

My Journey

Between 2015 and 2019 I went through major life changes and faced the most challenging times of my life on all the levels – mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. I chose to dissolve a 22 year marriage (26 year relationship), move out of my home away from my two children, and walk away from my partnership interest in a successful 18 year small business that served as my main source of income. It was terrifying, disheartening, life altering and humbling. My circumstances forced me to make difficult choices that were painful for myself and family. Yet, in the long run, the choices made were correct for me.

I was faced with the choice of staying the course and continuing on a downward spiral that manifested (slowly over years) into physical ailments (stomach and digestive issues), states of deep depression, advanced stages of codependency, exhaustion, manic episodes and a mental health diagnosis (that will remain a permanent part of my medical record). There is the definition of insanity that states: insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result. I woke up to that fact, in a most unpleasant fashion. I finally got sick of being sick. So, I decided to make a change and listen to my inner knowing. “I can stay here living a half-hearted life, continuing to deplete my life energy, and dying a slow death or I can leave, start a new chapter, free to make my own decisions and choices and live a fulfilled life.”

I chose the latter and spent the last 3 years mending deep, lifelong wounds. Seeking professional help, diving into research, contemplating options and concentrating on the discovery of a higher sense of purpose for my life. I made huge strides in my recovery process, feeling stronger, more empowered, balanced, and committed to living a full life. And then, crisis struck ... again.

In early March 2020 (literally in line with the COVID outbreak) I felt a small pea-sized lump on my chest and instantly felt dis-ease. I scheduled appointments with a primary care team. During my initial consultation, I was advised it was likely nothing. The following week I discovered a lump on my back. Over the course of the next 8 weeks, I was diagnosed with Stage IV triple-negative metastatic breast cancer. Tumors were discovered in my lymph nodes, adrenal glands, left breast, lung, ovary, chest and my bones. YES! My bones. I was given statistically 2 years to live (if I chose treatment) or months possible weeks to live (if I chose to deny treatment), no possibility or hope for a cure, no guarantee the treatment will work, no certainty of how my body would respond, and the lump on my chest had grown to the size of a golf-ball that was red, tender to the touch and “angry looking” - as described by my Integrative Oncologist during a tele-med visit. This was an incredibly unsettling, stressful and challenging time for my 48-year old self to face.



May 12, 2020 – Three days before first infusion.

I was under immense mental, emotional and physical pressure to make swift correct decisions as to my best course of action. Literally life and death decision making, quite daunting. I was also faced with the painful task of informing my loved ones. Looking my children in the eyes and telling them I had been diagnosed is the hardest thing I have had to do. It was sad, frightening and unnerving. The only assurance I could provide – then, now and ongoing - was that “I am in good hands, have access to excellent care and we (myself and the medical team) simply do not know. We will not know until we begin down the path of discovery and recovery. We are hoping for the best.” That is what I shared with them through tears and hugs.

Coming to a decision on treatment proved to be like a queasy roller coaster ride. After a series of biopsies and primary source identification, the prescribed treatment was weekly chemotherapy in conjunction with bi-weekly immunotherapy, for the rest of my life. I was informed the goal of treatment was to maintain a positive quality of life for as long as possible. A timeline was provided that included treatment consultation, port install, and date for first treatment. The night before I was scheduled to have the port installed, I received paperwork detailing the prescribed treatments and possible side effects (severe to mild). After reading through the material, my heart sank, I felt a well of negative emotions and my gut was screaming, “NO WAY, nuh-uh!”. I was in freak-out mode. I was on board with the immunotherapy. Just not the chemotherapy.

First Responders

This was the same night I had scheduled a call to share my solemn news with one of my dearest and longest standing friends. She herself had been diagnosed with cancer, successfully completed treatment and was on the path of recovery and survival. Turns out she was the best person I could have spoken to at that moment. She was the epitome of grace under pressure. She knows me well and loves me unconditionally. She took the news in stride, set her own feelings aside in the moment, felt my angst, confusion and doubts. She calmed my nerves, helped put things into perspective and honored the fact that it was my decision to make. She suggested I get a second opinion and not to make any final decision until I had more clarity. This was solid advice, which I followed (and recommend to anyone).

The next morning my Dad was driving me to get my port installed and I voiced my hesitation. He understood and agreed (tearfully) he would likely feel the same way, the choice was mine to make and encouraged me to cancel my port install and gather more information before making a final decision. Again, advice I chose to follow.

My oncologist placed an urgent referral request, I was able to get a second opinion quickly with an oncologist at the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. I am grateful to live in an area that is a centrally integral in the discovery, research and development of promising cancer treatments and remedies. He concurred the treatments prescribed were the best available for a patient in my circumstances. He indicated, given my biopsy results, a strong likelihood that I would respond positively to the immunotherapy. He informed me of clinical trials currently underway and mentioned working closely with Dr. Leanna Standish. Come to find out, Dr. Standish is a pioneer in the field of integrative oncology. This was my first introduction to the AIMS Institute. Most importantly, I walked out of the appointment armed with more knowledge, a feeling of hope and greater clarity. Thrice on green-light advice.

The final step before beginning treatment was approval from my oncologist and insurance carrier. Prior to my referral visit, we had discussed my option of moving forward with immunotherapy only. He informed me at the time this would be a first for a patient and his practice, that it could take up to 6-8 weeks before I see any response to treatment, (whereas with chemo the affects would be immediate)

and he would need to submit it for approval. By the time we reconvened, approvals were granted, and my first cycle of treatment was scheduled to begin May 15th.

