

Tenacious: Stories from Cancer Survivors

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According to cancer.gov, 18.1 million cancer cases are diagnosed a year; double that by the year 2024. According to trugenx.com, 1 in 3 men and 1 in 2 women have cancer. There is likely someone on a cancer journey right next to you.

Two women from entirely different backgrounds sat down recently to tell their stories of hope, pain, recovery, advocacy, and a life worth fighting for.

Megan Silea, 51, was diagnosed with colon cancer seventeen months ago. Amidst a global pandemic, Silea spent days in the hospital alone after her surgery.

Away from family and friends, she learned to cope with the pain. Proceeding her operation, she could only have one person with her during chemotherapy.

Silea said that the most challenging part of the process was being alone for that extended and not knowing when she would finally see her family.

Diagnosed at 51-years-old was a shock to Silea. After the discovery that her father had polyps and diverticulitis, doctors said that she should have started screenings at 35-years-old.

"What I found out – when I had my colonoscopy – was that [polyps] made me high-risk. And so, I should have started getting screened when I was 45, instead of when I was 50." Silea said. "But nobody ever told me that. I didn't know."

This dumbfound discovery led Silea to promote early and regular colonoscopies. A survivor turned advocate, Silea has found a lot of joy in talking about her journey, all to help people out. She says she'll shout the importance from the rooftops!

Silea has found a community and safe space to ask bizarre, embarrassing, emotional, and profound questions on a Facebook group through these hardships.

"Sometimes you need to know that even though things look really bad right now and are really scary right now, that doesn't mean you should give up. It might still be okay." Silea said. "It really helps having people tell you that who have actually gone through it."

Even so, it's a lot of waiting. She said that while her screenings look clear today, they could be different in a month or two.

"It's kind of a situation where, today, it looks like it's gone, but tomorrow it might not," Silea said. "We just get to be thankful that for today it looks like it's gone and hope that it stays that way."

Susan Trott, 65, has had three forms of cancer throughout her lifetime.

Starting at the young age of 19, she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. After a long-winded – yet successful – stay in San Antonio hospital, Trott went on to live a full life; marriage, babies, the works.

Nevertheless, the effects of her health journey lingered long past San Antonio. During her pregnancies, Trott hemorrhaged for both of them; she spent a whole month in the hospital.

As years flew by, she experienced blood clots, 42 basal cell carcinomas removed, two melanomas removed, and eventually two different breast cancer diagnoses. Despite that, Trott has found immense faith as her safety net.

"Knowing that whatever occurred, He [God] had me in His hands. When I was younger, and my faith wasn't as strong, I thought I was invincible. I was young and stupid!" Trott said. "But as years have gone on, I just saw His [God] hand working through all of it."

Trott said that she was just grateful to be here. After her Hodgkin's disease diagnosis, her complicated pregnancies, her breast cancer journey, her gratitude knows no bounds.

"I didn't think I'd make it to 30-years-old. But, I'm twice that now." Trott continues, "So, I'm just thankful for that."