What Do You Do to Kill Cancer?

December 30, 2017 By Lisa Vento Nielsen

Nothing is perfect; no one is perfect. Everyone has their shit and everyone has to learn to deal with it. No one gets what exactly that means, though. Except me. I get it and always did. I believe that if we all got together and smacked our problems down on the table like playing cards that we each would still want to leave the table with our own problems and not someone else's. Everyone has some great sadness in their life—everyone has something that did not work out, or some plan B they had to execute that was not their plan.

Shit happens, and the real gem of life is learning to take that Plan B and love the hell out of it even if it was never in your plan or thought process. For me, I never ever planned to learn to live with such dignity and grace in the face of such adversity. And I thought I knew adversity and I thought I knew what it meant when someone said, "You don't know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have." Stupid me.

I have found that when I was weakest and most downtrodden was actually when I was strongest, if that makes sense. Right now, I am nowhere near as strong and tough as I was when I walked into that operating room to get the cancer removed from my body. I was not as strong then as I was when I sat down in the treatment chair for the first round of chemotherapy. I was never even as close to strong as I was when I went from the first 4 rounds to the new chemotherapy drug and not knowing the side effects or issues that would happen. I am not as strong as I was when I sat through 34 radiation treatments. I am not as strong as I was when I put my name in to do the clinical trial (PALLAS)...well, you get the idea.

In each of these steps, I have been stronger than I ever thought I could be. I have just kept rolling with it but it is not me alone. I have had support, prayers, faith and more to keep me sane, to keep me smiling, to keep me focused on the prize. The prize is just simple—it is staying alive. It is staying NED as much as possible. It is being cured or whatever is called "cured" for this disease.

It means I have worked hard to change my whole body, what I eat, when I eat and what I do on a daily basis. See, most everyone has "cancer" in their body in the sense that they have an errant cell that wants to do bad things but for the bulk of the population, this errant cell is killed immediately and cannot reproduce. In the words of my nutritionist, Dr. Napoli, for cancer to happen it has to be a "perfect storm." The cell has to be able to do it's bad work and thrive inside to create the tumor and ultimately spread around.

For me, I was diagnosed after a mammogram showed slight calcification in the duct which was

microscopic and not able to be biopsied; it also had 98 percent chance of staying benign. A few months later, I had “advanced stage” breast cancer with a tumor of 5.6cm and 5/25 lymph nodes positive for cancer. This means there is always the chance that the cancer moved and got someplace else, and it also means that whatever is wrong with my body has to be corrected and/or fixed for the just-in-cases of cancer.

See, no one is ever truly “cured” of cancer. What it starts in your body, it can always come back. My nutritionist told me about a conference he attended where it was said that “85 percent of cancer patients do not change anything after they are done with treatment.” If this stat is true (and you know what they say about statistics…) that means I am one of the 15 percent that got myself totally upside down after cancer.

As I have written about a lot on this blog, I read the Anticancer book, and that started the seeds of what would ultimately become a total life transformation. See, I was never “obese” but I was up 30, 40 or more pounds from what I had weighed in my “youth,” but you see, as a woman who has been pregnant and has children, you just do not think that weight is possible. I looked in the mirror and saw, yes, a curvier version of me, but in no way did I really see me. I saw a woman who still wore a size medium and just had some extra weight I mean didn’t we all? I am still friends with girls from high school and college and other friends who all say the same thing: We just are not the same body types we were when younger.

Well, then I got cancer and realized there is a big link between excess body weight, hormones and cancer and all that jazz. So I did something I never thought possible and would have smacked you if you suggested it in the past. I weigh 137 pounds, which is what I weighed in high school. It is insane. It is also something very different because in high school, I ate donuts and crap and did not exercise and that was my weight. Now, ha, I have to forgo sugar, exercise daily and fill up on fruits and veggies instead of chips and popcorn.

I am telling you all of this because when I saw my surgeon’s office this December for my six-month follow up, everyone lost their collective minds and told me I was amazing and that I did the best thing I ever could have done for my health. I am not sure if anyone other than the alternative medicine doctor I wrote about ever told me that unequivocally that weight was so dangerous, or if I was told I did not register it.

See, I will do whatever I have to do to keep my body inhospitable to cancer, but I will not fall for fads or other crazy things. I am focused on research and proven methods to improve my body and its reaction to rogue cells. To do this, I am working with my nutritionist as well as my doctors at Sloan to balance all of the pieces of health. I no longer eat to just eat. I eat to fuel my body. To help the fight. I do not take a multivitamins, I take some supplements that are proven to help my immune system do what it needs to do. I do not let stress, worry and fear into myself (as much as I can not let it, I force it to not be there) and I also exercise and move every day.

There are no guarantees, however, that any of this will work, as a third of cancer patients regardless of initial staging become metastatic, but I will continue to do it anyway because it

cannot hurt.

What do you do to help keep your fears of cancer returning away? What do you do to try to not get progression of your disease? How do you keep your body as healthy as possible?

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