

beauty.
pearls for
chemo
girls™

Living Pearls | 2010



Living Pearls

When we began writing *Beauty Pearls* for Chemo Girls back in 2008, we approached our project with the vision of giving women diagnosed with cancer a guide for coping, their friends and supporters a gift that could truly make a helpful difference, and everyone living through this experience an online community offering solace, strength and inspiration.

It's been more than a year since the book was published. During these past months, at events in hospitals and wellness centers, libraries and schools, we've met so many people who epitomize the spirit and courage we sought to tap into with our work: the women warriors on the front lines of the cancer, their families, their friends and their caregivers.

We've held makeover events, treating chemo girls to a night of fun and beauty to remind them that having cancer doesn't need define who they are. We've participated in information seminars, sharing the expert advice in our book with women who need it. We've spoken at fundraisers to help raise awareness of the needs of cancer patients, and over and over again have heard deeply touching stories of strength and courage.

Some were so beautifully told we invited the speaker to share their experience on our website's blog. These posts, along with our own recollections of this time, are what we call our *Living Pearls*; stories that resonate with the essential bravery and courage every chemo girl puts out into the world, every single day.

These are personal memories of heartache and triumph, simple pleasures and universal truths. They are from the heart of the very people we envisioned helping. As with so many other experiences surrounding our book, we have been given a gift with every post, and it is our pleasure and honor to share them all with you.

Enjoy,

Marybeth and Debbie

Welcome to Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls

August 24, 2009

Three years ago, Debbie and I met for breakfast on Manhattan's Upper East Side to talk in detail about an idea I had for a book. Having recently finished six months of chemo for bilateral breast cancer, I had not been able to find, either in bookstores or online, a single source for all the information I sought.

I had figured some woman would already have collected the wisdom a chemo girl would naturally seek when dealing with the sometimes-devastating side effects of treatment. But back then, such a book hadn't yet been written. So I decided that as soon as I was recovered from treatment, I would do the work myself.

Debbie immediately understood how important this project would be. Her cousin, and one of her college roommates, was fighting cancer. They needed the same guidance I had sought – and couldn't find.

Together, we brainstormed what needed to be accomplished, and spent the next three years interviewing experts in wig care, skin care, body care, women's issues, alternative medicine, nutrition, fashion and spirituality.

Today, we're very proud to welcome you to Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls – the first-ever community dedicated to women who want to look and feel their best while they deal with the side effects of cancer treatment.

We believe that every woman dealing with cancer deserves to look and feel as close to normal as her energy and her spirit will allow. We are honored to be able to offer this space for comfort, solace, camaraderie and advice to our sisters in need – and all of their family, friends and supporters.

Thank you for joining us.

Marybeth Maida and Debbie Kiederer

The Power of You

September 3, 2009

I was on the phone with a colleague recently, a lawyer and activist who throughout her life has been a mover, a shaker – and always in control.

There was something about her voice that day, a hesitancy that I couldn't ignore. So I asked if she was ok, and she nervously told me a health issue was causing her some alarm. In that moment, I knew it was cancer.

So after we finished our business discussion, I took a breath and said, "You know, I'm a survivor." Instantly, the floodgates opened. She told me of the lump she'd found in her breast and of the confusion and fear taking over her once perfectly ordered world.

I listened to her story, gave her some insight into my own cancer battle, and pointed her to our website. I told her to look around, and to reach out if she felt the need. A few weeks later, she emailed me to let me know what a difference *Beauty Pearls* had already made in her life. Reading our posts, she felt at home among friends. Perusing the excerpts, she began to understand that this journey, scary as it might be, would end, and that she would be all right.

What she really appreciated was the practical advice we provided. Inspiration was fine, she wrote, but information was what she needed – and after realizing that taking care of her face and body would help give her back some of the power she felt slipping away, she went to a department store, bought some new makeup and booked herself a facial. These small steps may not seem life altering, but the very act of taking control of her situation, and seeking out ways to alleviate some of the side effects of treatment, made her realize that while cancer may be *in* her life, it doesn't *own* her life.

She's in charge – and so are you, because the greatest asset you have – your personal power – can never be taken away.

It belongs, completely and exclusively to you.

Borders, Book Discussion & Signing

September 3, 2009

Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls celebrated its September 1st publication date with a sold out reading/discussion at the Columbus Circle Borders across from Central Park in New York City.

The evening began at Borders and was followed by a reception at the Trump International penthouse, where a Julliard violinist serenaded the authors and their guests.

Presented by The Beauty Foundation for Women's Cancer Care and hosted by Foundation Vice President Krista Olsen-Dibsie, the reception garnered donations to help women undergoing cancer treatment.

All sales at the reception directly benefiting the Beauty Foundation.



Debbie Kiederer and Marybeth Maida are ready for the September 12, Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in Los Angeles

September 10, 2009



To support the effort to help women with cancer, we have accepted the challenge and are ready for the September 12-13, Avon Walk for Breast Cancer in Los Angeles.

The money raised for the walk will help to support medical research into the possible causes of and cure for breast cancer, education and early detection programs, and clinical care and support services for women with breast cancer in communities across the country.

There is a special focus on helping medically underserved women, the poor, minorities, the elderly, or those with inadequate health insurance. And much of the money granted by the Foundation goes back to the communities where it was raised, supporting everything from local grassroots programs to national organizations.

Avon Walk – We did it!

September 14, 2009

Debbie and Marybeth joined over 2,200 other supporters of women facing cancer by participating in the Long Beach California Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, September 12 & 13. We walked, talked, laughed and learned how vital each and every one of us is in the fight against this terrible disease. Our fund raising totaled more than \$5,000 and contributed to the astonishing \$4.6 million raised just this one weekend. The wonderful community spirit shone from every street corner, where thousands of well wishers, including kids, pets, and many chemo patients, rallied us as we made our way through the streets of Southern California, on a journey that we hope will one day lead us to a cure.



Chemo-grams

September 17, 2009

Throughout my treatment, I had two aunts who never failed to send me a card every week or so to let me know that though they were thinking of me, and pulling for me to make it through.

I've never forgotten how much it meant to receive those notes. While talking on the phone or writing emails about my situation exhausted me, finding a small envelope of hope mixed in with the bills and insurance breakdowns was such an energy booster. No matter what I felt like before the mail came, those cards never failed to elevate my mood – and my day.

Now that the book is out and we're meeting people at signings and events, one of the most common questions Debbie and I receive is how a person can help when a friend or loved one becomes ill. And our advice is simple and always the same: no matter what you do – do something.

