

One year ago this May 30th I was sitting with my mom while my husband helped my dad work on our car when I got the call. The doctors' voice over the phone seemed unreal. I felt like I was in a nightmare when I heard the words, "You have cancer." I cried in my mom's arms and texted my husband to come in right away. When my husband came in we cried in each other's arms. Before my husband met me his fiancée died of cancer and now his wife had cancer.

After my diagnosis I had many appointments and so much information that I felt overwhelmed. I had two spots of ductal cancer in my right breast, stage 1 and stage 0. My Aunt had the BRCA gene so immediately I had to be tested for the gene.

When I tested positive for the BRCA 2 gene I was given choices. I could do a lumpectomy and they would do frequent test to check for reoccurrence or a mastectomy and I wouldn't have to worry about it again. I kept thinking no one should have to decide to keep or lose a part of their body. How could I make that decision? They also highly suggested a hysterectomy. My husband and I discussed my options with doctors and each other. I decided to have the mastectomy and a hysterectomy. I cried about it, but I decided this would give me peace of mind.

I had high hopes for reconstruction during the mastectomy, but the plastic surgeon said because of the size of my breast I'd have to wait three months after surgery. He said I would have more than one surgery to reconstruct my breast. I thought my world had ended. I couldn't imagine waking up with nothing. I feared I'd look ugly.

July 17th I had my mastectomy. For a while I couldn't even look at my chest. While recovering from my surgery my friend Denise got me in contact with Mary Law. Mary took me to my first meeting of Link By Pink. I was conflicted with weather or not I should have reconstruction. During group I shared my conflict. Some shared about their reconstruction and some told how they were happy going flat. That night I decided I didn't want to go through anymore surgeries other than the hysterectomy.

Linked By Pink has also helped me pay bills while I was off from work. I feel comfortable going to meetings and sharing with people who understand how cancer changes your life. November 2, 2018 I had my hysterectomy and once again received support from Linked By Pink.

Going through cancer gave me something else to write about in my blog. Cancer is another challenge in my life I have overcome and I can write about to help others. Now when I look in the mirror I see a beautiful woman with the scars that tell the story of the battle I fought and overcame.

~ Aimee Gross
Erie, PA