



**STRONG
Transformation
Challenge
Winner!**

Kelly Pereira

When Kelly joined the STRONG Transformation Challenge, she didn't know what would be in store for her just a few months later. Initially signing up as a way to prioritize herself and reduce pain caused from stress and too much sitting, she learned in spring 2021 that she had breast cancer. Leaning on survival stories of other women within the STRONG community, Kelly was filled with hope, and she booked a photoshoot prior to her mastectomy, determined to memorialize the strong body that had seen her through 40 years and the birth of two children.

WRITTEN BY CHELSEA CLARKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL BUCETA

“For me, my diagnosis was a call to find more joy and to be true to myself. I’m doing that through exercise.”

Choosing to Celebrate

Kelly was shocked and terrified when she received her diagnosis, but reading about other women who beat cancer in the pages of STRONG over the years strengthened her resolve to not only overcome it, but to thrive, and she decided to document just how strong she was in photos. “I didn’t know if I was going to lose a part of my body or go through treatment,” she says. “I had to celebrate myself and stop waiting to be the ‘perfect’ size or shape.”

Finding Community

Building a support network was integral to Kelly’s emotional healing. “I was open with friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues about the diagnosis, and was overwhelmed by the care and support shown,” she says. She’s even participating in a University of Toronto study that measures breast cancer survivor’s fitness motivation when paired with a partner.

Who She Is

AGE: 41

HOMETOWN:
Aurora, Ontario,
Canada

GIG: Elementary
School Teacher

Soul Fuel

“Being healthy doesn’t only mean eating well and exercising. It also means finding joy in your daily life and doing activities that fill your soul,” says Kelly.

Creating Awareness

“Exercise is medicine in oncology,” says Kelly, who’s adamant about spreading the word about the effect that fitness has on cancer prevention and limiting reoccurrence. “Just as awareness about heart health involves exercise, there needs to be more awareness about the benefits of exercise for cancer survival and prevention.”