2022 Ben Strauss Youth Program

High School

Teen Essay Contest

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Cursed Then Blessed

My life had become full of stress and worry when I found out my mom had cancer. I did not expect my life to change when she had been diagnosed. I did not want to believe that she had been sick for so long and it had been due to cancer. I shut out the idea that my mom had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma because I did not want to believe it myself. I have all these worries and thoughts in my head but I had to keep pushing for my mom because I had to constantly see her and look at her differently, even though it was not her fault. The first day my mom had been diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma, I started looking up ways to get rid of the cancer so she would be healthy fast. As day to day life, it is the only thing I was having in the back of my mind was is she going to be okay, or even get to fully be herself again. I started asking my mom questions like, “Is your hair going to fall out?” “How will it affect you looking in the mirror?” But those things don’t matter, the only thing that really matters is if she's going to get her strength back and how it will affect her body to get better through treatments. My mom even worried if I would be embarrassed because of what my friends would think if she didn’t have hair. Those things did not matter to me anymore because I did not want her to feel discouraged or embarrassed because of how it affected her outside appearance. When people started asking me the same questions I had been asking my mom I realized how overwhelming it got. I realized how overwhelming it was for my mom especially when she was the one going through this journey.

When your parents have cancer it affects your day-to-day life unexpectedly. My mom couldn’t do as much and had to be bedridden for days after going to get treatments. She couldn’t work anymore because she had been so weak, after going to appointments for fluids. Even the days when she had been rushed to the hospital had been the scariest, especially the first time being with my mom while she turned gray and was shaking as I held her. It had been frightening because you are not used to this new way of life. We all had to try and stay healthy and keep positive for my mom in this scary time because even the little things like her not having enough fluids or low blood pressure can affect her so much while undergoing chemotherapy. My mom continues staying strong for her whole family while she was not even able to take care of herself.

As a teenager transitioning into high school the last thing I wanted to hear was that my mom would have to go through cancer and a whole new journey in life. As people found out a lot of people had changed towards me they either wanted to be more considerate to me because my mom was sick, or some people had thought I was making up that my mom had been sick and making up what she was experiencing which had become frustrating to hear because I obviously did not want this for my mom or for anyone to go through. While going to school I had been worried if my mom was going to be alright at home because she needed assistance most of the time at home. I had a hard time focusing at school, and being around people since it had affected me in many ways, although I did not want my mom to think that it was her fault, because she has cancer. She has always been a loving mom no matter what and always listens to me even when she has so many things going through her head as well.

I am lucky enough that my mom is still doing okay and to still be able to have her to this day since my mom has been ill for many years. I am glad that the doctors were able to figure out it was cancer to help her get healthy again after her chemo journey. She has stayed strong for so long and I am so grateful that my mom was strong enough also to get into chemotherapy and try her best to be healthy and get through her journey even as challenging as it was for my mom.