don’t fool yourself by thinking, “Well at least I’m not Lisa I have two boobs and no cancer why the hell should I listen to her?!” In my opinion, pity for others can just mask what you really feel like inside — I know I did a whole lot of pitying on others in my life thinking, “whew I am so glad that is not me.” And then a few minutes later I was back to the fear worry and unhappiness game of my life.

It’s a hard nut to crack, happiness — in my soul deep down I have always been happy but I never did things to make myself happy — I denied myself everything from a night out with the girls to a day to sleep in without the kids — I don’t do that anymore.

4. Which brings me to self-care. I literally, before cancer, would have stopped being friends with you if you told me I needed to practice self-care. I probably would have thought you were trying to sell me something perverted. Now I know what self care means — it means doing for me so I can do for others. As moms or just as women in general, we are the caretakers and we care for everyone and everything. Laundry to be done — guess who does it? Dinner to be made — guess? Lunches to be created from scratch to feed the damn pickiest kids on earth — guess? Cleaning, ironing, boo boo kissing, wrestling referee (damn my kids fight A LOT — yours, too?), bday planning, shopping, your dad needs to go to the doctor, your mom needs an X-ray …. you get the idea.

When it comes time do getting our own time it’s never important. Well let me tell you I make it my business now to fulfill my soul each and every day — I do it in weird Lisa ways — I write books, I write blog posts, I run 2 semi-successful businesses and one totally unsuccessful one, I dance with my husband, I cuddle with my kids (if they will let me) and MOST IMPORTANTLY — I pretend I know what I’m talking about when I move my arms like this (inside Gilbert Gottfried joke from a movie my brothers always said they don’t know why people like me but they do and it must be because <insert Gilbert Gottfried voice> “when I move my arms like this people think I know what I’m talking about!” So do things for you find your passion take your nap the kids will survive someone might have to learn how to get themselves a snack omg the HORROR!

5. Finally, don’t take your health and well-being for granted. If someone you know gets sick (ahem me if you know me) try to be a good friend by telling them that one boobs are in style by sharing my shit and by supporting my walk for the American Cancer Society — buy my T-shirt with proceeds going to my walk and just love yourself be kind to yourself and stay well! Also, focus on your health and how you can keep it — know that the whole world of “risk of cancer” is a bunch of bullshit. I had absolutely NO RISK FACTORS in terms of anything that the media tells us (besides from breathing in 9/11 dust and fumes for um 2++ years) but anyway, remember that your health is not guaranteed and to be proactive, know your body and if you ever need me for anything, I’m here!

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/loneliness-cancerland-part-2