

Stephanie: Hi, my name is Stephanie, and I'm a realtor, I am a certified life coach, I'm a world traveler, I'm a creative. And I just happen to be a breast cancer survivor.

Cancer, or when I was coming up, "the Big C," was never talked about. Never. I will say this until I'm blue in the face—there is nothing to be ashamed about. Talk about it. Get it out. When you share it, it's that old adage of, "You are not alone." You are not alone.

Caitlin: Welcome to the Feel More Like You podcast, presented by Walgreens and *Pretty Sick: The Beauty Guide for Women with Cancer*. I'm the book's author, and your host, Caitlin Kiernan. For cancer patients, it's often considered taboo to care about your looks when you're fighting for your life. For me, looking good was equally vital for my recovery. I've always been a big believer that beauty treatments are an adjunct therapy to cancer treatments. Some of the most helpful pieces of information I got didn't always come from my doctor, but came from my hair stylist, my makeup artist, even my dentist. And they helped me look and feel like myself again, so I could face each day.

Emily O: I'm Emily, Walgreens Health Editor. Throughout this season, Caitlin and I will guide you through each episode, along with our co-hosts, Walgreens pharmacist Emily Schafer and beauty consultant Laura Catron. We will bring you personal stories from survivors who've experienced every side effect first-hand as well as tips from the experts on the front line. Need to know about nipple tattoos? You'll hear from the top artists. Want to know how to shop for a wig? We've got advice from celebrity wig stylists. Wondering what it's like to get your breasts removed, to go through chemotherapy, or how to navigate emotional struggles and feel your best when you're at your worst? We've collected all the advice survivors wish they knew when they started treatment.

Caitlin: Our hope is that everything we share with you helps you feel more confident, in control and empowered. We'll break down the important information to help you look and feel more like you.

So, what about you? What makes you feel more like you? We asked some survivors for their advice on maintaining their sense of self during cancer treatment. Here's what they said.

Christine: I'm Christine, I'm a high school teacher, I have ovarian cancer, and cancer picked the wrong bitch to mess with.

Working out definitely helped me feel good, because it was something that I did before I was sick, so it made me feel more normal, and more like my regular life. Just, don't be afraid to live. I feel like people think they have cancer or that someone they know has cancer, and it's like—it always goes to such a horrible place when you hear cancer. For good reason, I mean, it's horrible. Be an active participant in your life. Do the things that you said, "Oh, I'll do them tomorrow." Do them today. Do that fun stuff. I mean, I signed up for Flamenco dancing lessons, I have no idea what that is, but I'll find out. My friend asked if I wanted to go, and I was like, "I do!"

Do the fun stuff. Don't be afraid to live even though you have cancer.

Emily:

Hi, I'm Emily, and I'm a math teacher, a mother, a wife, and I have breast cancer.

I love camping. I don't know, the outdoors, going for walks, throwing the ball—we have a Golden Retriever, you know, into the lake, and having them go fetch it—that I, I don't know, I became sort of like a hermit during those chemo treatments. It's hard to go out in public. I felt like I was trapped in my house because I didn't want to get those sympathy stares. But anyway, making myself camp was important to me because once I got there, and once I was doing the things I love doing, then I felt so much better. Yeah, I needed those camping trips just to feel like me again.

Melissa:

Hi, I'm Melissa, I am a filmmaker living in Chicago, and I have metastatic breast cancer.

So, yeah, there is a lot that you cannot make happen through a diagnosis. But what you can control is—ugh, I hate when people say this, but it's how you react to it. It's how you react to the situation that you're in. I think it's the only way that's helped me feel as much like myself like I can. Is just being able to say, "Well, I hate how it looks, but I'm going to put a scarf in it, and make it look cute," and "Yeah, I lost weight, or gained weight, but I can get myself a new pair of jeans, and maybe I'll feel good."

Karen:

Hi, I'm Karen, I am a BRCA1-positive woman. I'm a feminist, lesbian, actor, teacher, artist.

There's one definite, right? Change is inevitable. We're going to change. And even if we weren't going through this, we would go through other things that would cause our bodies to change, or our hair to change, or our skin to change. Change, while sometimes hard, can also be good. Because for me, change also meant being alive, and being able to watch my children grow, and being able to have more years with my wife. And so the constant reminder that I'm still here, that I have some control, can take back control whenever I can—and whether it is finding a new makeup regimen, or cutting your hair—anything that makes me feel good, and you feel strong, and you feel powerful, and I think that it has nothing to do with vanity. I think it has to do with self-worth. And self-love.

Brianna:

Hi, I'm Brianna. I'm a writer and a comedienne, and I survived Hodgkin's lymphoma.

