

Breast Cancer Awareness

School Psychology

Infant Loss

A Passion for Dance

Entrepreneurship

Health Transformation



FemaleGang

Dare to Dream, A Passion for Dance



I've always been a creative person. Ever since I can remember, you can be anything you dream but..... As women we are told to dream, yet it's always followed by a "but." Somehow it's become a scary thing, dare to dream. For me, dance was always a dream. Dance is and always has been a passion of mine. That crazy mind altering, heart consuming passion. BUT..... "dance doesn't pay the bills" "barely any dancer really makes it" and the best.... "aren't dancers much taller than you". And to be completely honest, for a while I believed it. I believed I couldn't make it. I believed I could love it but only as a small portion of a "normal" life. Then 8 years ago, my family experienced the unthinkable. My mom had a brain aneurysm. She survived and thrived but it gave me a new perspective on life. The Carpe diem moment, if you will. Realizing how special life is, gave me the courage to try something exciting.....to go against the grain....to not care what people thought....and to dare to dream. Not too much longer after, I stumble into burlesque. Literally, stumbled. I met a few positive people, and made some great connections, and there I was ~ on the stage.



Fast forward a few years, I dared to dream even bigger, I was going to produce my own burlesque show - Femmes & Follies. At that time, burlesque wasn't super popular in the area and was considered taboo, Fetish, or hush hush. And don't kid yourself, many circles still see it that way. But I learned, my power suit was my own skin! And I was always wearing it. Understanding the power, confidence and guts came from within! Yeah, it's not conventional but it can translate to any part of life. Owning your own female energy, honing your craft and believing in yourself. Be passionate about something, hold it dear to you, and exude the power from within.

Little did I know, "making it" comes from within. You decide your own definition of success. It's up to you to be proud of what you accomplish.

My little show grew into more than I could have dreamt. Femmes & Follies has grown into the largest burlesque show in all of central Florida. A type of show that is accessible to many different walks of life. A mixture of all cabaret arts - dance, burlesque, aerial, pole, fire performance, singing, comedy, limitless possibilities! And something sexy. (I know, so often we are taught that's not ok. But feeling sexy is a beautiful feeling. As women, we should welcome and embrace it rather than hide it.

I love finding performers with amazing energy and passion. And even more amazing, giving them the ability to share their passion on the stage.

I am lucky enough to have not one but two passions. I love being an artist but I also equally love animal rescue! I have been volunteering with Suncoast Animal league for more years than I can even count. Suncoast animal league operates solely on donations. So as much as we would love to think puppy kisses pay the bills, animal rescue relies a lot on fundraising! One crazy idea snowballed into another and before you know it, I'm the crazy dog lover that creates off the wall fundraisers. Femmes & Follies: Rhinestones and Rescues combines both my loves. A burlesque show that raises money for animal rescue! November 10th will be the 6th year in a row. The performers donate their performances and tips, bartenders donate their time and tips, all for animal rescue. Since it's inception, we have raised over \$35,000. This year, our goal will be \$10,000. With raffles, liquor sponsors and some beautiful performances, I believe we can do it.

So in short, dare to dream, make your own skin your power suit, and chase that passion. Don't wait for the carpe diem moment, reach deep down and believe in a wild crazy idea. Believe in yourself so strongly that it doesn't matter what others say.

-Katie James
Producer ~ Performer
Femmes & Follies
www.FemmesandFollies.com



A smiling woman with dark, curly hair is the central focus of the image. She is wearing a dark, textured jacket over a white top. She is holding a thin, light-colored stem with a small, feathery seed head. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green and yellow foliage, suggesting an autumn or spring setting. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting her features.

Entrepreneurship

Those who adapt survive

As far as I can remember, I have always been the type of person to live life as I want it and in my own terms. My name is Marcathia Chalut, I am an entrepreneur.

Born in Haiti and immigrated with my family to Montreal, Canada in 2001.

This was my first challenge in life, because overnight I had to leave my family, my friends, my country... everything I knew was left behind. Despite my young age, I understood that I had to seize this "opportunity" to create a good life for myself.

I was very lucky because I found, here, a second family and made new friends filled with love.

Now, Let's Talk Business

I would love to tell you more about my life; however, the main purpose of this article is to share my entrepreneurial experience with you guys. I hope by reading this, it will inspire you to pursue your passion, your dreams and adapt yourself to each opportunity or obstacles that you will cross your path.