This doesn't mean going on constant visits, making daily calls or sending elaborate gifts. Small helpful actions: bringing her kids home from the school bus, or offering to pick up a prescription if she's too tired to get out can mean so much – even if the help is declined. No one wants to feel isolated or forgotten. By extending the hand of friendship to a woman who is sick and perhaps feeling too embarrassed to ask for help that she is not alone.

At our first reading, a gentleman came up to the signing table and sheepishly admitted that he'd been so shocked by the news of a co-worker's diagnosis, he'd become paralyzed with fear of doing the wrong thing, and so had not yet done anything at all. Listening to this story of my two aunts made him realize that simple actions really could make a difference – and that there were plenty of easy ways he could let his colleague know the office was rooting for her success.

So in addition to his copy of Beauty Pearls, he bought a few cards and left the store with a smile. Armed with the knowledge that he could make a difference, he set off to empower his co-worker, and in the process managed to empower himself.

The Voice of Confidence

September 25, 2009

When I was growing up, I had an uncle who used to deliberately use made-up words when talking to me. If I pretended to understand, he'd ask me what the nonsense word meant. When I admitted I didn't know, he reminded me that the only silly question is the one not asked.

This lesson was hugely beneficial to me when faced with the thousand and one decisions that had to be made when cancer entered my life. As a journalist, it was second nature for me to ask questions, but faced with the enormity of what I was dealing with, I sometimes found myself tongue tied, unable to process, let alone question, all the things I was being told needed to happen.

Afraid and overwhelmed, it would have been easy to just accept what doctors said must be done. But even in the whirl of confusion following my diagnosis, I never let myself lose site of the fact that when it came to my body, the voice I had to heed was my own. So while I did my best to be a "good patient", I made it my business to understand what my options were in surgery and treatment. I took copious research notes and didn't hesitate to quiz my medical team about what I learned. I brought my husband or a trusted friend to all appointments so they could remember what I might miss. I never forgot that the only silly question was the one I didn't ask.

I didn't do this because I didn't trust my caregivers. I did it because this was my body – my life – being discussed, and the voice I had to trust most was my own.

It's easy to be intimidated by cancer. It's natural to want to implicitly trust in those we've hired to make us well. But books, support groups, the internet and community sites such as this exist to help shine the light on the dark corners of cancer treatment. Don't forget that, by understanding what you are facing, and not allowing embarrassment, fear or intimidation get the better of you, you will be able to make the decisions that are best for you.

And that's the best kind of patient anyone can hope to be.

Being a Team Player

Written by Dr. Torpey on October 2, 2009

No matter what specialty a doctor practices, when treating a cancer patient, every caregiver must be on the same team.

I'm an orthopedic surgeon. Imagine a woman coming to me complaining of pain in her arm. Examining her, listening to the symptoms she presents, and being unaware of the fact that she is undergoing chemotherapy, I may approach her condition as an isolated event and recommend physical therapy. But if she is wise enough to inform me that she's also fighting a malignancy, the way I process her information changes significantly. Open communication between you and your medical team regarding chemotherapy treatment is crucial if you are to receive optimal care. In the scenario I just described, upon learning she's dealing with cancer I would immediately send this patient for x-rays and/or an MRI scan to ensure the disease has not spread. Once metastasis has been ruled out, an appropriate course of treatment can be implemented in partnership with her oncology team.

The pain she's experiencing may be a side effect of one of her anti-cancer medications. Conferring with her oncologist, we may be able to identify ways to reduce or eliminate that discomfort. Chemo may also reveal an underlying condition that the patient never before noticed prior to treatment. For instance, a borderline diabetic may manifest full-blown symptoms after chemo begins. An aching arm may inspire carrying groceries on only one side, causing the lower back to hurt. Examining that pain, we may discover a disc problem, and treat it accordingly.

Some of the ordinary aches and pains of life become magnified during cancer treatment. While it's likely that they are not related to this disease, it's vitally important to tell any doctor you visit that you are under an oncologist's care, and make sure that all of your caregivers are working together.

As doctors, our goal is to lead our patients to health while providing them with comfort and relief from the symptoms affecting their quality of life. While we may have a variety of answers to offer for a particular situation, we depend on our patients to help us formulate the right questions.

Be completely upfront and clear about what you are feeling and what you are facing. You'll empower yourself and your doctors to achieve the best results possible – and make yours a winning team!

About Dr. Torpey:

Dr. Torpey was raised in Maryland and graduated Magna Cum Laude from Wake Forest University. He received his M.D. from Georgetown University School of Medicine in

Washington, DC. He completed five years of orthopedic surgery training including clinical training at Monmouth Medical Center, UMDNJ-Camden, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Mount Sinai Medical Center. Dr. Torpey then went on to complete a fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Torpey has special interest in sports-related injuries, upper extremity, total joint replacements and shoulder and knee reconstructive surgeries.

He serves as one of the orthopedic team physicians for Monmouth University, Georgian Court University and many local public and private high schools. He belongs to many medical societies including the American College of Surgeons and the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery. He also serves as a Clinical and Academic Instructor of Orthopedics at Monmouth Medical Center.

A Place for You

October 2, 2009

Cancer is a scary word, but as anyone who has experienced the disease knows, it's also somewhat generic. Ovarian cancer is not the same as cervical. Lung cancer is different from melanoma. Treatments and prognosis and trials and side effects are all dependent on the type of malignancy each patient has.

From our first conversations about how to make *Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls* a comprehensive guide for women facing cancer, Debbie and I were united in our commitment that this website provide a place where women could connect, not only in the broad sense of diagnosis, but in the particular details of each separate affliction. While my personal story focused on the cancer in my breasts, I know very well that throat or stomach cancer patients will have a narrative very different from my own. Our goal has always been to ensure that the vast community of chemo girls, all doing their best to make it through each day, has a platform to connect with those whose story is most relevant to their own.

Our Forum pages are now up and running. We invite each and every visitor to go to locate their cancer and then post questions, share stories, relate anecdotes and contribute their own chemo survival tips. While our book features world renowned expert advice, we are certain that the ladies on the front lines of illness will also have a trick or two about coping and it's these insights we hope you'll share.

The chemo community is a fluid place. Women come in at the beginning of treatment, and leave – hopefully forever – once their last infusion is received. While we hope and pray that your time in this space is short, we encourage each of you to reach out to

women who may not yet have any idea cancer is about to strike, and leave your own pearls of wisdom on these boards for her to utilize.

Empowerment, encouragement and enlightenment are the gifts we can use to uplift anyone whose life journey includes chemotherapy. By being generous with your knowledge and open with your spirit, you'll do something beautiful for women you may never know, but who will always appreciate the generosity and support they find here, in the community we can call our own.

A Pocket Guide to Getting Through

Written by Dr. Patricia Devine on October 6, 2009

As a physician, when I read literature, I want to know I'm hearing from experts – people who have reached the top of their fields and whose opinions and advice will be valuable to me.