I mean, I love a costume. I did a lot of online shopping. I decided, like, crop tops. This is my time to wear crop tops. I have so many of them, still. So I would sort of—what I would do with my makeup—use that as an opportunity to play around with my look. Because I just so didn't care. And one of my heroes is David Bowie, who transitions through so many looks. So I kind of embraced the David Bowie, and had different identities as I was going through each stage. And still, now, I'm continuing that as I go. Where I would be like, 'Today is a sequins

day. I'm going to do my sequins crop top, my sparkly eye shadow, pink lipstick, and just, like, go for a walk. Because who cares.'

Virginia:

Hi, I'm Virginia Gregory. I'm an actress, I live in New York City, and I am a two-time survivor of breast cancer.

I don't leave my house without makeup. And so, having no eyelashes, really, that made me feel like not me. When you're going through that and feeling crappy, you feel like you're not pretty anymore, and so whatever—it doesn't have to cost a lot of money—but whatever makes you feel pretty, it just is helpful to go out into the world feeling like yourself.

Deanna:

Hi, my name's Deanna. I am a beauty writer in New York, and I've had a cancer three times.

Everything that I was doing in my life, instead of being done for me, was being done just to eradicate this little rebellion in my liver. And so what I love about beauty is that it's really accessible—it's so transformative. And I know for me, at least, it's one of the few times in my day that I'm not having any other stressors fill my mind, or doing a deep dive on Instagram. That little ritual is as close to meditation as you can get without actually meditating. And just a way of checking in with yourself, whether—even if you are looking at your eyebrows in a magnifying mirror, and going up there with the tweezer—you're still doing something for yourself, and with yourself. In that moment, that you don't have to share with anywhere.

Laura:

Hey, I'm Laura, your beauty consultant, here to help you with skin care, makeup, hair, and more. I helped lead the Feel More Like You program in stores across the nation, where beauty consultants are trained in oncology side effects to help women feel more like themselves.

In the Skin Changes episode, we speak with Ramy Gafni, one of New York's most sought-after eyebrow wizards and celebrity makeup artists. When he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, he found that beauty products can be a tool to help him see the real him—not just him as a cancer patient. Here's what he said.

Ramy:

The goal is to look and feel like your best self. And, you know, many people who are in treatment, they're going home to their children, they're going to work—I went to work every day during five months of chemo. It was very hard every day at work having that conversation 50 times a day, when people would go, "Oh, how are you? You look okay, your eyes look a little glassy, you look a little green, but how are you doing?"

I had very, very dark circles, like deep-set—my eyes looked blackened. Literally, I looked like I almost had two black eyes. And when I started doing little makeup tricks, like a little concealer around the whole eye, and a little bit of bronzer, people started saying, "Oh, are you done with treatment?" And I said, "No." And they're like, "Oh, you must be getting used to it, you look so much better." And

you don't have to be a makeup artist. You can just kind of do a general sweep all over, and it can do—it's a little step that can do a lot.

You're saying, okay, I know I'm going through something, but I'm arming myself with some equipment to take action to counteract it. And I think it's very, very empowering and very positive. You're not being a victim.

Emily S:

Hi, everyone. Dr. Emily here, to talk about what you can expect from your health care team throughout your cancer experience. One of the jobs I have is to support our oncology programs throughout the company, ensuring that our pharmacists and team members have the tools they need to help patients, survivors, and caregivers experience in cancer. In our Breast Changes episode, we speak with Dr. Elisa Port, Chief of Breast Surgery and the Director of the Dubin Breast Center at Mount Sinai in New York City. She encourages patients to be their own advocate. This is your body, so be sure to ask questions until you understand your treatments, and what you should expect and when.

Elisa:

There is no question that from a surgery standpoint, lots of advancements have been made, many of them with a focus toward improved aesthetics, which is fantastic, improved reconstructive options, nipple-sparing mastectomies, we're doing more of, options related to lumpectomy where the normal anatomy is really, substantively preserved. Women who are larger breasted, who want to go smaller can often do that, women who are smaller breasted who want to go bigger can often do that, absolutely, there's a range.

Always remember, always, always, always, that there's no one size fits all, and to really focus on your own pace, and thank God in 2019 the cure rate for breast cancer is very high, and all things—improvements that have been made on all these fronts—we do all we can to instill optimism and hope in our patients who are newly diagnosed.

Emily O:

Hey, it's Emily, health editor. I'm excited to bring you authentic survivor stories and insightful expert interviews to help empower you as you navigate this journey. Like in our Mental Health episode. We talked to Dr. Guy Winch, psychologist and author of *Emotional First Aid*, to learn how to maintain your confidence and control. Dr. Winch says to surround your days with things that ground you.

Guy:

Who you are doesn't change. Your health has changed, your circumstances—your life has changed. How your feeling on a daily basis has changed. But who you are hasn't, and you need to remind yourself of that. Think about what are the activities, who are the people, what are the circumstances, what are the situations, the places, that you most make you feel like you. And you need to connect to those. You need to do those. You need to remind yourself of that internal core that you have.