While I was studying Business Management in college, it dawned on me that perhaps I should launch my own business. I thought, "I am doing pretty darn good in Business, so it should be easy for me to have my own business too." Boy, was I wrong! Let me tell you why.

In November 2015 my sister and I decided to start a catering service inspired by Haitian dishes in the Plateau -Mont-Royal. Again, I said to myself, "It will be easy... I lived in this neighborhood for more than 10 years, I know the market and food is a common way for people to connect...I got this!"

Three years later, reality hit. I was buried in debt, fell into depression and thought maybe this "entrepreneurial thing" is not for me after all. At that point, I had two options; to either quit or to adapt my strategy with this new reality.

I am not a quitter; therefore, I decided to redirect myself into a different game plan: Network Marketing. In today's world, social media and the internet are the main source of attraction for consumption. For anyone that is willing to learn, the internet offers great learning opportunities like tutorials, reviews, webinars, etc. It is all about networking yourself with the right crowd which will enable you to reach your main goal.

Surround Yourself with People Who Believe in You

We need role models, people who inspire us, partners who will motivate us when we are down. Remember when I said that I found a family and friends who were loving and caring? They were always there for me! They reminded me of the many lives I have impacted and that I am on a mission to help many others. I had to evolve, adapt and do better now that I am more knowledgeable about entrepreneurship.

Do the Work

Within a 3 months period, I left my 9 to 5 job to focus on my business. I work my online store in the health and beauty field, I'm also managing the social media accounts for a jewelry company. I can truly say without a doubt in my mind that a lot of positive moments happened in the last few months, which confirms that I got this and I'm on the right track.

I am an entrepreneur, but I'm well aware that the success that I envision for myself won't come to me in a silver platter. I have to put my best foot forward and do the work. Do I get tired? Yes. Do I give up? No, because everyday is a hustle, a new opportunity to be better, a better version of myself.

This is Where I am Now.

It's all about the mindset. I changed how I think. I shifted my "employee mindset" into the mindset of an entrepreneur. I give more contributions in what I'm engaged in, I have fun while doing it and I invest in my people.

I am working hard, with more confidence.

I am Grateful!

Now, I have a better understanding about my expertise in helping others in different aspect of their lives and set up their projects. I work in partnership with other entrepreneurs like myself in the health and beauty industry, but also in event planning to help increase their self-confidence, change their mindset and find the motivation to conquer their dreams.

THINK BIG!

Last but not the least, self-confidence is necessary for any entrepreneur. You need to know that there are higher goals you can reach in your business journey. Don't just settle, create the life that you want by doing little actions everyday that pushes you outside of your comfort zone, think big! Bet on yourself, believe in yourself, because if you don't then you can't expect others to believe in you.

Do not hesitate to contact me; let's get through the last quarter of 2019 and start of 2020 in the most powerful way possible!

Marcathia Chalut

-xx-

Photos by:

@phonsie.photography



Infant Loss & Love



When a child loses a parent, they are considered an orphan. When a spouse loses a husband or wife, they are considered a widow. What is a parent classified as when they lose a child? There is no word, no word to describe the unbearable pain. When my twin boys passed away, that is what I felt, unbearable gut-wrenching pain. No woman enters a pregnancy thinking the worst could happen, mostly it is a naive, beautiful, hope-filled nine months, coupled with celebration, belly rubs, preparation. When your world comes crashing down, you feel frozen, wondering how such a tragedy could happen to you, how life could change from sunshine and rainbows to darkness in an instant.

The days, weeks, and months following my loss, I was trapped in a place that I like to refer to now as “the darkness.” Literally and figuratively. I requested dark curtains to be placed on my bedroom windows and spent most of my days sleeping and curled up in my bed with my boys’ hospital blankets. These blankets still had their scents, blood-stained from delivery, proof that my children were, in fact, alive, in this world. But all too quickly, they were taken from me. I wondered how the world could go on moving, how outside of my bedroom windows people could be walking their dogs, celebrating 4th of July, running on the beach...I could not bear to see any of it. In fact, it angered me to the point of isolating myself from even the closest of friends and family members. I let the select few into my darkness, those who sat in silence, didn’t try to change the subject or encourage me to return to my “pre-loss self.” There was no returning to the “before.” I was forever changed. Sure, I wondered if I would ever be able to see the light again, to remove the curtains from my windows and my heart, but I also needed to sit in my grief, I needed to fully feel the pain. I firmly believe that where there is great sadness and great grief, there is great love.