As a cancer survivor, I remember wanting to understand what treatment was going to be like, yet at the same time fearing that information, though I know how empowering knowledge can be.

There is so much cancer information available online. Some of it is vetted. Some of it is not. When dealing with the overwhelming nature of a malignancy in my body, I did not have the time or inclination to search through hundreds of websites that may or may not have been vetted to find solutions to the various effects chemo was inflicting on my body, my family, my world.

That's why, when I first read *Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls*, I was struck by how perfect a book it would have been for me during my chemotherapy. It's filled with positive, encouraging, practical and well-organized information delivered by people who are highly respected in their fields. Now, as I suggest this guide to patients or pass it along to fellow doctors, I'm struck by how happy it makes all of us to have this resource to give.

I deeply appreciate the time and attention the authors' have paid to the serious matters surrounding treatment, such as assembling a medical team and maintaining emotional balance during the ups and downs of each day. As a gynecologist, I was particularly gratified to see a frank discussion of sexuality and the so-called "female issues," which can be very difficult for a woman to discuss with anyone, even her doctor.

Seeking to give hope and courage to those who need it most, Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls uplifts and empowers women to be the best they can be during one of life's toughest challenges.

I consider it a Pocket Guide to Getting Through – and encourage all those who are newly diagnosed to enjoy the overwhelming spirit of encouragement it presents on every uplifting page.

Free Chapter – Celebrating Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October 11, 2009

As a way to say thank you for visiting our site, and in honor of the 25th anniversary of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we're pleased to offer you at no charge "A Girl Thing" – one of the many chapters we've assembled in the hopes of making your chemo journey an easier path to travel.

When Debbie and I began to envision the online community we would build around our book, we believed that one of the most important features we could offer would be the opportunity to buy a chapter, or the whole book, as a download.

We both knew that while the book itself would make a great gift, for many chemo girls, the entire process of getting dressed, going to the store and making a purchase might be overwhelming. While receiving our book from a treasured supporter would be a wonderful present, we also wanted to make sure our sisters in need had a way to get the information we'd collected in a way that satisfied their understandable need for privacy and confidentiality.

You may be a woman whose chemo will not induce hair loss, and will never need to know the ins and outs of buying a wig – yet deeply wish to understand how to assemble a medical team or nourish your body. Conversely, those who are facing total hair loss may care only about how to manage being bald.

Whatever your particular needs are, we hope you'll consider purchasing the entire book or the chapters that speak to your particular concerns via our e-book offering. Every purchase will provide a donation to one of the charities we've listed on the purchase page, and provide you with the information and inspiration you seek.

We wish you every blessing and hope you enjoy and make use of the wonderful expert advice our amazing contributors have provided.

The Fountain Of Age

October 16, 2009

Birthdays used to freak me out.

I can remember turning 25 and thinking the only milestones left were the awful ones – ‘dirty thirty’ ... forty... old age...

Then cancer came calling and all of a sudden old age became a gift I could only hope to receive. My son was two when I found my tumors, and though I had him at the age of 41, it never occurred to me I might not live to see him grow into a man. I had taken my health as a given, and fully expected my body to behave in a way that guaranteed all my hopes and dreams would come true.

In the year that followed my diagnosis, I remained focused on the only prize that mattered to me: becoming well. I stopped paying attention to the extraneous issues of life. I didn't really think beyond the day my treatment would end. Once that milestone passed, I concentrated on reclaiming the normalcy I'd missed, the day in and day out of my world.

That year, when my birthday dawned, instead of a sense of angst, I felt such an enormous swell of accomplishment rise up inside me. I was another year older. How many people who faced cancer could say that? Through luck, medicine and incredible support, I was growing older, and watching my son do the same. With my husband beside me, our lives were rolling on, our child was maturing, and we were setting goals for the years to come.

So many people believe that the best years of our lives happen when we're young. There is certainly much to be made of the wonder and excitement of becoming an adult, and the incredible first-time experiences becoming a grown up can bring.

But one of the key reasons I consider my cancer experience a blessing is that I now understand how fleeting and fragile each moment is. I know that one day the sun will rise and I won't be here to see it, but between that time and now, there is so much to relish, so much to embrace and enjoy. It's not so much "big" events like births and weddings that resonate; it's the sandy, salty smell of the beach on an autumn day, or seeing my almost eight-year-old boy strut out the door in football pads, off to a mighty mites game.

It's waking up and being 49 and thinking man, I can't wait till I'm 60! And smiling at all the wonder and joy I hope to experience between now and then.

Insurance Mandates for Breast Cancer Screening

October 25, 2009

Because it's October, much of the public conversation around cancer concentrates on the breast. While Debbie and I know that the "c" word is terrifying no matter where in the body it's found, we also celebrate the focus so many have placed on Breast Cancer, which is one of the most prevalent forms of this dread disease to strike women. In this clip, 12 breast cancer survivors, including me, talk one-on-one with NJ Governor Jon Corzine about the importance of mandating insurance companies offering coverage in the Garden State to cover mammograms.

This issue has become a hotbed of opinion in many states, as the health care reform debate moves from the television airwaves to the US Senate floor. What do you think about insurance mandates for breast cancer screening? Should they be encouraged, enforced or abandoned? What about other screening methods for cancer — should these be a basic part of any policy written for women? Please weigh in on this important and very timely issue!

“A Place Where Cancer Is the Norm” – The New York Times

October 25, 2009

Cancer is a world no one volunteers to enter; yet there are places where the disease and all its treatments are considered completely normal. In the October 25, 2009 edition of the NY Times Magazine, a feature on M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas delivers an in-depth look at how innovative treatments and clinical trials make visiting the top cancer centers in the country so compelling for people facing rare or advanced stage malignancies.

Did you feel your choice of hospital and doctors for your cancer treatment was a good one or do the big cancer centers really deliver a more positive outcome than a local doctor, hospital or cancer center? Talking about assembling your medical team can be a great way to share insight and advice with someone new to the world of cancer — how would you advise a friend or loved one to make sure they had the best chance for success?



Cancer Screenings

November 6, 2009

As questions regarding routine cancer screenings continue to be raised in the media, mammograms have taken center stage. While not perfect, they are believed to reduce the odds of breast cancer fatality by up to 24%; yet some doctors are now questioning whether or not yearly mammogram screening is necessary in women under 40.

As a woman without a single risk indicator, I was diagnosed with bilateral breast cancer at 43. I found my tumor with my fingers. An emergency mammogram revealed the lump was suspicious, and ultrasound and biopsy confirmed malignancy. Had I not gone for the screening, I am not sure how far my cancer would have spread before I was able to confirm its existence and have it surgically removed and treated via chemotherapy.

