

"I went in February 2017 for my first mammogram because I was 40 years old and that's what you do. I got a call a few days later and they said, 'We just want to look at it again.' I ended up going for multiple biopsies. I went through a stereo X-ray, a guided biopsy, an ultrasound-guided biopsy and an MRI-guided biopsy. I had five growths in my right breast. No symptoms, no idea, no clue, no pain.

I'm a dietitian and a yoga instructor. I didn't think I would end up with this. It's like I won the breast cancer lottery.

I ended up getting my chemo treatments through the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in Chicago. Each time I went out to Chicago, we took complete advantage and explored. I loved it out there because one of the things that they focused on was yoga - they had mind-body counselors, the whole gamut.

I met with a breast surgeon who originally wanted to perform just a big lumpectomy. I told him to take the whole thing off. I'll take the fake boobs. That was one of my silver linings - I was going to be perky for life! That was my hashtag: [#perkyforlife](#). I went through four rounds of chemo and it sucked. It was not fun. I think the hardest part for me was honestly losing my hair because I had really long hair.

I had a mastectomy on my right side with reconstruction in May, chemo through the summer and then my exchange in October.

Around the holidays, the adrenaline I was living on that whole year just stopped and I could feel the anxiety building up. Yoga and journaling were helping, but I needed to talk to somebody who knew what was going on with my life.

I've become involved with the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition and the young survivor's group especially. One of the good things is that as soon as you're diagnosed, you meet other survivors and women who are going through it, and you're immediately in a sisterhood. It's not a sisterhood you want to belong to, but there's this great cheerleading support of each other.

I don't think I would have been able to beat cancer if it weren't for all of the yoga and nutrition aspects. I was still doing yoga when I was going through chemo because you can't just sit there. Getting into yourself and really being in tune with your body and fighting it with everything that you have is what you need to do. It helped me to build respect and love for my body even with everything I was going through.

I ended up having this area of really thin skin where the mastectomy was and I could almost feel the implant. The plastic surgeon did a little revision to put some tissue in there as an extra layer of protection in May 2018. Then, there was one little spot that was always black and blue. We kept an eye on it, but finally the surgeon said, 'All right. We're gonna cut it out, stitch it up, be done with it.' That was in June. The doctor took the stitches out and it got infected. In August, I went into the hospital because I was septic. I had my implant emergently removed. I was on IV antibiotics. That just ended a couple of weeks ago, so needless to say, my [#perkyforlife](#) is not right now. I'm done and that's over with, so I can breathe now and kind of get back to normalcy.

I look back on it and it's like, 'Oh, my God. Did I really go through all this?' One of my big things is to get everybody to do self-breast exams. Even if you're 25 years old and you think you're safe. It's really scary but it's definitely a disease that you can beat."

- Jennifer Muzzi, Adjunct Professor in [UD Behavioral Health & Nutrition](#)



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