

# See Life Through My Cancer Eye

As I sit here on a sunny February day, listening to high frequency music on YouTube...I'm reminded of why I am writing this. I am writing this not just for me, not just for my children, but for you. I want you to see my words, to hear my words and to feel my words. This is my truth, and if my truth can help you in any way I will feel truly blessed.

So let's begin.

My story didn't begin on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 1984, for many the day they were born is the day their story began. But for me I felt it was different.

My story, my second chance story began on a Wednesday, Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to be exact. What was happening around that time for you? For many of us we'd been experiencing a year of turbulence through Covid. We had been stripped of our normality, and were still in a stage of unknown. Will life ever return to normal, what will normal even look like? Is this now going to be what our children will know, yo-yoing in and out of lockdown with a sense of fear and uncertainty.

At the time I thought Covid was the only C I was going to have to handle at that time, but on the afternoon of Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March I received a phone call that was going to change my life...forever.

It was an unknown number, I actually nearly didn't pick up. But the person I was when I answered the phone soon died after that phone call, I was changed forever just from that one conversation. Isn't that crazy to understand, that just one conversation can change your entire outlook, not just on life itself. But also on relationships, the current state of the world, future plans, literally everything changed.

Now, the woman I spoke to. I don't know if she didn't like those phone calls so much so that just saying the word cancer was so traumatic for her, but that's not her decision to make. But that's what happened, and I still to this day haven't processed my feelings about this, as she came off the phone telling me to 'Take Care' I Googled what she had told me I had.

Googled, that's right. I had been told I had Non Hodgkins Lymphoma in my eye. Now how many of you know what this is? I definitely did not, nor did I know that St Barts Hospital was a cancer hospital, that was something else I found out from Google. But there it was, in black and white, staring at me.

Cancer.

It is such a powerful word isn't it. I think there's only a few words like this that have such power behind them. Words like love and death.

Cancer. I don't know how I didn't just collapse into a ball, but somehow I managed to walk upstairs and tell my husband who was working in our bedroom. I don't even know if I managed to actually get the words out but he instantly saw the fear I guess in my eyes and rushed over to console me.

Even as I am writing this, I am four years later but just reliving that moment in my mind has caused me to pause and I can feel the tears building up in my eyes. I have never in my life felt so overwhelmed with emotions as I did crying in his arms.

What followed was even harder, I knew I instantly had to tell my brother and my mum. Now this is the thing with my cancer journey and it's why I am where I am today. I always wanted to talk about my cancer, not because I wanted to play the victim. I wanted to I guess normalise it, which sounds actually bad to say. But having cancer now sadly is a normal thing, but it is also not the same as it was 20/30/40 years ago.

It is no longer a death sentence.

I have friends who like me, have fought it and won. But I have also lost people, like my stepdad to it. So I understand why it's such a taboo subject and why people don't like to talk about it, but that wasn't how I wanted to deal with it. I didn't want to hide it, I didn't want to squash it and pretend it wasn't happening. That wasn't my way of dealing and healing with it.

But telling my brother and my mum, although I wanted to, I started the video call (remember this was COVID time so we couldn't see each other) but as soon as I saw their faces I handed the phone to my husband and rushed out the room crying. I couldn't even hear what he or they were saying because my sobbing was drowning them out. I felt and this may sound weird or you may have felt this too..but I felt like I'd let them down. Isn't that odd?

I hadn't chosen to have cancer, I didn't purposely go out in search of it. But for some reason I felt like I'd let those two people who had been with me my whole life down. And I felt ashamed.

When I think of how many emotions I went through that day, it's a lot for one person to experience. But as the day went on more emotions and feelings were flooding my whole being. I can't actually remember if I went to pick my children up from school that day or if my husband did, but I do remember just wanting to hug them. I remember watching them sleep that evening, and again more feelings flooded in. Guilt, anger, sorrow, pain, fear, hurt, overwhelm, lost...I felt so lost. What now, I just wanted to know what now? Because as I watched my children sleep and I was experiencing all these emotions and feelings...I suddenly became massively overwhelmed by one strong, unignorable thought that instantly changed my way of thinking.

You see, I'd been gazing at my children through my tired, sad and now cancer eyes and had been thinking will I see them grow up? Will I be at their weddings? Will I hold their children in my arms? And then the thought came through and instantly I knew what I had to do.

I instantly thought, I cannot leave my children. I cannot leave them motherless. I cannot and will not abandon my children. I bought them into this world, I will not now leave them.

And so I knew and swore to myself, then and there. I am going to fight this, and I am going to win.

I have my whole life been stubborn, sometimes this has worked in my favour and most times not. But it was my stubbornness and my pure love for my children, for my husband, for my life that spurred me to fight this cancer and to beat it.

That is what I set out to do, and that is what I did.

But beating cancer, no that wasn't enough. When you have cancer and you beat it, you see the world differently. I saw the world now through a cancer eye and I knew what I needed to do.

So here's how my story started, what happened after and what's still to happen...

Well that's for another time.

But I hope just this snippet has helped you, maybe it's resonated with you? Just know that you are not alone, you are a warrior, you are strong, you are loved, you are brave, you are courageous and you now have me in your corner, cheering you on.

Empowering you with all my love

Sharon Gabrielle – The Cancer Mum Cheerleader

