**Six Ways Breast Cancer Made Me Fearless**

Kris Hallenga knows a thing or two about adversity. Diagnosed with incurable breast cancer in her 20's and overcoming multiple obstacles, Kris has defied the odds and survived to inspire countless others around the world, especially young women. She admits she had no business experience, yet has demonstrated an amazing ability to lead, embrace challenges, and build an innovative non-profit, earning her accolades such as the most “inspirational” and most “admired” young CEO of this generation. [During a SpartanUp Podcast,](http://www.spartan.com/en/media/podcast/episodes?article=31644) Kris shared some important lessons about her battle with cancer, running her charity Coppafeel, and appreciating the little things in life.

**You never know who you're speaking to and who you can inspire.** People don't spend enough time talking to people they don't know. Think of all the interactions you miss out on when you're in the same routine. We get used to ignoring people -- literally shutting people out – usually out of fear or inattention. Open the door. Smile. This one really resonates for me. I couldn’t begin to list the number of business and personal relationships I’ve made by talking to strangers – who are no longer strangers to me.

**Challenges can't consume you.** (In fact, they can consume you. But don’t let them.) Kris decided to use her experiences and struggles to help others. Get over the obstacles and don't wallow in the misery for too long. Have your pity-me moment, then start to build yourself back up. Often, it's not until something terrible happens that you know what you're made of. It took cancer for Kris, but, hopefully, for others the catalyst will be something less dire.

**Recruit the help of others and let them carry the load**. When it came to running her own charity and having a meaningful impact, Kris used fundraisers, who she describes as, "People doing amazing things for us just off their own back." Much like a Spartan race, Kris states, "People do crazy things for good causes." Get out there and spread your message. What gets you up in the morning is the fact that others are out there helping too.

**Be fearless.** When asked what scares her, Kris paused a moment, and said, with absolute firmness,

“Nothing.” To me, it’s all about your frame of reference. “When you've been diagnosed with cancer there's nothing scarier than that. Five and a half years on, I've learned to cope and to build a life around it that I love." It doesn't have to be cancer that shocks you into a braver version of yourself but understand what fear is and learn how to control it. Life is going to throw some haymakers your way, learn to throw some back. When asked if she feared failure, Kris said, "When you've been diagnosed with incurable cancer, there’s nothing else to fear."

**Know yourself inside and out**. Kris runs a campaign called: “What normal feels like.” In this campaign, women learn to describe the size of their breasts beyond simply saying “big” or “small.” This becomes empowering because people too often surface scan, not really looking beyond the obvious. And women do it to themselves. Kris encourages all of us – both men and women – to get to know our bodies. Self-exam can make all the difference. In fact, it can save your life.

**Exercise is therapeutic.** For Kris, treatments help and she's constantly in treatment. But the road to recovery is a lifestyle. Eating healthy food, and getting what Kris describes as "gentle exercise:" Kiel Pilates, she has realized that helping her body and being fitter changed how she lived in it.

Kris' message is simple yet profound: "You only have one shot at this, you have two boobs and they need to be looked after. Get in touch with your body. Be your own health advocate. No one else will be." Know that everyone has terrible days or, as Kris puts it, "Realize that if you can achieve a little thing that makes you happy, you can make a big difference, and that will get you out of bed."