



## **LAUREN TEHRANI'S Breast Cancer Story**

2013 has been a mild year for me compared to the past few years. In 2010, my husband and I got married. In 2011, we welcomed a beautiful baby boy. In 2012, I was diagnosed with stage I triple negative breast cancer. I was 26 at the time of my diagnosis.

### ***My Story***

In January 2012, I was reading Giuliana and Bill Rancic's book and had been following Giuliana's breast cancer story. On a whim, I decided to do a self-exam and found something hard, jagged, and oddly shaped in my left breast.

The next day, I emailed my gynecologist about my discovery. Due to my age and no family history, she thought it might have been related to my menstrual cycle and told me to wait until February to see if it was still there after my next cycle.

I tried to carry on and push my lump out of my mind...but a week later, was in the doctor's office with my primary physician because I had gotten pinkeye from my son. I figured that since I was there, I might as well tell her about my lump.

After doing a breast exam, she referred me to a breast specialist who then had me get an ultrasound of my breast. Two ultrasounds, two mammograms, and a needle-biopsy later, I was on way home to wait the 3-5 business days to get my results. I didn't have to wait long. The next day at 5pm, my phone rang. I had cancer.

Those three words made my world come to a screeching halt and the uncertainty of what lay ahead was frightening.

Because my cancer was triple negative, my treatment plan was simple: surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. Due to my tumor's size, I had the option of choosing between a lumpectomy and a mastectomy. I cannot even tell you how many times I changed my mind leading up to my surgery. Since the recurrence percentages were fairly close and I felt as though I did not have enough information at the time about my cancer, I opted for a lumpectomy. It was a difficult decision but it is one that I stand by. My tumor was removed on February 21, 2012 with clear margins and zero lymph nodes involved. I could not have been more thrilled.

Even though my surgery results were great, I still needed to undergo chemotherapy and radiation. I was extremely nervous about chemotherapy and the thought of losing my hair terrified me. Looking back though, I never felt more beautiful than I did when I was bald (well almost, I had some very stubborn little hairs).

Once I completed my chemotherapy, I had to undergo six weeks of daily radiation. I struggled with radiation. I have fair skin and burned fairly early into my treatment. Each day I would text my parents "this number of treatments down, this



many to go". It was a grueling six weeks that felt like they would never end. But, on October 10, 2012...I had completed my last treatment. I was free to move on with my life.

### ***My Village of Support***

A cancer diagnosis is not only tough on the individual diagnosed, but on family and friends as well. I can honestly say that I would not have been able to get through all of my treatments while trying to maintain a positive attitude had it not been for my support system. My husband took over in taking care of our one-year-old as well as taking me to countless emergency room trips. My mom flew to Sacramento the evening I was diagnosed and along with my dad, alternated chemo appointments so I would not be alone. My dad, shaved his head because "if his little girl was going to be bald, then so was he". My family...drove from Southern California to Sacramento and filled an entire waiting room so I would know that I was not alone on the day of my surgery. My supervisor and co-workers were there when I received the initial phone call and made me feel at ease about being out from work so I could concentrate on getting better. My close friends cheered me on and were there for me every step of the way. My Alpha Chi Omega sisters put together a beautiful basket filled with love and well wishes. The list goes on and on.

### ***Rebuilding Me***

After I finished my last radiation treatment, my radiation oncologist referred me to the Breast Cancer Survivorship clinic as well as to Triumph Fitness. Through the survivorship clinic, I have learned a little bit more about my cancer diagnosis and ways to cut my chances of recurrence. One of those ways is exercise.

This past May, I was fortunate to be accepted into Triumph Fitness which is a nonprofit organization located in Sacramento. The program is for cancer survivors and helps to set an exercise foundation in order to rebuild strength and encourage healthy living. It is a wonderful program and has helped me to slowly regain my energy that was lost through treatment.

### ***Moving on with Life***

I am happy to say that I have been cancer-free for a year and a half. I continue to make exercise a part of my daily well-being and am in the process of training for the Tinker Bell Half Marathon in January 2014. My son continues to serve as my main motivation to continue to work on my health so that I will be around to watch him grow up.

If there is one thing that can be learned from story it is that contrary to the stereotype, breast cancer can happen at any age and to anyone. I think we need to



stop saying that it is rare in younger women and start encouraging more self-exams and being our own personal advocates.

***“Early detection leads to survival”***

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