

As I sit here and write this letter, I try to remember how it all began. Last summer, as I was preparing for the Beast on The Bay (which was on my bucket list), I felt a lump on my right breast. Knowing that I had a doctor's appointment and my annual mammogram the next month, I thought nothing of it. It wasn't until a few weeks later after my appointment that I received a phone call telling me that I needed to come back for another mammogram and sonogram. I didn't think much of it because they scheduled it about 3 weeks later. (If it was serious they would have made my appointment sooner wouldn't they?) It was at that appointment that the radiologist gave me some information about breast cancer. They didn't tell me at that point that I had cancer but gave me the information about it. It was then that I thought I might have breast cancer.

Not knowing what to think I knew that it was such a bad time to think about it with the Beast on the Bay coming up in a few weeks and a week after that a 50 mile bike ride. I had an appointment a week after the 2nd mammogram to have a biopsy. The radiologist said at that point that there was a possibility of breast cancer but they would finalize the results and get back to me. I got the phone call a couple of weeks later that I had invasive ductal carcinoma. What a shock since I have no breast cancer in my family. I thought to myself, "why me"? I proceeded to have more biopsies and tests done. I ended up, at that time, preparing myself for both the Beast on the Bay and the diagnosis of breast cancer. I did not let this get in my way. I was trying to stay focused on getting ready; I did not want to think about it. I had my consultation with my breast surgeon and asked him if it was OK for me to compete in the Beast on the Bay. He said, "Go right ahead, I am not operating on your legs". That was a sign...NO Excuses I had to do it.

I proceeded to do my run/obstacle course on Saturday and on that following Tuesday I had my double mastectomy. The recovering wasn't easy, but I got through it with the support of my husband, family and friends. I tried to stay positive thru the process but thought in reality, I can't do anything about it. A year later, I look back on it and I would have not done it any other way.

I did do the race again this year...NO excuses. Maybe not as fast, but I finished. I thought, "Wow. I have been through a lot in a year". I learned to take things one day at a time and be thankful for what I have. It wasn't until after my procedures I met up with the group of girls from Linked By Pink. I am so grateful to be part of this group of strong women who can so relate to my experience.

~Renee Dommermuth  
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