Topless & Proud

April 3, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

So check out my blog to see ME — way out of my comfort zone, but then again who of us who have been diagnosed with cancer can even remember what a comfort zone is or where it is?

I have already shared some pictures showing my scar on both my instagram and my blog that are (to me) breathtaking and I guess contemplative and some have said it shows that I am “resigned” or “tough.”

I cherish those descriptors and I love it — because as soon as I heard the words “you have cancer” at 39 years old with a husband who hadn’t been “there” for me, two kids aged 6 and 9 that took up my whole life force and energy I really did have to get resigned to it ASAP because there was no “no thank you” option.

It was live and growing and I wanted it OUT in any way possible and did not even consider doing a lumpectomy but asked (or demanded … those who know me know when I want something, I do not take no for an answer) for the mastectomy.

I have shared this before but when I woke up from surgery, I was so scared — not before surgery at all — but afterwards, I was afraid to look at my body — this new body that would be “half.” The breast (yes just the one) I used to feed my daughter, the “pillow” both kids had laid their heads on multiple times per night (lol), the weight and feel of the breast — I knew it was gone, I could see the bandages but I would not look at my body for some time.

Then, once I “healed” I began to wear a prosthetic and avoid the half-bloated and bald body in the mirror.

I was ashamed and disgusted by how I looked and the fact that I got sick. At some point, though, I realized that I needed to love this body…. This body that survived childbirth (one natural, one C-section) and 2 D&Cs in between as well as cancer and all of its requirements like mastectomy, lymph node removal, 8 rounds of chemo, 33 rounds of radiations, gaining 50-80 pounds, losing the weight, walking my 40 miles per week, etc. etc…. So I do — I love my body and these special photos by #behindthescars taken by the amazing photographer Sophie Mayanne tell that story.

I look at these 20 pictures and I see a beautiful, dare I say “sexy,” confident woman who is not half but whole and I share it for you, those of you who find yourselves the 1 in 8 and fear looking in the mirror now that you feel half — to know that someday you will know that you are whole too.

PS: I do feel a bit funny posting these as a 41 (to be 42, God willing) mom of 2 but I do think it’s important to share that breast cancer is not a pretty pink disease but you can still feel pretty and beautiful after being mutilated, poisoned and burnt :).

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