It is the love of my children that pulled me out of my lightless world. In seeing that Gavin and Chase still existed, only in a different way, I began to open my heart to healing. I embraced the reasons that I had to stay, when before I wished I had gone with them. In the holes that were left in my heart, when my boys physically left, grew kindness, compassion, empathy, acceptance, and courage. I openly spoke their names and told their story. A story of spending years waiting for them, as they were a hope in my heart through infertility treatments. A story of a miracle when they split from one embryo. A story loss and learning. Navigating living life without your children is not something any parent should have to face. It changed me forever. I have learned to open my eyes to the beauty of the world, instead of shutting it out. To see that my boys are in the warm breezes that blow, the calmness in the ocean, the sunrises and sunsets that paint the sky, the white feathers that find their way onto my path. They are with me in my happiest moments and on my most trying days. They give me the patience and grace to raise their two rainbow siblings. And they teach me to love with the fiercest love imaginable.

I stayed to share them with the world. To keep their legacy alive and to help other parents see that there is light, even in the darkest of places.

If you are hurting, you are not alone. There is hope and there are resources available to you.

laurelbox.com

This beautiful (local to Tampa) company curates gift boxes for grieving hearts. Givers can send tea towels, remembrance jewelry, candles, ornaments, and tea cups to loved ones.

Carly Marie Dudley- Capture Your Grief

www.theseashoreofremembrance.blogspot.com

Capture Your Grief is a worldwide community project designed to help bereaved parents mindfully document their grief experience and discover other ways, perspectives and ideas on healing after the death of a baby or a child. While this project is mainly for bereaved parents, anyone who has been touched by such a loss is invited to participate. Carly also offers gorgeous remembrance art.

mollybears.com

This organization provides families with teddy bears that match their baby's weight. These bears provide comfort to aching arms and can be customized with the name of a baby as well. Many times the bears are sent free of charge to grieving parents, so donations are welcomed.

