My Valentine to You, Reader …

February 14, 2018 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

Hi, it is nice to meet you—as you might guess, my name is Lisa and I was the 1 in 8. Today is Valentine's Day and maybe you, too, are the 1 in 8. Maybe you look in the mirror and see a stranger. Maybe you are coming to terms with what this whole plot twist of cancer means to you and your body and your relationships with others. Maybe you already get it, you are already at a point where you can squint a little and look in the mirror and see the you that you used to be.

I want to tell you that I love you. I get you. I know how you feel and probably what you think. I know you are lamenting the fact that you gained too much / lost too much weight. I know you are adjusting to new tits or no tits or 1 new tit or 1 no tit—I know you are trying to find a bra or a T-shirt or just about damn anything that will fit you and make you feel like you are whole. I imagine you are thinking about how to ever be intimate again with your husband/boyfriend/girlfriend/wife/tinder hook up … I know you are worried about how your body will "work" now that you have no hormones in your body or just are tired and worn down from the relentless battle you have endured.

I see you. I love you. I know that it is hard right now and that you foresee it will be hard for a long time to come. It is not. Eventually, you adjust. You recognize yourself again. You look in the mirror with your new boobs, your no boobs, your 1 boob, whatever boob situation you got and you love it. You get your confidence back slowly and surely just like your hair comes back (and trust me girl, it will come back). You're going to have to say goodbye to that do-it-yourself Brazilian that chemo gave you or that red lobster look radiation gave you and be ready for the healing.

Let the healing come—look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I love myself. My body is healing. I am healthy." Do that as much as you need to until you start to believe it. Yes, some things will never ever be the same but they can be better. You are alive, you are here. God willing you are cancer-free and will stay that way forever.

I heard recently from my new friend Dana from Anaono that "that which is cut out of us never is what made us women" and I believe it with all of my heart. Know you are a goddess, that you are beautiful and that you are not what was cut out of you.

Cancer came to fuck you up but you beat it back and taught it a few tricks in the back alley. You are fierce, beautiful and I am here for you if you ever forget it.

XOXO

Li

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.