Did Cancer Change My Life? A Pro Bodybuilder’s Story

I had cancer. I am a 25 year old male who was diagnosed with Type 1B Non-seminoma Testicular Cancer on August 22nd 2016. A type of Testicular Cancer that is an aggressive form that had begun to spread beyond its tumor to the vessels leading to my lymph nodes, which could have then metastasized to larger organs of my body if I didn’t take action. Late last year I was advised to take action first by having a radical oriectomy, which was a complete removal of the infected testicle, and then chemotherapy. Collectively, my journey with cancer spanned only about half a year. Now that might not seem like a long time, but with cancer each day can seem like an eternity. To give a taste of what I mean, in just 3 months, I had logged over 170 hours in a hospital bed hooked up to a continuous drip of chemotherapy drugs being infused intravenously into my chest. This of course not including dozens and dozens of appointments, scans, and blood draws.

As an individual who encompasses nutrition and fitness routinely in his life, is a professional bodybuilder, and manages the nutrition of numerous clients on a weekly basis for a profession, the news of this completely shook my foundation. I lived my life healthier than 99% of people! The age old question, “why me” always seemed to sit in the back of my mind.

Some of you have already heard my story, those who are familiar with me or have read previous blogs of mine, but what I have yet to address publically, is if it changed me. That is, did cancer change my life? Did it teach me something? Did it make me a better person? Do I view life differently now? I mean let’s face it, not all of us experience serious disease, life-changing moments, or near death experiences, but we always hear people claim that it changed them or maybe we just have always wondered what the person learned from it. So let me tell you my story. Let me tell you what cancer did and didn’t do for me. This is by no means a universal feeling, this is my experience, my thoughts, my account.

Cancer didn’t save me. What it did though, was it smacked me in the face. It opened my eyes to how I was living and it slowed down my life just long enough to see what I was doing right with my life and what I was doing wrong with it. It allowed me to take time to breathe and self-analyze where I was, how I treated people, and what I wanted in life. Don’t get me wrong, I felt like I was a good person. I had a stable relationship, in which I was recently engaged, had a great family, great friends, and even had a successful business that I owned. I had competed in over 6 fitness shows and had done exceptionally well in each, and felt I was on my way to continue to see success in many facets of my life. I felt I was compassionate, did a good job in remaining humble, and overall felt like I had my head on straight. So no, I can’t say cancer really saved me from the life I was living or really opened my eyes to a new lifestyle…. But then again?

Cancer didn’t save me, but in a way it kind of did. I know I know, you might think I’m crazy as I just said it didn’t over the entire duration of the last paragraph, but let me explain. I just told you that it didn’t save me from the life I was living beforehand, but I think what it did was save me from a life that I was headed towards.

A few months prior to being diagnosed with cancer, I started to feel run down---go figure right? Well, while I’m sure the cancer was a main cause, I just felt like my life was on autopilot. Sure, autopilot to a potentially bright future, but I don’t know, I felt detached from my own life. I felt as if I was numb to the sensation that is happiness, pleasure, emotion, and drive. I knew what I had to do each day and was disciplined enough to do it, but never reached for more. I felt my relationships with those closest to me were becoming distant and I never felt “in the moment” when creating memories with them. The odd thing was that I didn’t really connect with this, until I started chemotherapy. I’m not sure if it was the hours and hours a week laying in a bed self-reflecting or the constant nauseated feeling in the pit of my stomach from the medication, but life felt real again. I felt things more. I cared more. I wanted more.

Now again, I felt like I had lived my life pretty positively leading up to these moments, so I can’t say there were many moments of feeling regret about what I had or had not done yet in life, but I just felt motivated for the first time in a long while. Actually let’s take that back a step; I felt annoyed! Annoyed that something in my life was holding me back from continuing it. I knew that I had to take care of this problem head on and that required patience and bit of suffering, but the idea of sitting around made me antsy to take off running with my life again.

So if I’m to come full circle with this question; cancer didn’t save me, but it did help me remember what is important in my life and what it means to actually live life. It inspired me get back to my best self and stop doubting myself on anything I was fearful of. I mean hell, I just took on cancer and kicked its ass, and so what else is there to really be scared of? In an ironic way, cancer took my self-confidence and feeling of invincibility away from me once it first was discovered and as I started to see my body battle it, but ultimately the battle reinstated it all to a higher degree as I came out on top.

Currently I’m 4 months into remission and sticking to my promise of not letting fear hold me back. My relationships with family and friends are stronger than ever, and I feel life again. Additionally I have taken on a role to write and share my story along with other fitness topics on an amazing platform, yes Healthost, where I get to help others in all facets of health, nutrition, and fitness.

So I guess, thanks cancer, because of my battle with you;

Life is good. I’m motivated. I’m healthy. I’m me.