When You Share vs. When You Do Not Share

March 24, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

My whole life, I have experienced things differently than others. I know a lot of people who fall apart at the drop of a hat and I was always stoic and focused on how to survive the things that happened instead of wallowing in them.

I have had people “pity” me before I got cancer. Pity sucks and I thought I had written before about how it is a useless emotion. I pity you and think how lucky I am to not be you and then moments later I am all pissed off about something not working the way I thought it should. At no point did anyone learn anything, anyone help anyone, or anything positive come out of that experience.

For me, there are times when I am reticent to share my story upon meeting someone new or when talking with folks. I do not know why this is — I am almost ashamed of it but there are some people I can sense off the bat would pity me harrrddd and though I am used to it sometimes I just CANNOT.

As I said, I have experienced pity before being a “motherless” child — through divorce, not death, marrying a cop who had some issues — to put it mildly, having had miscarriages and being broke and well the list goes on… I always have and will continue to hold my head up high despite the drama the pitying looks and all but sometimes I tire of being this “sick person” who is pitied.

You know, I am not sick. I do not *feel* sick aside from being tired but I was always tired even before cancer and its treatments. I know I have written this before but it bears repeating for any newbies reading this — when you are diagnosed with cancer, throw out your experiences of what it is like to go to a doctor. Before cancer, if you do not feel well, you go to your doctor and they make you feel better. During and after cancer, you go to the doctor and you get hit with treatments that make you feel worse, worse, worse than you can imagine.

Then, once you are “done” with all of your active treatment, there are still more things you must do such as hormone therapy and/or ovary suppression and/or clinical trial and/or just hope and pray it never spreads (God forbid) or comes back (also God forbid).

You know you cannot live in the mire or in hiding (trust, I did it for a while and I could not any longer hide but instead went loud and proud by unveiling myself in this blog). Sometimes in telling

your story, you feel so empowered like a kick ass warrior women who knows how to manage it all but then you look at the other person who never had to deal with cancer and you envy and worry about wow how much it would have been amazing to go back in time and never to have been told you have cancer…

Now, I know it is hard for me to ever hide this shit as I have only one tit and oh a blog that about 2,400–3,000 people a WEEK are on and reading; not to mention my Facebook and Twitter accounts that are also kind of broadcasting the fact that I am, in my own mind, a cancer survivor.

However much I call myself a survivor, my doctors at Sloan would not as there is something about a 3–5 year window that needs to be hit before that word is given to you. That being said, I am okay with calling myself a cancer survivor (just recently, though). I was calling myself a survivor in training but I decided to just go for it and promote myself because I do so believe that a bulk of this crap with cancer is mental and physical and luck and out of my control.

When I created my hypnosis script and mixed it with a meditation tune in February, I was so damn happy about it because in my mind it is another layer in my defense — I am hypnotizing myself to believe there is no sign of disease anywhere in my body, plus I am exercising and staying low on the scale to help with risk of recurrence and eating healthy and using only organic crap in my hair, on my face, on my body etc. and STILL I know as much as the sun will rise tomorrow that there is still a 30 percent chance that I could become stage 4 and die from this disease.

I do not know what other people know about these stats, though, when they pity me. I do not know if they know that stage 4 is the only kind of breast cancer people die from or if they just feel bad my hair is so short, my boob is one less or that my kids went through something life changing at such young ages.

I do know that no matter what, I keep sharing my story, meeting more and more people and struggling with my own fatigue to figure out how to execute on even bigger things to help others who have been told, “You have cancer.” May it never be you or someone you love but if it is, I am here for you.

This is what I do in the time between…

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