Emily O:

There's so much that your doctors will help you with to prepare for treatment. But what's some advice you might not know you need? Survivor Christine said

she wasn't prepared for how the physical changes of treatment would impact how she saw herself. For her, a strong mindset made all the difference.

Christine: You have to learn to realize, beauty is from the inside, and if you take care of yourself, you're going to feel good, and that will help you to look good. And I think just keeping a positive attitude really helps. Because it's very easy to go down that spiral of, 'I have no hair, I have no eyebrows, I have no eyelashes, I don't even—I look sick when I look in the mirror.' And it's really hard to see yourself different. Whatever. If I like how I look and I'm confident, then I don't really care what you think when you look at me.

Emily O: Deanna wanted to face chemo head on. She prepared a daily to-do list with all kinds of regimens to try and get ahead of every possible side effect. But what she didn't realize was how much she was asking of herself.

Deanna: Be realistic, when you are going into surgery, or treatment like chemo. When the time comes, you're just setting yourself up with high standards that are going to be eventually impossible to meet. And so, give yourself a break. You don't have to do chemo well, and there's no such thing as that. And I think that was something I—I made the mistake of, is thinking I had to win chemo. Which is kind of twisted.

Emily O: As a manager of restaurant, Virginia worked up to 60 hours a week, even during chemo and radiation. Eventually, she realized the importance of slowing down and taking time for herself.

Virginia: I'm not sure I even noticed it until after it was over. What actually happened to me when it was over is that I fell and broke my leg. And was fired that night from the job. And it made me realize that it really was the universe saying, "Just stop. Take time for yourself." In some ways, it was the best thing that happened to me because it forced me to change my life.

That's something that I would tell anybody to—that's going through it to really take time for self-care. Because I don't think I did nearly enough.

Emily O: And Brianna wants survivors not to feel guilty for how their diagnosis impacts their loved ones.

Brianna: I think if I could give advice to people—it's not your responsibility to worry about how other people feel about what you're going through. Because I think especially family members, or people who are around you every day, react in such a way that it's like something terrible is happening to them. And it's not, really. It's hard, obviously, for them to see you going through something, but you shouldn't feel responsible for keeping their spirits up when you're going through it.

Emily O: Just before she was diagnosed, Emily and her husband were about to finish paying off their house, retire from their jobs, and go camping across the

country. But when she got her diagnosis, they put their plans on hold so Emily could take time to rest and recover.

Emily: It's important to try to tie up any loose strings. Anything that might take your mind away from focusing on your health. Any distraction, whether it's, I don't even know—money, in our case—try to do that. Because you're not going to have much energy to do it once you start chemo.

Emily O: As a mother and a teacher going through breast cancer, Csilla struggled with needing help more than providing it. She learned to accept her need for support.

Csilla: It's okay to be in pain. It's okay to say, "All right. I'm not feeling well today. Can you guys help out in some other ways?" And that's okay. Asking for help. And just apologizing for not being able to help is something that you've got to let go, I feel like. But I had that tendency to apologize, like, as if cancer was my fault. It's not your fault.

Emily O: When Melissa faced her metastatic diagnosis, she was completely devastated. Years later, here's what she learned.

Melissa: I think what would have helped me the most, like what I would have wanted to hear, and this is coming from someone who has done this three times, and is in a position where I know it's going to kill me, right? So if there's—I'm kind of an expert at cancer, even if I don't want to be. But I think the best thing to know is it gets better. So, from the day of the diagnosis, it's going to be really, really hard. It's going to be awful. But every step of the way, it's going to get a little easier.

And if you're—if you are stage 4, it's not going to be linear, so you're going to have real good days, and real shit days, and a lot in between, but, I don't know, what's the alternative? It's worth it. Life is worth it.

Emily O: Thanks for listening. Be sure to rate and subscribe, and tune in next time to hear—

Female: I said, 'So you thought I was really going to lose my hair, and we'll deal with this crazy lady later?' And he said, "Yes, that's kind of exactly what I thought."

Female: It's really in fashion to be able to wear wigs, and be able to change your look, and switch up your hair. It's extremely popular, and it is kind of the way now.

Male: Someone else would come in and say, "I heard human hair is horrible and synthetic is fabulous." It's only fabulous if you know how to work it.

Emily O: Special thanks to the survivors for sharing their stories. This Walgreens podcast was clinically reviewed by Emily Shafer. It was written, reported, and produced by me, Emily Ornberg, with Taylor Banasik, Lauria Locsmondy and Stefan Clark. It was co-produced by Caitlin Kiernan, author of *Pretty Sick: The Beauty Guide*

for Women with Cancer. Follow her on social media at @CaitKiernan. Recording and mixing by Matthew Lejeune, with Connor Boyle at Chicago Recording Company. For more oncology side effect help, visit Walgreens.com/FeelMoreLikeYou to find oncology-trained pharmacists and beauty consultants in your area.

Emily S:

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