We Only Have So Much Time...

How do you handle the world of what if? What do you do to help yourself not go down the road of negativity? For me, it's staying busy.

September 5, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

We only have so much time and yet…

And yet…

The little things still chafe. The stresses, the worries, the thoughts of not enjoying the moment because the moment is just too much.

I balance so many things on my one boob — a budget that never meets up where it should, a family that just keeps moving one way when I want them to go the other… a new school year pressing down on us when I did not get enough of summer yet. I did not get enough.

I see people constantly getting bad news. News that their cancer is back or that it is incurable. People who are dying left and right. And it is almost October — the month of pink when everyone says, "Breast cancer…" but no one quite gets it.

I live in this time of in between — this world of I do not know — someone who once could only live in the world of certainties and knowledge, I now live in the world of what I do not know can't hurt me… yet.

And yet…

I am NED (as far as I know). That means that there is no evidence of disease in my body — I was given those words back in December 2016 after my mastectomy and lymph node extraction, despite having 5 / 25 lymph nodes test positive for cancer — I had a pet scan a few days before my mastectomy so I guess that was how they knew to say NED. I did chemo scared to death til a nurse told me kindly, "this is just being done as an extra — all of your cancer is gone."

No one really knows, though. Every time I open up my Facebook or my Instagram, there is more bad news. More friends and acquaintances and people I do not even know but feel I do through the blue screen, the small squares, getting bad news, facing death, kissing their kids and not knowing if it is the last time or now. And I am crying. Crying for them — for their children, for their unborn children, for their friends and families. And I know I cannot spiral — I cannot go down the road of "what if" or "how will it happen." I can only live in the moment. The moment of suspended time

where as far as I know I am ok — but the what if is still there — I run from it but it follows me like a bad stalker.

The story of Rachael Bland, I can share — she is someone who shared her story even in the moments before her death at 40 years old, leaving behind a 3-year-old son and family and friends. She is — was — a journalist and was part of a podcast out of the BBC that two of my insta "friends" are on (I put friends in quotes because although I feel I know them and maybe they know me, it is in the world of square boxes not in real life…). She was diagnosed with breast cancer that had spread to the nodes and in April 2018 was told it had returned in the opposite side of her body and chest… yesterday, she died. In 5 months she went from recurrence to incurable to death.

That is just the story I feel comfortable sharing because she was so vocal about cancer and what was happening to her body and what ultimately took her from this earth.

As a mom, it hurts me so much to think about the what ifs. But not just as a mom — as a person. All that I want to do — all that I am doing, the people who count on me, who love me, who hate me, who tolerate me, who can't stand me — every thing in relation to me in the orbit of this "post-"cancer apocalypse.

I try to keep in mind that life changes on a dime for everyone but sometimes as I straddle the worlds between "health" and "sick," I see it is not the same for all. Despite all of my fears, anxieties and worries before diagnosis, I never really thought of the "what if I am not here anymore…" It was not until Cancer that mortality hit me in the arse — hard.

So I let it out, I write it down and I try to get back to living. I have spent the last days of summer away on vacation, enjoying life AND working — it seems being busy is the best way to suppress the negatives. Now, as I face getting kids back to school tomorrow, back to routine, I just have to stay in the world of "TODAY" and not "what if."

How do you handle the world of what if? What do you do to help yourself not go down the road of negativity? Today, I will cry, just now, before the kids wake up and need my attention, before my conference calls are scheduled, as I work on various projects, I will weep. It might help… Does it help?

This is "life after cancer" … XOXO Supermom

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