My personal story makes me a firm believer in cancer screenings. Reading this article, however, I'm not sure if I would be as strongly in favor of the procedures, had cancer not yet come into my life. What do you think about screenings? Do you ask the men in your life to go for prostate tests? Do you have mammograms and pap smears? What do you think of this latest conversation about preventative measures and what will you teach the girls in your life to do when it comes to these yearly tests?

Living with cancer? Yes you can!

November 10, 2009

Living with cancer? Yes you can! Read this beautiful piece about one of the NBA's greatest stars to understand how a leukemia diagnosis led Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to look inside his winner's soul and decide that not even cancer would get in the way of him being exactly who he is: athlete, writer, scholar, parent, friend — and now a messenger eager to share the news that as long as he follows doctor's orders and takes care of himself, "...You can continue to live a productive life without changing your lifestyle that much...."



Navigating Through Cancer

November 11, 2009

Many hospitals now employ patient navigators, dedicated nurses whose job is to help patients make sense of what they must do to effectively and successfully make their way through their diagnosis and treatment. Many of these health care professionals we have met during book presentations love that *Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls* offers a 'take home guide' for the many issues and decisions women facing cancer treatment must deal with. This article gives an overview of some of what the experts in our book discuss in great detail.

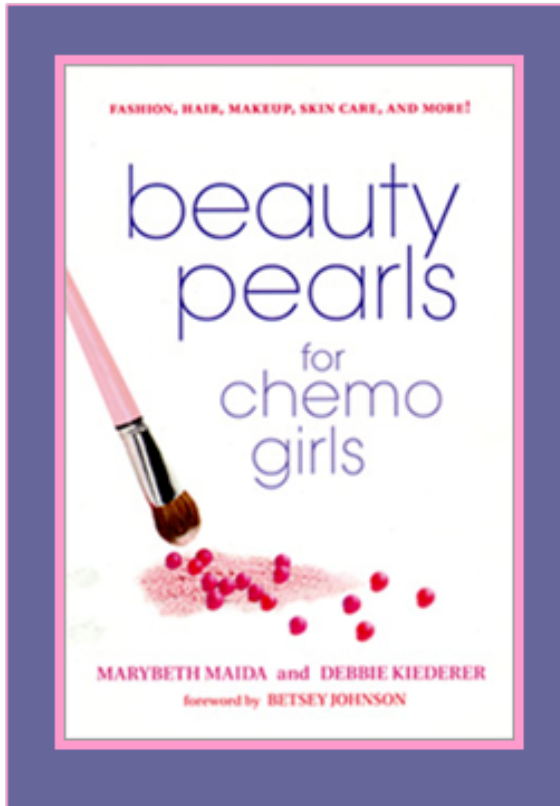


Great Article from our Event @ The Solomon Katz Breast Center

November 12, 2009

News – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Trish Feathers – 914.365.3597 or tfeathers@sshsw.org



Solomon Katz Breast Center Hosts Authors of "Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls"

Recently, Sound Shore Medical Center of Westchester's Solomon Katz Breast Center hosted authors of the book, "Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls", at a special Breast Cancer Awareness event

NEW ROCHELLE – November 6, 2009 – -

The Solomon Katz Breast Center was the site for the last in a series of Sound Shore Medical Center's Breast Cancer Awareness Month events. Debbie Kiederer and Marybeth Maida, authors of the newly published book, "Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls", were presenters at the October 28th offering. They shared information on how women can look and feel their best while dealing with the side effects of cancer treatment.

During Ms. Maida's bout with breast cancer, she was devastated with the loss of her eyebrows. When she endeavored to research information on what she could do to improve her appearance, Ms. Maida was unable to find any source that helped. Vowing to make beauty tips and feel better information readily available for others – who may follow in her footsteps, the idea for "Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls" was borne. With the help of Debbie Kiederer's retail cosmetics industry experience and the invaluable assistance from many breast cancer survivors, a wealth of helpful techniques are now available in the first-ever book devoted to the subject.

The authors, along with a fashion expert, shared information, offered demonstrations and gladly signed copies of their books. Among the many guests were chemotherapy patients, administrators and staff of Sound Shore Medical Center and the Solomon Katz Breast Center as well as oncology professionals from the area. During the wine and cheese reception, the presenters were given a long-stem pink rose and a free copy of the book was given to each guest.

For more information on the Solomon Katz Breast Center or to schedule a mammography screening, please call 914.365.4617. For physician referrals, call MDs-LINE (914.367.5463) or visit www.ssmc.org to discover more about Sound Shore Medical Center's Care. For Life. Services.

Hot Stuff

November 16, 2009



What could be more embarrassing than sitting in a conference room with a group of colleagues, delivering your professional expertise on any given subject, when out of nowhere your face suddenly begins turning red, your heart races and perspiration beginning to collect at your temples... this happened to me more than once during and after my cancer treatment, an unwelcome reality common to chemo girls dealing with the hormone suppressing chemotherapy — the hot flash.

While these moments of intense heat are usually associated with menopause, they are also a common side experience for chemo girls whose cancer treatment aims to radically reduce hormone production. You can find the reasons behind these flashes, and also check out some expert advice on how to reduce them, by reading Chapter 6/A Girl Thing in our book.

Learning to Live — Again!

November 19, 2009

Quick, name three things you've always wanted to do but haven't yet gotten to! Renting a villa in Tuscany for the summer, driving the Almagi coast with my husband and sitting in with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band have been long time goals I've yet to reach and — especially that last one — may remain forever outside my ability to achieve.

While dreaming and planning are part of what makes life so much fun, I have to say that so much of what I had thought was massively important for me to accomplish in life faded to insignificance once cancer entered my world.

Many of us don't really think about what we really want to do with the time we're given on this earth. Cancer, despite its horrifying potential, can often bring into focus the truly important dreams and wishes we hope to attain, while blending into soft grey fuzziness the many unimportant matters that once took up so much space in our brains.

Giving Thanks

November 25, 2009

Walking home from church one Sunday, my son ran ahead of my husband and me, kicking his way through the fallen leaves gathered along the sidewalk, eager to get home and see the opening NFL kick offs. Suddenly he came to an abrupt halt and began studying a tall vine spouting clusters of deep purple berries glistening in the late autumn sun.

They were gorgeous, and as we took a moment to admire this last burst of natural beauty before the trees fell into their winter sleep, I was struck once again by how lucky we are to be alive, and able to enjoy these moments of quiet wonder.

Since this is the season to reflect on the earth's many blessings, Debbie and I would like you to know how grateful we are for the amazing experiences we have enjoyed in since the release of our book.

