

It was time for my bi-yearly mammogram/sonogram. It was also 2 weeks away from our Disney Vacation. I knew the lumps had changed but I figured I would deal with it after we came back. Once we returned I had my follow up appointment. Sure enough the lump was no longer a bunch of cysts. The cancer was in ¾ of the pie sections which meant the breast was gonna have to go. The biopsy showed cancer in some of the lymph nodes too.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness and as it turned out, October 1, 2014 was my first chemotherapy session. After six trips to the chemo chair it was time for surgery. I think I just went through the motions. My blinders were up and I just did not look at what was happening. I followed all appointments and things were healing as they should. This is when I was told about Linked By Pink for the second, maybe even the third time. I finally went to a meeting. I felt odd and wondered if I might not have been emotionally ready for support meetings. I became a member of the online group they provide and followed the posts of the members online. I then decided to try going to one of their Get-Togethers. I have met some of the Strongest Women Ever.

When it came time for my radiation, these ladies told me all sorts of products to use when I needed them. You are given a waist length robe to bring with you to each appointment to feel warm and comfy. I decided instead to use one of my own, silk and lacy! I went for the sexy and confident strength. I did not feel as much as a patient but a warrior looking for a riot. LOL! In the radiation area of the cancer center there is a changing room. Inside the changing room there is a cork board filled with cards and well wishes from current and former patients. They are addressed to all cancer patients to provide support and some are from the Linked by Pink Ladies. It was actually nice to know I had met a few of these women and to know they also went through this. After 25 visits to radiation table my skin did mostly what everyone else's did.

I was looking forward to reconstruction and having my expander filled. I was excited for this to be over and getting back to something normal. My skin was healing nicely. In August I developed a staph infection. I was given antibiotics but I had to have the expander removed so that I could heal from the infection and the radiation cooking from the inside out.

This was one of the hardest things for me to deal with. It was like having my mastectomy for a second time. I am even in tears as I write this. When I posted about the surgery in our online group, the out pouring of well wishes and offers to come sit and visit were great in number. These ladies in pink knew I needed someone to talk to and just be there for me. They also knew I was dealing with A LOT of other family things too. I actually still owe a couple of them a coffee date, LOL!

I am currently still healing and waiting for reconstruction. I will say that I have learned to follow my instincts. If it feels wrong then you should find something that works for you. If you like your doctors then you will feel at ease about the healing process.

~ Michele Baumgratz
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