

# Want to know how I did it?

On May 2, 2012 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was told that I would need surgery, chemotherapy and radiation in order to beat the new challenge that I was faced with. I gathered information from the brochures that my doctors gave me on breast cancer and what fascinated me the most was the importance of staying active while being treated. Staying active is the primary and fundamental element of managing fatigue and lymphedema (swelling of the arm post surgery) during the healing process. In order to set myself in motion and stay active, I approached Nadia, a personal fitness trainer, who I later discovered would be one of the most important people on my journey. I had met Nadia at Taste of the Kingsway the previous September and picked up information about her fitness studio. At the time, I wanted to get back in shape however, I lacked the drive and the attitude to push myself to meet my personal health goals. Consequently, commitments with work and family always stood in the way of my workout goals, inevitably pushing my goals to the bottom of my priority list.

Naturally, being diagnosed with breast cancer made me significantly reprioritize my life, allowing for my health to take priority over all the insignificant excuses that had always held me back from achieving my fitness goals. Nadia and I discussed my treatment plan and we started having training sessions together in preparation for my surgery in June. The pre-surgery personal training aided tremendously with the healing process post-surgery with my body being able to bounce back at a much faster rate. Although I had some limitations post-surgery, Nadia was able to carefully see when my mobility was challenged and make me stop or adapt the workout. Although we were making great progress, I was told that I would need a second surgery in August and our priorities shifted from the initial goal of strengthening post-surgery to once again the importance of a program to reduce the risk of lymphedema.

The most difficult treatment began in late August and lasted until the end of December; chemotherapy. My chemotherapy sessions were spaced three weeks apart, and it would take me roughly ten days post treatment to feel like myself again and feel well enough to exercise. These personal training sessions were very tough both physically and emotionally, as chemotherapy weakens the immune system and energy levels. Nadia was able to adapt each session according to how my body was feeling that particular day. There were days when my heart rate would rise above 170 beats per minute, when I felt light headed, and Nadia had to slow me down. The most important factor was that I had to listen to what my body was telling me.



In January, I began the radiation treatment for thirty days. In order to maximize the workout we had to once again adapt the program around my own ability to move my arm and chest. At times, the movements and stretches were painful but I would persevere as I wanted to feel normal like everyone else. I am blessed to have had Nadia as a trainer and as a new friend, with her motivating and encouraging attitude throughout the entirety of my breast cancer experience. Today, I am full of energy and I have muscles in my arms that I didn't have before my treatment began. Staying active is the key to a healthy body and healthy mind. If you are ever faced with a health challenge, I encourage you to take action and put your health first. Being active keeps you positive, strong and in control. Thank you Nadia!

*~ Norma Beauchamp*

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