The patients, survivors and supporters we've met at our signings, discussions, workshops and charity events have been truly inspirational for us. Their generosity of spirit, their strength, courage and determination has created an overwhelming sense of purpose for us. Leading conversations about a woman's chemo experience might have been awkward or difficult, yet at every stop along the way we have found ourselves

laughing with our audiences, sharing anecdotes and ideas and as a group creating a circle of friendship that resonates long after the evening has ended.

So while we give thanks for our lives and health, our families and friends, on this, the first Thanksgiving since our book was published, we also give thanks to the chemo girls and supporters who have shown us through your wonderful reviews and steadfast encouragement that our message and our mission really can make a difference in many people's lives.

We so appreciated this opportunity to contribute to the well being of women facing a very difficult time. We thank you for joining our community and send you our deepest, warmest and brightest wishes for a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Raise Your Hands!

December 1, 2009

With so many different ways to generate support for a particular cancer, it's always refreshing to see a new and fun example of creativity in the face of crisis. This video, produced by Emily Somers, aims to raise awareness for breast cancer, and proceeds from its use are targeted to fund free mammograms for women in her community. Take a look at these dancing fingers, so pretty in pink, and then consider how you might raise your hands to help a close to home chemo girl:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEdVfyt-mLw>

Blessings

December 24, 2009

Cancer is not a blessing. No one who receives that dreadful diagnosis reacts by thinking how lucky they are to have this disease.

While the truth of illness in our bodies can be devastating, many of the events and emotions that come into play during treatment can reveal to us the beauty of our lives and those with whom we share it.

When I began treatment, I was amazed at the outpouring of support I received. Distant cousins, friends, neighbors and co-workers sent cards and letters, flowers and gifts to let me know they were pulling for me during a tough time.

And while it saddened me to realize that some of those who I thought would be with me on the front lines of my cancer battle were in fact not going to be around at all, I learned how important it is to let go of expectations that can't be met and release my soul from disappointment, anger, or any of the other negative emotions that can clog the pipes of our personal happiness.

Facing what might have been a terminal illness, I learned that life really is a gift, and that those we love and cherish are the bows and ribbons that make each day so sweet and wonderful.

Instead of worrying about our retirement savings and my two-year-old son's future, I relished the fact that my home was warm, my child happy and my husband the rock solid partner I had once wondered would ever come my way.

When my teenage stepson was afraid or angry about what was happening to us, I practiced patient understanding and achieved a deeper connection with him. And when people I expected would've been there for me disappeared, I moved on, glad to know a truth I might not have realized before, and grateful for the lesson life was providing.

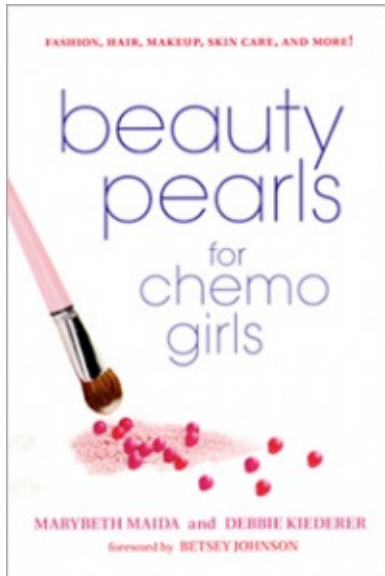
So while I can't say that cancer was a blessing, I can absolutely say that I came out of the experience a much calmer, wiser, stronger and happier person than I was going in. Maybe it would've been easier to never have had to face what I did, but being on the other side, I am grateful for the chance to become who I now am.

This week, as those who celebrate Christmas open gifts and share the warmth and joy of the day with those they love, Debbie and I hope you'll look inside your own heart and revel in the gift your very own life bestows on those you choose to have near you –the happiness and inspiration your presence on this earth brings.

Blessings on us – everyone!

Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls and The Noel Foundation

January 19, 2010



The Noel Foundation and Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls invite you to celebrate and support women facing cancer with our first ever chemo girl makeover fashion show.

Thursday, February 11, 2010

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

The Roger Smith Hotel

501 Lexington Avenue

New York City

Join us for cocktails, food, fashion and fun featuring expert advice from the groundbreaking new book and community website Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls — live streaming video coverage to the street and the web.

Come meet Louis Philippe and Christine DeAngelo — two of our Beauty Pearls Experts.

Goody bags include a signed copy of the Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls book with chocolates* to celebrate the Valentine's tradition.

A I D A N M A T T O X

Fashion Shows the Love!

February 8, 2010

Chemotherapy patients will feel the love this week, as designers, makeup artists, stylists and friends join Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls to celebrate Valentine's Day with their first-ever chemo girl makeover fashion show.

Streaming live from the penthouse at the Roger Smith Hotel in midtown Manhattan, the Thursday night gala will take the expert advice provided in the book and community website www.beautypearlsforchemogirls.com and apply it to three chemo girls, who will receive makeovers from Henry Picado, lead designer at Aidan Mattox; contributing designer Christine DeAngelo and on makeup, Shiseido's own Louis Philippe.

Cameras will follow the chemo girls as they go off for their transformation, while below cocktail party guests will enjoy the music of rapper M.Island, who will perform a new song written for his mother, a cancer survivor. All action will be streamed live to the hotel's website and street level gallery on 51st Street and Lexington Avenue.

"I love the idea of women being strong and beautiful as they face the difficulties of cancer," says Henry Picado. "And especially on Valentine's Day, I want to show these beautiful ladies that they are loved and they are still fabulous no matter what cancer treatment may be doing to them."

Each guest will receive a signed copy of Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls, and offerings sponsors Aidan Mattox, Shiseido Cosmetics, Fifth Avenue Chocolates, Bella Bags, Colorific Shoes and Honora Pearls.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the Noel Foundation, a CT based not-for-profit dedicated to offering direct assistance to women undergoing cancer treatment.

For more information or to obtain a press pass for the event please contact Marybeth Maida: Marybeth@beautypearlsforchemogirls.com or 732-778-2090.



Thank you for showing the Love!

February 12, 2010

Last night's event was truly amazing! Thank you for supporting Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls and The Noel Foundation and participating in such a special evening.

A special thanks to our beautiful chemo girls, Henry Picado, Christine DeAngelo, Louis Philippe, Michael Schecter, performer M.Island and our sponsors:

Aidan Mattox

Shiseido Cosmetics – Saks Fifth Avenue

Fifth Avenue Chocolates

Bella Bags

Coloriffic Shoes

Honora Pearls

Little Cupcake Bakery

Our first ever chemo girl makeover fashion show!

February 14, 2010

View the full album of photos at our Facebook page and become a fan too!!



Join our Facebook Discussion!

