

THERE IS LIFE THROUGH AND AFTER CANCER

I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 39, however, I am so happy to say that I am a SURVIVOR and to be able to share my story with others. Thank goodness I was having regular mammograms beginning at the age of 30, as they spotted the lump during my yearly routine mammogram. I must say at this point, it is very important that women schedule and have their mammograms yearly, as if I had not had mine, I would not have known that I had cancer. Early detection is key and my lump was so small, that I could not even feel it, right up until the day that I had surgery.

In September 2008, I started experiencing panic and anxiety attacks, which I sought counseling for. I was asked during counseling whether I had gotten a health checkup lately. As I knew that my yearly physical was due shortly, I decided to wait until I went to the doctor. In December 2008, during my routine mammogram they saw a suspicious spot which was diagnosed as cancer. Due to my age and family history I was tested for the cancer gene, which came back positive. Based on these results and consultations with my doctors at Lahey Clinic, we decided that it would be best to schedule a bilateral mastectomy with immediate reconstruction and oophorectomy. In addition, I had to have chemotherapy.

To hear this news and to know that I would be losing my breasts was very horrible for me, but I did understand that it was necessary. The doctors told me from the onset to remain positive, this would be key to help get through everything. All surgeries went very well and being positive definitely helped. There were days that weren't so good, but I just took one day at a time. Watching my body change so much through this process was the hardest part for me, not actually dealing with the cancer. After the mastectomy, I felt ugly for a time, but during the reconstruction I was able to start feeling much better about myself. Then it was time for chemo. My hairdresser suggested that I cut my hair to prepare for this. This was a blow for me, even though I knew it was going to happen. I had long, thick, healthy hair and it was my pride and glory, it was me. I loved my long hair and did not want to lose it. But guess what, I love it even more now, short and no more perms to deal with. I would have never cut my hair like this, but going through this process helped me to try something different.

The past year and a half was filled with many feelings including happy, sad, heartbroken, overwhelmed and so much more. I have learned through this that I must live life for today and start enjoying all that it has to offer. I am going to stop stressing over things that I cannot change and just live life to the fullest. Today, I love me.

Cancer picked the wrong diva...I beat cancer and I'm still fabulous.