



# 2020 Ben Strauss Youth Program High School Teen Essay Contest

## Emmy Scheg

### Never Take Anything for Granted

I do not think I will ever forget that day. June 26, 2016. My dad took my stepmom and I out to the deck and sat us down. We had no idea what was going on. He told us that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. My stepmom and I broke down. I was scared. All I heard from the conversation was cancer. My dad had cancer. I remember being at a loss for what to do. My stepmom was almost eight months pregnant, my grandfather was dying, and now my dad was sick.

We found out that there were a few options for treatment, neither one ideal but we had to make do. Option one was radiation but it was possible that it would not be 100% effective. Option 2: surgery, with the possibility of a few risks. After some thought, we agreed surgery would be the best way to go so that there would be no risk of it coming back. We had a plan. We could get through this.

Unfortunately, hours later, my dad and stepmom were out front talking to our neighbors, breaking the news to them. As they were walking back inside, my stepmom fell. I remember hearing the bones break from inside. Then she screamed. It turns out she broke both bones in her right arm. Our plan was officially thrown out the window.

My dad's cancer was put on the back burner as there was nothing we could do until he had surgery, which was set for September 29. My dad took care of my stepmom every day throughout her hospital stay and once she came home. I helped as much as I could and tried to keep sane. By the time I began school, my stepmom had surgery, she had my little sister, I also had surgery and my grandfather died. But, the end of summer did not mean we were finally on the other side of this purgatory.

After my sister was born, my dad's family came down one by one over the weeks to help take care of her as my dad, stepmom, and I were drained. The week of my dad's surgery, my grandparents came down from Rochester, New York to help out. On September 29, I stayed home from school as I knew I would not be focusing on the curriculum but my phone, waiting for updates on my dad. My grandparents stayed at my house to take care of my sister and my stepmom waited at the hospital.

When we were finally able to go and see him, I was scared. I hated seeing my dad stuck in a hospital bed, drained and sickly. I tried to be as strong as I could. I had to help my stepmother as she was a wreck and help take care of my sister as she was not even two months old. I could not break.

Little did I know, the surgery was the easy part. Watching my father recover was horrible. The first two weeks were awful. He was always uncomfortable and in pain and there was nothing anyone could do to help him. I hated it. I tried to help out as much as I could with

the baby so that my stepmom could help my dad. If I was not doing school work, I was helping with taking care of the baby or helping my dad or my stepmom.

We were finally through all of the physical hardships but mentally, none of us were ok. My dad, in particular, had a very rough time. He had been a manual labor worker all his life and all of a sudden he could not do it anymore. Just standing up from the couch or getting out of bed was so hard for him as he was constantly in pain. I know he hated it. He has never been one to let an injury handicap him to the point where he could not go about his everyday life. Unfortunately for him, taking it easy was his only choice and had to become his new normal.

Slowly but surely he recuperated but his cancer had a huge effect on not only his life but the people around him. He still has issues from the surgery that, although have decreased over the years, affect him negatively on a day to day basis. He will never be able to go back to where he was years ago, but he is making do with what he has.

It seems as though all of this happened a millennium ago when it has not even been four years. Although my dad did have cancer, I am grateful it was a type that could be easily dealt with on a medical level. I do not ever want to think about what it would have been like having to watch him go through treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy. My dad is alive and well and I know I will never take that for granted.