

# How Pizza Saves Lives

*Alyssandra Osborne*

You know how when you were younger, in elementary school, and the school liked to do fun little fundraisers? When I was younger, I knew that the money went to other people and kids who needed it. But my focus was usually on winning the pizza party. You do all of these fundraisers for Leukemia and Lymphoma society, 5k runs, etc. You don't really ever deeply think about the fundraisers until you are one who is affected by it.

I am Aly and this is the story of my cancer adventure. February 6, 2019, I was diagnosed with cancer. Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. As most would expect hearing this news was absolutely heart crushing. But for me, it wasn't about the disease. This was devastating news because I was just 5 weeks shy of studying abroad in Japan for a full year. I cried. But, I broke down into tears because having cancer meant I couldn't study abroad. It also meant that all of my hard work was for nothing. I had just spent the past 18 months preparing for that trip, and let me tell you, it was not easy. It included studying Japanese, late nights, raising money for my trip, filling out paperwork, meetings, interviews, and appointments.

But I learned you can't dwell in the past and you need to look forward. So, I got up and brushed off all of the bad news and I started to move on. I contacted my study abroad group and they told me they would reserve a spot for me next year so I won't have to go through everything again. This was great news to hear and gave me the motivation to push through this cancer and get rid of it.

Getting my diagnosis and talking to my doctors gave me hope that this was something I could beat. When I heard that I had stage 4 cancer I thought that stage 4 was always a death sentence. I have come to learn that it is not. The doctors were saying how my cancer was very curable. Not just remission, but a complete cure! This gave me hope that this is something that I can beat and then resume my life like normal. The doctors would give me information in an easy way which made me understand what the plan was and how we were going to treat my cancer. From all of this, I have come to learn that I am very lucky to get the diagnosis I have. It's not great that I have cancer, but I'm glad the type I have is curable.

When thinking about cancer, all of the negatives are going to pop up into your head. Things like nausea during chemo, having numbness in my fingers 24/7, missing school and having to be away from friends, classmates, and losing my hair. But I've learned that if you look at them in a negative way then they are negative side effects. But if you look at them in a different way, then there can be positives too. Instead of losing hair and having it fall out little by little, donate it. And who knows, you might look really cute with it super short. I know I was not emotionally ready to lose my hair because I had always wanted and loved it long. But I decided if it was

going to fall out why not try and donate it. So I donated almost all of my hair to Wigs for Kids. Then, I got a transitional haircut which is when you get a short haircut to get you used to the idea of short hair and then possibly going bald. And to be honest I LOVE having short hair and I think it looks really cute, which is something that I wouldn't have learned without cancer. And maybe missing school isn't too bad. Ever since I learned that I had cancer I have actually become more of a positive and happy person. Weird right?! But I think that was because I was so worried and stressed about a lot of things in school, and taking a break allowed me to get rid of those stressors, relax, and heal. Then when I went back to school for the first time after my first chemo I had an amazing time and enjoyed my classes much more than before.

The right attitude and knowing that you have people supporting you is important. Whether it is friends or family through social media or it is the doctors, nurses, researchers, volunteers, etc., they are looking out for you. And make sure, that with your positive attitude, you remember to laugh and have fun. Enjoy life when you are feeling good. During my first round of chemo I almost never felt nauseous so what I would do is have fun. Joke around with friends and family, laugh and have a good time. With this, I was actually able to enjoy life almost as if I didn't have cancer at all. I know that in the future there might be some bumps in the road but I believe that with my positive attitude and ability to look forward to my future, it helps me to be strong and beat this cancer's butt. I do fully hope and expect that in my lifetime ALL cancers will be curable with the help of research and advancing technologies. Then in the future others like me can have cancer but still have a bright and amazing future to look forward to.

I am able to look forward to my future because of the hospital I go to, and the doctors and staff that work there. Seattle Children's Hospital is truly Amazing! Every employee, from my Primary Oncology Doctor to the people working in Starbucks has an amazing personality and attitude which is so important at a hospital. One of the things I remember was the day I learned my diagnosis. I was immediately admitted into the hospital. Many groups of people would come into the room flooding us with overwhelming amounts of information. So, when I first met my Primary Oncology Doctor one of the first things I noticed was her body language. I was sitting in a chair and she crouched down to my level to talk. She, of course, was talking to my parents too, but she made me feel like she was mostly talking to me. I felt like I was part of the process, not just like the patient in the room. This made a great impression on me and I felt extremely comfortable to talk to her. I didn't feel intimidated and felt she was someone I could talk to about anything.

In hospitals I feel like attitude is extremely important. When I, and many others, think of hospitals we think of sickness, injuries, or bad things. With this in mind it can be very sad and take a depressing toll on the patient, their parents, people around them, etc. But when everyone is so inviting and happy it creates a great atmosphere.

I guess the main point of my cancer adventure story is that having cancer makes you learn many, many things. It also allows you to try things you have never done before, and gives you the

opportunity to learn more about yourself. Although I don't suggest getting cancer, I do suggest trying new things because you can come to really like what you do or it could spark a new interests. When going through any rough patches in life, attitude matters! And the attitude I fully suggest is positivity with laughter. Because, trust me when I tell you, that positivity and laughter will make something that could be really hard much more bearable. Having a future goal or dream as motivation will help you go through your rough patch as a strong warrior with nothing that is going to stop you. Enjoy and live life to the fullest. And last, but not least, maybe the next time you are part of a fundraiser take a little extra step. Maybe, instead of just donating the money, contact the person in charge and help count the money, or go visit some of the people the fundraisers are helping. Who knows, it may make their day or may be a bigger impact in their life than you think. After all, it's about more than just the pizza.