February 19, 2010

We have recently posted new topics to our Facebook Discussion board and would love to hear from you!

Join our community and share your own Experiences, Tips, & Inspirations!



Hats off to the Hat Box Foundation!

February 22, 2010



and placed it in a cute little box.

Clare Emily was just another young girl enjoying her life when bone cancer turned her world upside down. The very idea of losing her long hair to chemotherapy treatment was as awful for Clare Emily as it would be for any girl, and the hats her mom found to cover her baldness were too itchy or too thin to be comfortable. That's when Julie Abdallah decided to help. Putting her skills to work, Julie hand-knitted a beautiful hat for her friend's daughter

The package was so well received, Julie and her three sisters decided to do what they could to help others facing illness-related baldness and started the Hat Box Foundation, to help brighten the lives of cancer patients and others in need.

"While we don't have a cure, we believe something made from the heart can help heal the human spirit," Julie says.

Hospitals across the country agree. Since 2007 the Foundation has distributed 100% hand-knitted or crocheted caps to thousands of well deserving recipients. Each hat is donated by volunteers who create unique, one of a kind gifts which are distributed free

of charge to men women and children looking for ways to remain stylish and comfortable while they cope with hair loss.

Each hat is imbued with the compassion and kindness of those who may not know the patient, but wish to do something meaningful and important for those in need. The Hat Box Foundation continually searches for volunteers to make caps, and sponsors to help offset the cost of packaging and delivery. Are you handy with a knitting or crochet needle? Consider donating your talents to this wonderful organization. Go to www.hatboxfoundation.org and see how your hands and heart can warm the soul of a chemo girl in need.

From “Pearls of Wisdom” by Rebecca Haynes

March 29, 2010

“Now I feel like 50 is the new 20. I spend a lot of time on the phone talking to people who’ve been diagnosed. Yeah, it’s scary, but it’s going to be all right. You don’t want people to be more afraid than they have to be. It’s like you’re walking into some terrible dark room, and my whole goal is to flip on a bright light.” – Marybeth Maida

“Anna and Her Ponies” – Written by Heidi Guest

April 9, 2010



Anna Duncan and her family taken at Christmas. Left to right: Jeff, Julia, Matt, Anna

“The last thing you expect or want from life is often the first thing you take on your journey to life.”

*Timothy Shriver
Chairman and CEO
Special Olympics*

Anna Duncan is the kind of woman every person

hopes to have for a neighbor. For two terrific years, she was mine. While others kept their distance, it was Anna who reached out, knocked on our door, introduced herself and made us immediately feel welcome. Active in the community, devoted to her husband and kids, I often smiled watching her go about her every day, her mini-van in perpetual motion. She moved with an optimism and a power of purpose that I’m not even sure she was even aware, so natural was this state of being. In fact, I’m sure if I had shared my impression with her, she would have good-naturedly laughed and dismissed it. I believe she considers herself average. Believe me, she is far from average. Anna Duncan is an extraordinary human being.

For the last nine years, Anna and I remain next-door neighbors in spirit, but the truth is we now live on separate coasts. And because our interactions are understandably more limited than they were in the past, I always look forward to receiving her annual holiday letter. I remember sitting down, early last December, with a cup of tea, eager to open the big stack of cards that had arrived that day. Anna’s was the first in the pile. What a great way to get in the holiday spirit, I thought to myself. I smiled as I glanced at the discernible changes in the two adorable kids we once knew who enthusiastically waved to us, without fail, on every cul-de-sac departure and arrival. Matt and Julia were clearly on the verge of adulthood and probably favored vehicles of the four-wheel variety these days.

Anna’s always-newsy Christmas letter felt both comforting and familiar as I settled in and began to read the annual update. Without warning, I came upon a new paragraph that didn’t match the rest. My body went cold. I couldn’t believe what I was reading. Breast cancer. Already advanced at the time of diagnosis. Treatment to begin in January.

Whether she said it directly or I read between the lines, one message was abundantly clear: My friend Anna was frightened. And so was I. Anyone who knows Anna would never juxtapose “frightened” with her name. Optimistic, Plainspoken, Energetic, Dedicated, Giving. Yes. Frightened? Absolutely not.

Having already sent our own breezy annual holiday greeting across the country to Anna, I immediately sat down and wrote her a letter. For some reason, I couldn’t call. I suspect this was true for many of Anna’s friends. It was impossible for me to reconcile the concepts of Anna and Cancer. I felt disoriented and confused by the harsh set of circumstances that this effervescent person had to face. Why couldn’t I get on the phone immediately? Offer comfort? Share the exact right words? I remember being both surprised and disappointed at my own reaction. Suddenly, in a moment of insight and wisdom, I had a greater understanding and compassion for those who had failed to reach out to me in the most trying of times. I thought of the words Anna and I had repeated every Sunday as we sat with our families in the pews of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church: And forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...Though I prayed for her daily, I still could not pick up the phone. Unsure that it would be a good time to call, I sent an e-mail, which would give her the opportunity to decide. Anna, of course, immediately responded and a call was arranged.

Ironically, I spoke to Anna just a few days before receiving a request to write this blog entry. Coincidence? I think not. At the end of our conversation, I promised to send her a copy of *Beauty Pearls For Chemo Girls* as one of its co-authors, Debbie Kiederer, had given me a personal copy at the time of its publishing. After reading it, I remember thinking that it was the perfect gift to give a loved one when you wanted to offer your love and support with all your being, but didn’t quite know how to communicate that message.

Shortly after accepting Debbie’s request, I e-mailed Anna, asking her for her valuable counsel on subjects that would be most meaningful. In her usual fashion, she responded immediately and her advice was quintessential Anna, just like the words I previously used to describe her. “Frightened” did not match anymore. It made my heart sing and I hope it does the same for you. Without any further ado, and with Anna’s permission, I would like to share her most recent discovery and paradigm shift...one that is obviously working for her.

Heidi:

I have to share something with you that my third opinion oncologist said to me. It’s been my mantra as I go through treatment. I have to set up this story though. I had three opinions because my breast cancer was quite advanced and I was frightened by the treatment plan. I kept looking for another, less scary, perspective. My oncologist is very young, and the third person I spoke too was older and wiser. His first admonition was not to be frightened by the long-term effects of the chemo on my heart, that I needed to focus on beating the cancer

and being there for my teenagers! He got my attention with that one. His closing advice was something like this:

Do you feel like you've landed in a stable full of shit?

When I nod yes, he continues with: Where there is shit, there are ponies, look for the ponies!

Every time something wonderful or even unexpectedly good happens, I consider it a pony – even something so seemingly small as a hug from Matt!

I've kept half my eyebrows till now (they're going fast!), and that's a pony. You can find them anywhere if you're open to them!

