

June 24th, 2014. I am healthy and active.

June 27th, 2014. I am diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 27. What seemed to be a harmless lump in my left breast ends up being a cancerous tumor that forever changed my life, and the lives of those that love me.

June 28th, 2014. My husband, Craig, and I start to muddle through cyclone of tests and doctors' appointments and medical language that is the steep learning curve into the "world of cancer". We cry. We fear the worst. We hope for the best. We are fortunate to have a community of family and friends that jumped in the shark-infested water with us to help keep us afloat. There are so many decisions in the beginning. Single vs. double mastectomy? I elect to have a double mastectomy for my own peace of mind. That decision is an incredibly personal one that each woman makes for herself, if given the choice. Genetic testing? I choose to be tested and find out that I do not carry the BRCA-1 or BRCA-2 genes. Reconstruction now vs. later vs. never? I chose to do it at the same time as the mastectomy.

August 6th, 2014. I go to a Linked by Pink meeting for the first time and I am reminded that I am not alone. They speak the language of cancer and ask all the right questions. I feel supported.

August 22nd, 2014. I have a double mastectomy with reconstruction and the doctor tells us that the cancer is worse than we thought. It is invasive and in my lymph nodes. Chemotherapy is now necessary. Thus, we are thrust back into the cyclone of tests and appointments and so many decisions to be made. I am advised to have 16 rounds of chemotherapy plus radiation plus targeted therapy plus hormone therapy. They are going to throw everything possible at this cancer.

August 29th, 2014. We decide to preserve my fertility. This is a unique concern for young women with breast cancer since chemotherapy has a high chance of causing infertility. Craig and I really want to have children one day, so it is important for us to talk with a fertility doctor as soon as possible and figure out our options before I start chemotherapy. My sister finds us a foundation in Cleveland that will pay \$12,000 for the entire fertility process of egg harvesting because I am a cancer patient. We cry with relief and gratitude.

September 18th, 2014. I start the first of 16 rounds of chemo. The experience of chemo is individual for each woman. It's not usually a cake-walk, but some women think, "Wow, this is not that bad." Let me just say that I never, not once, ever said that. It was horrible. I was sicker and weaker than I ever thought possible. This treatment, that was supposedly saving my life, put me in this dark tunnel that I could not see the end of. It messed with my senses, my sense of self, and my emotions. By the grace of God and a handful of my loved ones, I made it through. In the darkness, Linked by Pink was there to support me. They helped to pay for medical bills, visited me after surgery, celebrated each milestone, and had tea with me on my worst days.

February 6th, 2015. My last day of chemo. It will forever be one of the best days of my life. Since that day every other treatment has seemed manageable, whether that be radiation, hormone-blocking pills, or targeted IV therapy. For me, chemo was my low, and every day since has been a relief. We threw a party that day.

August 5th, 2015. Tonight I will go to a Linked by Pink meeting and surround myself with ladies that have been through a similar journey. These days I live with a sense of gratitude that I cannot explain. I savor normal work days, sunny summer skies, and the strength of my body that can run again. I hold my husband, my family, and my friends close by. Today I feel healthy and alive.

Katie Robb Sewall