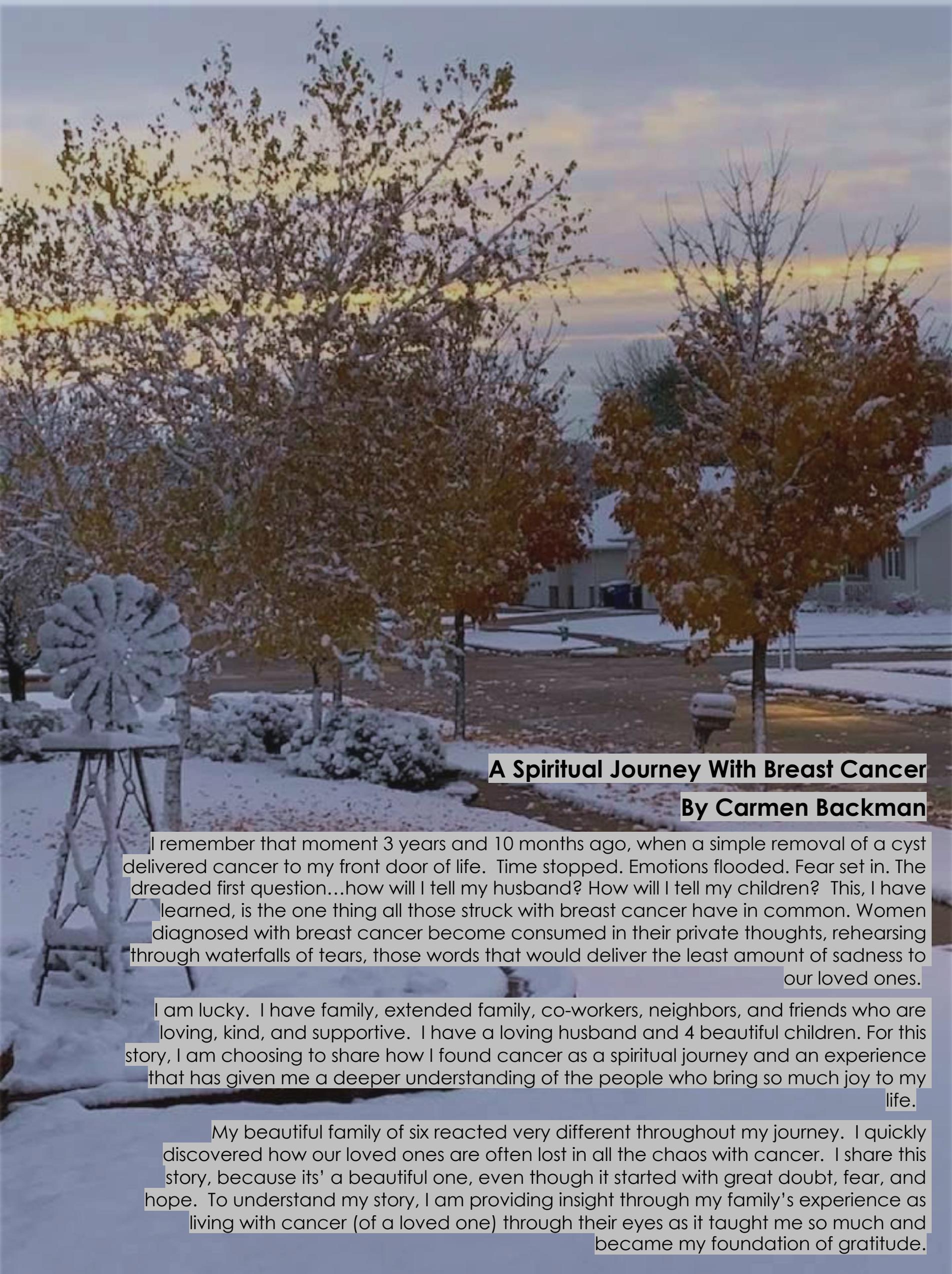


Retreats:

Faith's Lodge-Minnesota

A Mother's Nature- Utah





A Spiritual Journey With Breast Cancer

By Carmen Backman

I remember that moment 3 years and 10 months ago, when a simple removal of a cyst delivered cancer to my front door of life. Time stopped. Emotions flooded. Fear set in. The dreaded first question...how will I tell my husband? How will I tell my children? This, I have learned, is the one thing all those struck with breast cancer have in common. Women diagnosed with breast cancer become consumed in their private thoughts, rehearsing through waterfalls of tears, those words that would deliver the least amount of sadness to our loved ones.

I am lucky. I have family, extended family, co-workers, neighbors, and friends who are loving, kind, and supportive. I have a loving husband and 4 beautiful children. For this story, I am choosing to share how I found cancer as a spiritual journey and an experience that has given me a deeper understanding of the people who bring so much joy to my life.

My beautiful family of six reacted very different throughout my journey. I quickly discovered how our loved ones are often lost in all the chaos with cancer. I share this story, because its' a beautiful one, even though it started with great doubt, fear, and hope. To understand my story, I am providing insight through my family's experience as living with cancer (of a loved one) through their eyes as it taught me so much and became my foundation of gratitude.

My Family

My youngest child reached out often and was very open to learning and talking about this journey, clinically, emotionally, and spiritually. I learned that he has great trust in life and his faith and that information provided him the ability to be a support system. One of my children 'never' spoke of it, except one time when he said he couldn't bare what this means to the family and respectfully asked me not to speak of it. What I learned about him is that he feels deeply and privately manages his emotions. One of my children wanted to talk about it but remained fearful of saying the wrong thing and showing any emotion in front of me. What I learned about her is that I needed to open up the conversation, as she wanted to talk about it, but she lacked the confidence and trust and feared it would bring me sadness. One of my children was the 'You are Strong' champion...sending inspirational texts often. What I learned about him is that he has a very positive outlook on life and thrives to be positive in everything in his life. My husband...lived his private place of fear and worry but never wavered in his role as a caretaker, provider, and support system.

Through this journey, my husband and children have had people in their life who happened to be at the right place at the right time to support them...and they were people I would have never expected to be their support system. Cancer exposed (to my family) the depth of their love, fears, faith, and friendships. They are more aware, more compassionate, more giving, and taking more time to live for today. For me, this is a gift, something special. Every moment I spend with them, I see them through life's lenses and rejoice that such wonderful things have come during a near devastating time for our family.

I was diagnosed twice with breast cancer, exactly one year apart from each other. Telling my husband and children a second time was harder and more emotional than the first time. I found myself not as strong or 'ready' and lost myself for a bit. More questions, more options, more of 'why me'?