So the motto to this yarn is:

Attitude is everything, and my attitude is to look for the ponies and celebrate them!

PS forget about the shit, it turns to fertilizer! Thanks for sending the book Heidi; I can't wait to get it!

Love to you, Anna

Love to you too, Anna. I will look for the ponies from this day forward. And you're absolutely right; the coveted pony is not perfect. Where there are ponies, there always is shit. But, as you beautifully point out: Do we look at the shit or the pony? The choice is ours. I'm with you: Let's look for the ponies...today and every day thereafter. Ralph Waldo Emerson agrees with us wholeheartedly:

"Though we travel the world to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not."

About Heidi Guest:

Heidi Guest is the Founder and President of The Guest Experience, LLC, a company committed to mentoring individuals to live into their full potential. With a philosophy of "one size fits one", The Guest Experience works with a broad range of clients providing private individual coaching as well as consulting to organizations. Emphasis is placed on clients identifying their individual talents and applying those strengths to reach their personal and professional goals. Heidi writes a weekly column on The Guest Experience blog, *Beauty Every Day*, designed to encourage people to pursue lives of meaningful engagement and purpose.

Prior to the creation of her own venture, Heidi was a twenty-two year veteran of the prestige cosmetics industry. In her last role as Vice President of Education for Clinique North America, Heidi led initiatives that supported the selection, education, development and retention of both Clinique Consultants and executives. In addition, she

led global point of sale strategies designed to optimize both the employee and customer experience for the number one volume department store cosmetics brand.

Heidi represented the cosmetic company to the public as “The Voice of Clinique” in Clinique’s longest-running national radio campaign as well as the brand’s media spokesperson on local morning talk shows and nationally syndicated programs like NBC’s i-village Live.

To read more about Heidi, visit <http://www.guest-experience.com>

Latest Reviews

April 30, 2010

It is our pleasure to share with you two of the latest reviews of our book.

You can find the review articles by clicking the links below.

TheBreastCareSite.com –

<http://www.thebreastcaresite.com/tbcs/CommunitySupport/ForYourBookshelf/ForYourBookshelf.htm>

The Wag – <http://www.westchesterwag.com/fashion.asp>

The Best Medicine

May 7, 2010

In the months since *Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls* has been released, Debbie and I have spoken to hundreds – maybe even thousands – of women facing cancer treatment.

While each experience is as unique as the patient dealing with disease, one thing never seems to change: the eagerness of all these women to reach out to others in need, to connect with fellow survivors, and most of all, to look into the face of cancer – and laugh!

Time and time again we’ve seen how tightly closed and worried faces brighten as we relate our tales from the front lines of cancer: the laughter that follows as I relate how my inspiration for the book bubbled up the morning I stumbled into the bathroom and realized I’d left my eyelashes on the pillowcase; It resonates when Debbie tells the story of how one of our experts provided her advice while running in and out of stores collecting prescriptions and lollipops and chicken soup for her husband, lying at home with a cold.

It may seem counter intuitive to approach such a devastating diagnosis with humor, but by speaking honestly about the more ridiculous side of treatment – my two year old son not letting me in his room unless I first covered my ‘baldie’ head; greeting my newly growing-in hair with a mix of joy and horror as a wide white swath of fuzz appeared down the center of my head, prompting a trip to a hair salon for a dye job that made me look like a freshly shorn Lucille Ball – what we’ve found is that by being able to poke fun at the whole chemo experience, we take away some of its bite, and remind our sisters that even in the worst of situations, there’s always room for a smile.

As each of us faces the inevitable difficulties cancer creates, it’s vitally important to remember that no matter how serious or trying our situation is, the ability to find the lighter side of the moment allows the lighter side of our lives to shine through. So while we take the time to cry, to mourn, to cope and to deal with the effects of chemo, we hope everyone will remember the power that comes from giggling, smiling – from laughing out loud.

Cancer is no joke, but if we can find within ourselves the strength to embrace some of the absurdities treatment presents – and let out a good guffaw in the process – we keep hold of joy in our lives, and remind ourselves that while the load may be heavy, the weight will ease as our treatment ends.

And the punch line lands on the disease that tried to wipe out our happiness, but instead was laughed right out of our lives.

“Living Out Loud” – by Donnalyn Giegerich

May 11, 2010



I was teaching yoga in the Caribbean to unwind from my otherwise hectic work life and came home to incredible right flank pain that was moving around to my back. Went to Riverview hospital on advices of my fabulous GP to uncover a baseball-sized tumor in my retroperitoneum...lodged between my kidneys and adrenals leaning up against my inferior vena cava. Fast forward to an originally planned 10 hr kidney auto transplant surgery at NYPresbyterian/Cornell for a 4 in 1 million soft tissue diagnosis of Leiomyosarcoma...a

highly recurrent, erratic and no cure type of sarcoma cancer that affects up to 20% of children diagnosed with cancer annually.

As an athlete and business owner seasoned in unexpected setbacks, I simply refocused my attention and direction on what I could do with this startling news. I could keep moving, working, living out loud and I could “pay it forward” in ways that would hopefully serve others well with my giftedness. So I kept going. Speaking professionally, doing sprint triathlons, teaching yoga, supporting a research foundation for LMS and most recently, mid life modeling, pageantry and creating a non profit KickCancerOverboard which encourages those touched by cancer has kept me busy. I’m Mrs. Red BankUS platforming for rare cancer awareness in a bikini with a sixteen inch torso scar in kitty heels in midlife simply because I can!

I’m speaking so much now that my fabulous webmaster has created a website that entails my speaking topics, clients to date, testimonials and advocacy work around empowerment and LMS awareness. The great part of all of this is I’m doing what I really love! By helping people step into their greatness despite the adversity they face. I’m speaking across the country, advocating for others globally thru my blog and networking for and with others around medical issues, business opportunities and community service. Cancer’s certainly not a gift because I wouldn’t give it to anybody, but my husband and my dual cancer journey (he was diagnosed w multiple myeloma as my hair was growing back from chemo) has hopefully helped others gain perspective and encouragement around what’s truly possible through challenges...more opportunities!

To read Donnalyn’s blog, visit this link: <http://donnalyn.org/category/blog/>

“Singing Birds and Winter Lights” – Written by Gail Welch

June 1, 2010

Singing Birds and Winter Lights – these are just two of the many things that remind me of Mum.

She loved the sound of singing birds and the sparkle of lights and every time I hear birdsong or see the winter lights in the city trees I think of Mum. I have many, many happy memories of her and our family; but unfortunately, there are the sad memories too. The smell of cigarette smoke and people smoking are particularly hard for me, as they bring back the reality of a life taken needlessly – if only she had quit smoking.

