



2019 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

2nd Place Winner

Emily Ruth John

Picture This

Picture this. You have a nice life, good friends, and a loving family. But that all comes crumbling down when one of the people you love the most in your life is diagnosed with cancer. Well, that's exactly what happened to me when my dad was diagnosed with stage three colorectal cancer last year.

My family and I knew my dad wasn't feeling well, but we never expected anything like this to happen. Getting the news made me feel like a chunk of me had been ripped out. I was scared about what the future held for me, more specifically, if my dad would still be here. However, my dad promised my family and me we would get through this together.

The first step in this scary journey was treatment. The doctor told us that daddy would feel sick from the treatment, but I did not think much of it. Then when my dad started to receive his chemotherapy treatment, he changed. He would feel sick and could not do as much as usual. My dad has always been an all-around happy person, but when that joy slowly started to slip away, I knew this was much more serious than I anticipated.

I needed to step up and help the family more. I started to do little things around the house like empty the dishwasher, keep my room cleaner, and take care of my younger sister, Allie. I continued helping through all my dad's treatment.

Most teenage kids worry if they have friends or if their grades are good, but the stress I felt seemed so much bigger. What would happen to my dad?

Throughout this entire experience, my friends have been by my side the whole way making sure my dad was ok and that I was ok. They were so kind to me the whole time and I am so grateful. When treatment was over, it was on to the next step. My dad was about to have his surgery to remove the cancer. I had a mix of emotions when this occurred. I was happy because the cancer would be removed, but I was also scared because surgery could not go as planned.

I was terrified but something happened that made me feel so happy and like everything would be ok. My best friend, Celia, asked her friends to wear blue, the color of my dad's cancer ribbon, to school on the day of his surgery. It made me feel so good that she would go out of her way to do that for me and it made me feel like everything was ok.

When the surgery was over, it was like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. The surgery was complicated, and the cancer was very hard to remove but, the doctors were successful! My dad's recovery was long and frustrating. It was very hard to watch my dad struggle. It pains me to see others in pain.

My dad's surgery was in October. He continues to recover and try to get back to a normal life before cancer invaded it. Although the process was hard, I learned so much from it. I learned that life is not all about you. Other people have real problems and you need to care for them too. I also learned how to be more responsible and that I have amazing friends that care for me. Most importantly, I learned I have the strongest dad in the world. He was so brave through this whole process and I am so proud of him. I love him very much and I could not ask for a better dad. Now, he is a cancer-free dad.