



Ciara, 51 Lowell, MI

Stage 1 Breast Cancer

Upon my reflection on my breast cancer journey, I can speak to a pivotal moment soon after my diagnosis. This self-guided decision ultimately led me on a path of positivity from the day I chose to become a student of the science around breast cancer. This decision became a major turning point for me as I navigated my situation without having any prior experience of breast cancer. I would go on to embrace the world of advocacy.

Looking back, I can pinpoint the time I felt most vulnerably challenged through my diagnosis with the mental toll I faced during the many decisions between surgery and treatment options. Hours spent mulling over facts; I can still remember how difficult it was, both mentally and physically, to make these drastic, bodyaltering, permanent changes. I experienced many restless days and sleepless nights sorting out logic from instinct while honoring what I knew I could ultimately live with.

My husband was very supportive of all my decisions, and as for our 12-year-old son, I sheltered him away from a lot of the tricky conversations around breast cancer, hoping to spare him further worry.

Deep down, I felt I had to be strong enough to make these solo choices. This got lonely at times; while

my husband tried to keep up, he wasn't comfortable offering me medical opinions, and after losing his sister to pancreatic cancer just a year prior, he was more afraid and shocked for me.

I would love my past self to know just how this diagnosis would actually strengthen me and that I am in awe of my own bravery. I would show myself the depths of how resourceful I can be at the scariest time in my life and how I would carve a unique path in patient advocacy that now benefits so many globally.

Daily gratitude has become a comfort and joy, as I choose to see the silver linings and get giddy over simple living.

I have shown myself that there is power in education and that my voice can be heard.

Learning about this disease is empowering and freeing.

A note to my past self is to breathe... just breathe and take the path of self-discovery passage through breast cancer.

Trust your guiding instincts and be brave to advocate for yourself and others.

Much love,
Ciara