



April 16, 2025

When someone asks how cancer affect your life, I have to answer with, "how does cancer NOT affect your life." For me, the hardest part is that when you have cancer, it isn't just you, but your whole family has cancer with you, alongside you. It has been so difficult for me to watch my three children go through all of this with me. It has been the one thing I haven't been able to protect them from. For the past 5 years, as I have battled my cancer, my children have fought it with me. They have experienced sadness, panic, tears, and they have had to watch as their mother changes in front of their eyes in real time.

You see, I was a go getter so to speak. I was the mom that returned to and finished college at 43 years old, graduated magnum cum laude, (when my youngest went to kindergarten) and went straight into graduate school and gained her master's degree in human development counseling (all while undergoing chemotherapy and radiation). I graduated with honors and was the program Marshall, as well as that year's commencement speaker. I have even managed to keep working part-time while fighting for my life. You see, I do not give up. I wanted to show my children what it was to work hard, have faith, and resilience. I have done my best to prepare them for the worst that life could possibly throw at them, and show that they can still find joy, love, and faith in even the worst of circumstances. I think the thing that has affected me most is,

I was the mother who had it all together. I never missed kids sports games, I went all out for birthday parties, and I rarely (if ever) dropped the ball on appointments. Cancer forced me to slow down despite my defiance. I have struggled with the fact that I don't have the energy anymore to be everywhere I'm needed. Thank goodness my husband does help pick up the slack, however, it was my ego that was hurt the most. It has been difficult to reflect upon how your life was and how it is today. Cancer has taken so much from me, but I would be lying if I said that was the only way it has affected me.

Having cancer has been an opportunity to take an inventory of my life and what is truly important. For me, what is most important is the legacy and lessons that I will leave behind to my children, family, and friends. I decided long ago at the beginning of my cancer journey that I would teach my children how to live with a life-threatening illness, and if the time came, I would also have the opportunity to teach them how to die. Die, without regrets, with peace, dignity, and a heart full of love. Cancer has affected my attitude (for the better) towards the little victories, the small pleasures, and the joy of loving without any reservation. In this sense, cancer has taught me. It has taught me to take time for myself and to rest as needed (something I was never truly known for) and it has taught me to be mindful of the present moment because that is all we truly have.

My goal is to beat this cancer and be one of the warriors to come out the other side of my disease. I also understand that cancer has changed me, with my scar-ridden body, my physical stamina, and it has changed the way I look at the world. However, I believe that we are all on a journey and this is my path at present. Therefore, I plan to continue my fight with positivity, laughter, and beside the most supportive family that I could have asked for.

I am asking for financial support because I have had to miss some of my part-time work and my husband has had to miss so he may take me to my appointments and scans. This has caused us to fall behind on finances and it has added a tremendous amount of pressure and strain on our family. Please help us continue to be the best we can be under the circumstances. Thank you for your consideration and I hope you can find it in your heart to help a whole family that is experiencing this cancer together.

Thank you,

LaNise N.

Kirk

