

1000 paper cranes. "What does that mean to you?" Words, images, and objects can hold different meanings and show different ideas to individual people. My 1000 folded Japanese origami paper cranes demonstrate all of my hopes, support and respect for my mother who was diagnosed with breast cancer and is currently in a powerful fight against it. This was my only way to cope with my feelings, such as sadness, fear of losing her, and the uncertainty of my family's future. I felt as if I was in a dark tunnel. However, I started to see myself more able to cope with my hurt feelings in this difficult time, and decided to become a more positive support for my mother. I was able to do this, with calmer feelings in my mind and heart, during the four months that I was folding paper cranes. This is my story about how I coped with my mother's breast cancer by folding 1000 origami paper cranes.

When I first heard from my father about my mother's health condition, and he told me the possible outcomes that could occur to her, I burst into tears, weeping so hard. Normally, I can confidently say that I almost never cry at anything. But that day, I exploded into tears that continued throughout the night. I could not stop because it was so difficult to accept what I had just heard about my mother's health condition. I was hurt and confused. Why would it be my mother!? It was hard to believe that someone so special to me would have to deal with breast cancer. My mind repeatedly asked, "Why my mother?"

I never worried about my health as I was always told that I was fine, perfectly healthy. I would have never expected myself to worry about others health. Of course, I would be happy to help to take care of others who need assistance, even though health is frequently a more personal issue and struggle. Therefore, I was shocked to find out that my own mother who I believed to be so strong and capable had health issues as big as cancer. And there I was, suddenly breaking down in tears at the thought of it all. I did not know how to support her, and I was tremendously scared and confused with in myself.

I'm not yet an adult. I'm still in high school and still learning the basics of many things as a normal teenager. I'm not certified in the study of health, especially in an issue as important, drastic and life changing as cancer. So I won't be telling you about how to treat cancer, as there are already several theories being argued. But rather, I would like to talk about my own experience and the effect that it has had on my life personally, and also what I have done to cope with the difficult situation.

As my family went through this painful and stressful time, my mother had times where she was strong and believed that she could get rid of her cancer. But there were also days when she struggled and cried just trying to get through her day. As I saw this, I've learned that I needed to keep trying to be helpful by being patient and loving, like a family member should. I tried to be less of that annoying hormonal teenager, and instead tried to help and comfort my mother.

First off, I come from a mixed race family: Caucasian and Japanese. I decided to make myself a bit Japanese as I was raised in such a way. In fact, my mother used to tell me that in Japanese culture there is a story that if you create one thousand paper cranes and string them together, that your wish would come true. I suppose this is similar to wishing on a star, but much more difficult and time consuming. I knew that it would take a tremendous amount of effort and time to create one thousand paper cranes. I made the first crane, then I made the second crane. I thought that what I could do for my family and mother in this situation was nothing much. But maybe I could do this small and simple thing of folding paper with my prayers, wishes, and love for my mother. I kept going to make 1000 origami paper cranes with all of my hopes to heal her being folded into each one.

At first I tried to keep my project a secret and surprise my mother, but as time went by, and my pile of paper cranes began to grow, and my parents ultimately found out. Unfortunately, I was told to stop, and to focus on studying, rather than doing this silly thing of folding paper cranes. Even my mother, who I thought might understand, did not and she said she would get better if I studied more. Even though I was told to stop, I did not stop. I continued to fold because this was the only hope I had to cope with my fear, sadness, and hurt feelings. Day after day I would fold paper cranes at least thirty a day in order to finish in my desired time frame. As I eventually finished, and began to string together the cranes that had taken about a month to fold, I felt that I was almost done but I was far from it. This process of stringing together the cranes took about another three or four weeks, as I was also busy with school and other responsibilities. But I never gave up, just like my mother never gave up her hope.

When I finished, and showed the creation which I'd spent so much time on to my family, my father looked and was shocked as he didn't believe that I would finish and accomplish my paper cranes project. My mother took my arms and hugged me for strength, and she held a look of gratitude and happiness in her eyes. In that moment, I felt that I could be a little hand of support to my mother in some way, and it also gave

me strength to get through this hardship in my life.

As everyone has different ways to cope, I personally find myself trying to keep busy when I have a hard situation come into my life. I put my mind and body somewhere else and focus on other tasks, rather than consuming my mind with the negative and the problems. As I mentioned before, I am half Japanese. I decided to take the Japanese way to cope with my mother's health.

You might have been expecting a sad story of how cancer has ruined my life, and that of my family. But actually, I feel the opposite way in how I see this life event. I feel that my family has gotten closer and stronger. My father takes more care of my mother, and I do as well. And now, my mother is more relaxed as she takes care of her body. This family trial made me so strong, able to stand beside my mother through her fight with breast cancer. All of my hope, wishes, prayer, and support flows through my 1000 folded Japanese origami paper cranes. My mother told me that she is so grateful for my love for her, and my positive support and attitude, so that she can fight her cancer. My family has been learning to stand together as a family to fight cancer with memories of my 1000 paper cranes adding to our strength. We have hope and wishes folded into each paper crane, representing that we will be strong and that we'll be able to overcome cancer together as family.

I still believe that there is hope in any hardship. Some might yell at the sky and curse God for this unfortunate event of a major health issue. But I would like to believe, and have faith, that this trial which my family endures, is through the love of God, rather than any hate. I still think that trials and hard times come to everyone in our lives, and it's not to make us fall and collapse under the pressure. Rather, I believe that the opposite is true, and that when given these trials, if we continue to push through, it ensures that we will become stronger and better set for the future ahead of us. This may not agree with everyone's perspectives of the world, but it is what I believe; and this has brought me hope and has helped me to endure. I know that I provided help to my family and to myself, through this difficult time, by putting love and hope in to each and every one of those thousand folded origami paper cranes for my mother.

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