My Results

While I was informed response to the immunotherapy could take 6-8 weeks, three weeks after my first infusion the tumor on my chest had reduced by 80-90%. I was thrilled and my doctors were pleasantly surprised. I continue to respond incredibly well to my treatments, have not yet suffered any serious side effects, have spent more quality time with family and loved ones than ever before and have a high quality of life. All in all, my doctor has said, this is a time for celebration. In addition to the immunotherapy, I have been prescribed protocols by an Integrative Oncologist that are also helping my body move into greater balance, homeostasis. On a personal level, daily meditation, writing, researching, and listening to music all serve as physiological self-soothing techniques that relieve mental and emotional pressures and keep me connected to my spirit. It is a curative holistic approach to wellbeing that is serving me well.



June 4, 2020 – Three weeks after first infusion.

A Personal Plea

What I am asking is continued support of the stellar medical treatment and freedoms I'm currently awarded as a patient, namely the freedom to make my own informed decisions as to the course of treatment that best serves my wellbeing and overall quality of life. When I have an inner green light and in turn my choices are respected, honored, and granted it has proven to help, heal and relieve my personal pain and suffering on all levels – mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. As a patient, I consider any medicine, protocol, and therapeutic method that holds promise and potential in helping me to recover or find relief from pain and suffering to be curative.

In my experience, alternative treatments and practices have proven to be far more efficient and effective than traditional mainstream methods at relieving my anxieties, overcoming unhealthy habitual behaviors and establishing healthy personal boundaries.

Over the last 7-10 years, I have consulted with psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, and doctors. Therapeutic methods that have proven most effective and efficient for me include kinetic testing, EFT (tapping therapy), hypnotherapy and most recently KAP therapy. Psylocibin therapy falls in line with these alternative natural forms of therapy and I am humbly requesting safe access to these promising therapeutic methods.

At this point, the only 100% guaranteed fact of life is death. The Right to Try legislation - that is presently in place at both the state (my state of Washington) and federal levels - is a door of opportunity to the potential of promising curative methods for patients suffering from terminal illnesses. Approval of this application for licensure is a necessity in order that I may walk through that door of opportunity into the land of promising potential with integrity, dignity and stability. As the saying goes, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Denial of the license closes that door and leaves me stuck waiting outside this realm of possibility, doctor note in hand on the doorstep of despair. Ouch and Brrrrrr! That would be a big pill of disappointment to swallow that will leave a bitter taste in my mouth, another wound that cuts to my bones from which I must heal and a depletion of my limited life energy resources (time, willingness, commitment, money etc.). Right now, I have an internal green light indicating I am headed in the correct direction and this is the next step on my journey.

Making Good Choices

To me, life is a journey of adventurous self-discovery and growth. After YEARS (48 and still counting) of astute observation (adolescent wallflower), unshakeable faith in self-knowledge (books are my go to knowledge boosters and I ask a lot of questions), boots-on-the-ground experience, heart-on-the-sleeve vulnerabilities, and a life-on-the-line reality; I've become acutely aware of my gifts and talents to deeply absorb, objectively understand, and always honor my inner Truth and divine guidance systems. The systems only fail when I fail them. Meaning when I am disconnected and don't listen to my whole being, pay attention to my personal warning signs, when I allow personal healthy boundaries to be breached, and lose faith in my inner decision-making authority and/or let others influence my decisions; I engage in half-hearted commitments that result in keeping me captive in a negative pattern/cycle of pain and suffering that continually repeats. When I follow my inner knowing system and make correct (helpful and healing) decisions in the present, life flows effortlessly and peacefully, the emotional pleasure/pain wave begins to still, and my heart fills with a sense of joy, peace, harmony and equilibrium. In a nutshell, making good choices is helpful. Making bad choices is hurtful. As a terminally ill patient, what I need the most right now is the freedom to continue making my own health care choices and have safe access to treatments that will help me.

The Gift of Far-Sightedness and Power of Faith

Regardless of my diagnosis I still hold strong faith in my dreams. Dreams I wish to see manifest before I leave this earthly plane ...

A cure for my dis-ease. Inner peace. Experience true love with a loving partner.

Ambitious, I know. Yet these are the goals I am willing to commit my limited life energy and resources to. I have a choice to curl up in the fetal position, give up and stay stuck in a pattern of victimization. Or I can choose to try. I can wake every day and make a conscious choice to take one step forward to achieving these goals. This is how I choose to walk the remainder of my journey, the role model I aspire to be for my children, and the growth I strive to obtain before I pass away.

Who cares?

Who am I and why should you care about my story? Because it is a timeless story of human suffering. I am human. I suffer, have suffered and will continue to suffer if I do not choose what is correct for me at present and in turn have those choices respected. I have an inner guidance system that never fails – I have grown to know what is correct for me through years of self-observation, professional therapy, personal research and trial and error. I am your daughter, sister, mother, lover and friend. I have an

open mind, warm heart, kind soul and insightful spirit. If we ever spent time together, I believe you would find me to be quite pleasant, relatable and a whole lot of fun. I simply wish for a deep, overwhelming sense of inner peace, joy, and satisfaction when my physical body is laid to rest (returns to Earth). That is my definition of a successful life. A life well lived is a life fulfilled. I wish that for everyone.

Gratitude

I hold a deep amount of gratitude and appreciation for everyone involved in this impactful endeavor. Thank you sincerely for your commitment, compassion, and graciousness. Looking forward to making huge strides in helping patients find relief, recovery and comfort as we walk this difficult path together.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erinn', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Erinn Baldeschwiler