

SURVIVOR'S VOICE

Here's another powerful example of how your gifts are helping breast cancer patients.

The day I discovered the lump in my right breast was the day that changed my life! With great trepidation I made an appointment with my doctor. After he examined me he sent me to have a mammogram and then to a surgeon who recommended I have a biopsy as soon as possible.

After the biopsy, while still in the operating room I heard the technician come into the room and whisper to the surgeon, "It's malignant." By the way, I also heard him get a reprimand for reporting the news so that I could hear it. That wasn't normal procedure.

I was devastated. I was in my early 40's. There was no breast cancer in my family. The diagnosis was shocking. I had always tried to eat healthy and exercise was a big part of my life.

When I recovered from the initial shock, I decided to work on my attitude and put the rest in God's hands. I had a wonderful, supportive and loving family and friends. My husband, Danny, and three daughters, Lisa, Kendra and Darcie were members of my recovery team. We all worked together. I knew that with hope, faith and love I'd get through this.

My doctor recommended that I have a modified radical mastectomy as I had a very fast growing kind of cancer. Surgery was set up for the next week and within two weeks of discovering the lump I was in the operating room.

I was aware the surgery would leave a scar. My surgeon encouraged me to have reconstruction a few months later. The mastectomy surgery went well and that night I was sitting up reading a mystery novel when my anesthesiologist came to check on me. He was surprised to see how fast I was recovering from the anesthesia.

The following morning my surgeon awakened me. He said, "I have great news. Your lymph nodes are completely clear and you'll need no radiation or chemo." Then he went on to say that because I had discovered the lump early and had the mammogram, biopsy and surgery soon the outcome was excellent. Let's hear it for early detection!! With that morale boosting, good news all I had to do was to work on a full recovery. So that I would have something to look forward to, my husband and I planned a cruise through Scandinavia, which we took six months later. Also, I planned my reconstructive surgery a week after returning from the cruise.

While still recovering in the hospital I had one special visitor. My pastor's wife, Arvella Schuller, who had had the same surgery just one year earlier. She brought me a gift... a beautiful bottle of perfume and said, "I brought you this because



you're going to want to feel pretty sooner than you think.”

When Arvella was later asked about this she said, “I did it for Tedi because someone did the same for me a few years earlier when I had my mastectomy.” Those encouraging words at that important time meant the world to me — “You're going to want to feel pretty sooner than you think.”

Another important step in my healing process was the visits I received from women who'd been through mastectomies a few months earlier. It was so reassuring to meet these women and see that they were now leading lives that were alive and vital. Many were young mothers with families to care for just as I was.

What did I learn from this life changing experience?

I learned that I had greater strength, a stronger faith and a more positive attitude. These strengths will help make my future even better.

I learned that it took body, mind and spirit to recover. I continue yearly mammograms, a healthy living lifestyle with lots of exercise and positive thinking.

I committed to help other women who had breast cancer. The Cancer Recovery Foundation International invited me to be a member of their board of trustees. Some years later I related the story of Arvella Schuller and the gift of perfume to my fellow board members.

We made a decision to launch a new breast cancer out reach and formed a partnership with Hour of Power. We call it “Pass It On.” We gave Arvella an award for endorsing our program and presented her with the “Extraordinary Woman Award” for giving hope to breast cancer survivors everywhere.

Today I have the privilege to be a board member of “The Breast Cancer Charities of America” a spin-off of Cancer Recovery Foundation. It's very satisfying to know I am helping to eliminate breast cancer as a life-threatening illness.

Two life-changing quotes that I continue to live by:

“Tough times never last but tough people do.”

Dr. Robert H. Schuller (Arvella's husband.)

“At every moment, our bodies are continually responding to the messages from our minds.”

Margo Adair

So now I ask you, “What messages should your mind be sending to your body?”

If you are facing cancer challenges, I say to you, “You're going to want to feel pretty sooner than you think.”