



# 2019 Ben Strauss Youth Program

## High School

### Teen Essay Contest

# Samantha Cass

## It All Started With Discomfort

The way I found out wasn't the best: I was downstairs with her when she got a call and I noticed that she was writing so I looked at the paper and saw what it said, and I started crying without realizing it and kind of collapsed on the floor like any good daughter would have done.

My mother started to have some discomfort in her stomach area while we were on Christmas break. At that time, we were in Avon, Colorado at a resort called Beaver Creek where we went skiing so there wasn't really anything we could do. Things weren't that bad but when we got home things started to feel worse. When we got home my mom thought it would pass but it didn't, so she finally went to the doctor and got some scans. At first, her doctor said it was an ovarian cyst, but they recommended some more scans and it turns out that it was ovarian cancer. Luckily, we caught it early enough that they could operate on it. When Dr. Chu was performing the surgery, she realized that the cancer was slightly on her uterus. So, just to be safe, the doctor removed her uterus as well.

My mother was in the hospital resting for a few days, and she could only eat liquids for a while which she was not very happy about. On the day I came in, she could eat pureed foods which meant she could eat ice cream and believe me, that made her very happy her face grew a big smile and her eyes widened as she took the first bit of ice. That night that I was there one of my mom's friends, Keri came to visit even though she didn't want anyone but family to see her like this. When Keri was there she brought my mom a big stuffed unicorn. The unicorn was almost about the size of our 4-year-old bullmastiff because my mom loves unicorns. While my mom's friend was still there, we were making jokes about when my mom would fart because her doctor told us that if she farts, then she gets to go home. This means she has shown signs of bowel movements which mean she would be able to function and eat non-Pureed foods. Everyone in the room with us picked a time and that is when she was going to fart and whoever won would get the bracelet my mom was making. Our predictions:

Grandma: 5:00 am  
My mom's friend Keri: 11:20 pm  
Me: 9:45 pm  
Dad: 2:00 am  
Mom: 10:00 pm

Sadly, none of the bets ended up being correct so nobody won; we all said goodnight to my mom and left to let her get some sleep. That night my dad got an email from one of my teachers that said they saw me leave the classroom and didn't come back even though they didn't know I asked to leave and I did come back to the classroom. So, my dad got worried and I don't really like to talk to my dad about how I feel so this worried him. Seeing my dad upset about me not telling him how hard this was for me to deal with made his eyes water; that was the first time I have never seen my dad cry, which of course made me cry. Over the course of the next two days, my mom finally had bowel movements, so she was released from the hospital. For the next 30 days, she had to give her self-blood thinners. In case you don't know, blood thinners are shots and or pills that someone can take to thin their blood after surgery. The doctors don't want a patient's blood to clot which could lead the patient to have another surgery. My mom was receiving the blood thinners through shots. My mom *hates* shots. On March 1st, my mom was finally done with the shot treatments and she had been prescribed six cycles of Chemotherapy. Luckily, she did not need the radiation part.

After the first round of chemo, some of her hair started to fall out which made her upset because the one thing she absolutely hates (maybe even more than shots) is people touching her hair, my mom's hair is straight and blonde, but she has dark blonde roots. She always wanted it to look nice she told me a story about how she used to wake up early to shower, dry her hair, and curl it. My mom started doing that routine in seventh grade. Another story she told me was about how her colleagues at work would touch her hair and she would get mad at them. People would touch her hair to be annoying and to get her attention which made her hate people touching her hair even more. So, when she started losing some of her hair she went and got it cut to about half its original length. She got her haircut on the 14th of March. More recently, she shaved her head on the 22nd. Shaving her head was a really big deal for her because she likes her hair to look good. Since her head is shaved, she looks like her younger brother Joe who always had his head shaved. She doesn't like her head shaved but she got a few head covering. One of them is a plain coral color which is my mother's favorite color, the next one is a mix of colors it consists of green, teal, purple and magenta, the last one is a white base that has neon yellow in it along with teal and pink. that makes her feel beautiful. My mom has been cleared to drive but I don't want her to, and even though she doesn't listen to me all that often, I still want to make sure she is okay. My mom has three more rounds of chemo to go through; she is eager to get them over with because she wants to get out and travel like we normally do. My family normally travels to Costa Rica, St. Barth's, Disney world. It's been tough for me to come

to terms with her having cancer, but it is what it is yeah, she has cancer, but she is fighting it her treatments are almost over and then they will check her to see if it is gone. My mom is officially not allowed to hug anyone anymore until her treatments are over. So far she is doing well but sometimes the treatments get to her and she doesn't feel good but she powers through it she is a fighter.