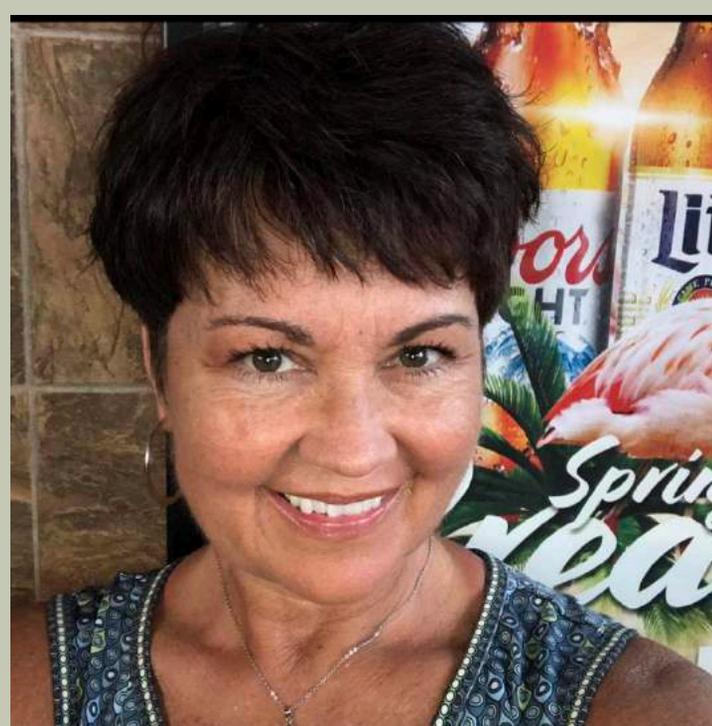
My ultimate choice was to have a double mastectomy. All other options were considered; Lumpectomy? Chemo? More Radiation? Single-Mastectomy? There are no clear answers, only options, all with risks and all with potentially different outcomes. I chose a double mastectomy, primarily because its' what my family most wanted. In their view, if we remove the breasts, we remove the cancer. It is true...with many forms of breast cancer, as we decrease the chance of recurrence of cancer, unless you have the form of breast cancer that lives elsewhere in your body. My cancer lives elsewhere. This decision was very hard and had the greatest emotional impact during my journey with cancer.

Throughout the two difficult years, I turned to Prayer. It became my private safe place. Prayer seemed to release aching emotions. Prayer helped me separate fears of life to recognizing the gifts of life. I found more clarity, more purpose, more understanding. My prayers eventually transitioned from me to my care team, the young children I saw at the cancer treatment center, women who take this journey alone, and for women who've I met (by text only) that sought someone who could 'relate' to every aspect of what they were going through and sought support. I felt like I was turning something difficult and negative into something positive and meaningful. I felt, at times, that my prayers where heard, perhaps not for me directly, but for those who needed them more than me.

Prayer helped me understand that my journey with cancer was a part of a greater purpose. My purpose has been to experience this journey, so that I could relate to and be a support system for other women who seek understanding of the physical AND emotional journey. The emotional journey, private and mis-understood, is not easy to put into words. My experience has given me great insight into the emotional toil and the ability to be helpful to others.

I have grown in unexpected ways. I have found that I can do things I did not know I had the ability to do. I am able to put my journey with cancer into words. I am able to write prayers. I have a small ability to write poems that describe the emotions of this experience. But most of all? I learned that I have the ability to live for 'today'. Colors are brighter. Smells are stronger. Hugs are tighter. Laughter is louder. Conversation is more meaningful.

I have had a blessed spiritual journey.





Health Transformation

Hi everyone! My name is Jenna Walkiewicz and I am excited to share a little bit about my two passions in life: golf and fitness. I originally moved to Florida from Rhode Island after graduating college in 2013 and quickly realizing that I wanted to pursue a career in the golf industry. Thanks to my college golf coach, I was able to find a perfect fit at the country's largest state association – The Florida State Golf Association (FSGA).

Fast forward six years and I am still working at the FSGA as the Director of Women's Golf, traveling all over Florida running golf tournaments for the top female amateurs in the state. Not only is my job unique and fun, it has also given me the opportunity to meet so many amazing people, including my husband Kyle. The game of golf has truly shaped who I am as a woman, teaching me the importance of honesty, integrity and hard work.

While being the Director of Women's golf is my main job title,

I am also a dedicated and crazy passionate health and wellness coach for Beachbody.