It was on a Friday in June 2005 when I received a phone call from my Dad, telling me my Mum was in the ICU with terminal lung cancer. The doctors did not expect her to last more than 3-4 days.

Time stood still. I had no idea that she was sick. When I'd last seen her four months earlier she seemed perfectly fine. Now we were being told we only had a few hours left with her. At that time my parents were living 3500 miles away in Cyprus, almost 21 hours travel time. I went into a frantic rush and within a day, began one of the longest journeys of my life, hoping with all my heart that I would get there in time. I arrived to find my Mum in the ICU. She looked terrible; breathing through an oxygen mask, pumps with tubes everywhere. Over the next week she improved enough to be moved out of the ICU, and her diagnosis was changed to Leukemia, Emphysema, and Lymphoma. As a long time heavy smoker, her condition was blamed on this awful habit. She immediately began a course of IV chemotherapy.

I was extremely lucky and blessed to be able to stay with my parents during this time. My employer allowed me to work remotely from Cyprus and my husband was extremely supportive while remaining in the US. I spent 4-5 hours at the hospital every day, enjoying my Mum's company with many long chats and reminiscences. It was a strangely pleasant time with lots of laughter. Her condition appeared to be moving into remission and the doctors were pleased.

On the day following her fifth course of chemotherapy, my dad and I arrived at the hospital and immediately noticed that something was terribly, terribly wrong. Mum was distant, unresponsive, her demeanor was different. She had a blank stare. The doctors came, conferred and whisked her off for a brain scan. The worst of our fears had come true – Mum had suffered a massive stroke. For the second time, time seemed to grind to a halt for me. I could hear the doctors talking, but it was like they were on TV or something, not real at all.

Realization set in. Mum had suffered an irreversible stroke. She was not likely to improve at all. Her chemo could not continue. Her condition would worsen again; there was nothing the doctors could do for her.

Mum never wanted to live like this; she had said it many times after caring for my stroke stricken Grandmother. She was now totally helpless, completely dependent on others.

Our daily visits continued but they were no longer chatty. They were long and for the most part silent. She was still Mum, but she was different. Her eyes remained sharp and watchful but the rest of her was dull and lifeless. The nurses told us that she was most likely fully aware of what had happened to her even though she was unable to communicate this lucidly. Her eyes told me this was true.

Yet one of the things that I remember most strongly about this time was her hair. Mum had beautiful, thick, blonde, wavy hair. The chemo ravaged her mane. It was ok for a while then all of a sudden it started falling out in big clumps. The nurses would take it away before we arrived in the morning, but told us how very upset the loss made Mum. Dad and I brought her hats to wear but they made her angry and upset and she refused to wear them.

Dad talked to her hairdresser and he said he would make her a wig but she refused to see him. She seemed more upset over the loss of her hair than she was over her terminal condition. This was most disconcerting for Dad and me. It took a while for us to digest this fact. The doctors were telling us she only had a few weeks of life left, yet all that seemed to matter to her was her hair. She'd lost about 90% of the hair on her head but 100% of the rest of her hair – eyelashes, eyebrows, arm hair etc. I think that that was the most shocking and striking thing for us. We are used to seeing bald people but not people without eyebrows, eyelashes etc. The hospital that my Mum was in did not have any kind of cancer care program that offered support in the hair loss or makeup department so we just had to accept it. We had no idea that there were options available to make this loss less traumatic for all involved. It never occurred to us to put makeup on her to replace her eyebrows etc. And though we did our best to try to see things from Mum's point of view – it was very difficult for us to understand why hair mattered so much to her.

How I wish I'd had Beauty Pearls for Chemo Girls to refer to during those days. I would have understood how important Mum's appearance was to her, and how badly she wanted to retain control of at least one aspect of her life. It would have made things so much easier for my Dad, for me and most importantly, for Mum.

She passed away seven months after her original diagnosis, five months after her massive debilitating stroke. I will always be grateful for the hours we were able to spend chatting during those initial two months, and I remember that time as a priceless gift I will always treasure.

And while she lost her life and is almost five years gone, the things she loved remain with me, and in that way, so does she. I hear her in the singing birds, I see her in the twinkling lights, and I love her as much today as I ever did.

She is always with me.

“Do what makes you happy” – Written by Geri Mazur

November 6, 2010

I met Debbie Kiederer a few weeks ago and over coffee she asked me to write a guest blog. I said, “What do I know? I’m a business coach...I write about marketing.” But then she asked me what I would tell someone who was invited somewhere, but was feeling crappy and didn’t want to go. I thought about it for a second and replied, “I would tell them not to go”.

Twenty-five years ago I was diagnosed with Thyroid cancer. Relatively minor in the world of cancer, but mine had spread to lymph nodes on both sides of my neck. Out came the entire thyroid and all those lymph nodes with it. Complications from the surgery kept me on tons of meds for almost a year. Today I still wake up and take five pills for those complications. But those first few years were hell. I wanted to believe everything was normal when it really wasn’t. The folks around me wanted to believe it even more than I did. And so I did my best to do all the things I would normally do...even when I didn’t want to. I went back to work too fast. I went out of town on vacation too fast. I went out with my friends when I was scared and tired and really wanted to stay home and put my head under the blankies. And when I look back, I wish I hadn’t.

I’ve been trained as a Co-Active coach. And the first principle in this school of coaching is that the client is creative, resourceful and whole. I will never assume I know better than my clients about what is right for them in their lives. I might help them make a conscious decision...and try to help them understand the consequences of their actions, but once they get that, then the decision to do or not to do something is entirely their own.

I always think the best thing to do...in any situation... is to work with what is. Cancer takes an enormous physical and emotional toll. Denial doesn’t help...and only makes things worse later on. But once we acknowledge how hard cancer is and accept that fact, it just actually may become easier to deal with. And way easier than fighting reality. And so for that person who was feeling crappy and didn’t want to go.... If you’re like me, there’s a part of you that wants to go and another part that doesn’t. Figure out which

part is the bigger part...which part will make you happier. Understand the consequences of your actions. And just do what you want.

Geri Mazur has more than 30 years experience moving people, products and brands forward. She combines strong business acumen with life coaching expertise to ensure clients get more of the good things in their lives. She has held a number of senior strategic management positions in marketing, communications and advertising, working with such well-known brands as P & G, sanofi-aventis and Pfizer. She has successfully positioned brands and companies of all sizes for growth in highly competitive markets. In addition to her extensive business experience, she is a graduate of The Coaches Training Institute, one of the few programs certified by the International Coach Federation, the largest worldwide resource for coaching and coaches. With a combination of insight and intuition, keen understanding of human nature, and practical business marketing and communications skills, Geri helps her clients see what to focus on to ensure continued success.