What the Hair?!

When I looked in the mirror this time, I still saw a stranger.

June 23, 2019 By Megan-Claire Chase

I've been on cloud nine since my mother gifted me an early birthday present (b-day is July 3rd) of getting my hair blown straight 2x per month for a year. I've hated and still don't understand the chemo curls. Then it hit me as I stared at my reflection this morning after washing my hair and seeing the curls form again. I no longer understand my hair curly OR straight! WTF?!

I know the chemo curls look darling and such. To me, it's a constant reminder of how unnatural they are and what they represent — the 4 AC and 12 Taxol that nearly killed me. I suffered extremely painful side effects during that hellish five months. Fellow warriors kept telling me the chemo curls were temporary because they had them and then went away. I'm three years post-cancer. Why are they still here? Are mine truly permanent?

I used to have super thick straight hair pre-cancer. It was almost to my shoulders. I could do so much with it — French braid, French twist, ballerina bun, pigtails, ponytails and the list goes on and on.

During that first week of my hair blown straight and seeing the length, I could not stop beaming! I had stopped flinching when I saw my reflection. I recognized this straight hair. I couldn't believe those tight curls were this long straight.

It is this second week when I realized this straight hair is completely different, too. It's so much thinner than before. I'm rusty at using my flat iron and products to keep it smooth. The sides are still short. How do I style it, so I don't look old?

I purposely haven't worn a fascinator in my hair for two weeks, which has been my trademark with the curly hair. I've just worn some snazzy headbands, barrettes and combs. I wanted to see how different I looked without them.

I wanted to feel like ME again.

I wanted to look like ME again.

I can't even believe I'm saying this but…I STILL don't recognize ME. I thought wearing my hair straight again would feel natural and complete. My hands can barely hold the flat iron because of the neuropathy. I couldn't even remember how to braid a few strands. This straight hair is different

too.

I will never understand those warriors who say hair doesn't matter. They completely invalidate the emotional toll losing hair creates and when it grows back entirely different from what we once knew. It DOES matter.

As I washed my hair this morning, it was strange to feel the curls take hold as the water flowed through it. I went in with straight hair and came out with those chemo curls. When I looked in the mirror this time, I still saw a stranger.

Now I fully see that I will NEVER physically look how I did pre-cancer. I'm not the same externally. My weight is up again. My face is fuller. My thick eyebrows are gone and must be drawn. I deal with chronic dermatitis on my eyelids. The corners of my mouth are often dry and cracked. I still have dark circles under my eyes. My lashes aren't as long as they once were.

That's a harsh dose of reality I wasn't prepared to swallow this morning.

Until next time,

Warrior Megsie

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