After moving to a new state with zero friends or family, I was incredibly lost and found myself turning to alcohol to try to fit in and make new friends. Before I knew it,

I was 40 pounds overweight, lacked self-confidence and didn't recognize the person staring back at me

in the mirror. My journey with Beachbody simply started out as a way to shed weight, but quickly turned

into a major part of my life. The more I focused on bettering my health,

the more confident I grew. After a few months of dedicating myself to healthy eating habits and simple at-home workouts, friends and family started to notice the positive mental and physical changes I was going through. I couldn't even begin to describe how it felt to find myself again. To be proud of the person I saw in the mirror. To feel like I was finally moving forward rather than in circles. To have finally wanted more for myself.

The physical, mental, social and even financial changes that were happening

because of the Beachbody programs and coaching opportunity were too great not to be shared with others. So, this past

January I fully committed to helping others regain their confidence and lives back as a health and wellness coach. The beauty of it all, is that I get to help others better their own lives while simultaneously work on bettering my own.

Reading personal development, journaling affirmations and the small things in life I am grateful for on a daily basis has made the biggest impact in my life. Everyone

deserves to live a healthy life, they deserve MORE out of every day and they deserve to see their fullest potential come to light. I think the greatest thing that being a health and wellness coach has taught me is to love myself for who I am. To be unapologetically me, embrace my flaws, and to take every day one step at a time. It is unbelievable what working on yourself a little bit each day can do. I am forever grateful for the community I am a part of, the women that help lift me up when I am down, and the opportunity I have to show others that they too can live a life by design.



School Psychology

My son's first writing assignment for a class as a freshman in college was to answer the question, "What is science and why is it important to society?" in less than 1500 words. He leaned on his older sister to be an editor, and not me, which was a good move because my answer to this question would be impossible in less than 300 pages or so. Nevertheless, the enormity of the query got me thinking, could I answer this same question about psychology or school psychology in so few words? Besides being a mother of 4, I am a school psychologist working in a school by day and private practice in the evenings. The work that gives my life meaning is supporting children to learn and achieve so that they become happy, healthy adults.

If one were to turn to a Google search for an answer to "What is school psychology," one would find National Association for School Psychologist's (NASP's) answer to a related question, "Who are school psychologists?" and the The American Psychological Association's (APA') 143 word introduction to their 1005 word answer on a similarly related, "What is the graduate specialty of school psychology?" Overall, I think NASP best explains that "school psychologists are uniquely qualified members of school teams that support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community." In my mind these answers are great beginnings to the *What* part of the question, but not even close in answering the, *Why* is it important piece.





Rebecca, Kiana, Kobe, Nikki, Tysen, Richard

Luckily, the more I thought about it, no one answers,” Why is school psychology important,” better than school psychologists and their stakeholders themselves. The longer I’ve worked in the field and with school psychologists, the more and more impressed and moved I am by the incredible work that school psychologists do, in big and small ways, everyday. At conferences, presentations on so many valuable topics from assessment practices, interventions, self-care, professional development, counseling practices, best practices in teaching and learning, tools and strategies for every special need, behavior supports, and so much more, demonstrate that school psychology is important because we school psychologists have a breadth of training that helps students, teachers, administrators, families and communities in so many powerful and useful ways. Many school psychologists have specialties and areas of expertise that give them even more specialized knowledge to support students and schools with their strengths. Most school psychologist have roles that vary depending on where they work and how they want to apply their strengths and training to their professional goals.

For me personally, school psychology is important because I learned quickly in my first and only year of teaching that you cannot fully or successfully teach academics when psychological or cognitive development is stressed or impeded in some way, without understanding what the barriers to learning for the child are. School psychologists are important members of the school team, adding their unique training and skill set to the great and difficult work that teachers do every day.

I started my professional life as a High School English Teacher. After a year of discovering how difficult it was to teach Shakespeare to teenagers who worked 2 jobs or who were dealing with trauma, or who had undiagnosed learning disabilities, I went back to school to become a school psychologist. During graduate school, I also had each of my 4 beautiful children, now ages 17-22. Being a mom and a school psychologist gave me so much empathy for students and parents and sometimes I found that connecting with students who needed unconditional positive regard from a caring adult in school was often like mothering. Love goes a long way in helping children thrive. Love plus knowledge is the most powerful combination!

In this way, I admire all women (teachers, mothers, educational specialists) who use their relationships skills and education to support kids. It takes dedication and ferocity to be an advocate and a voice for less powerful, often voiceless children and adolescents.