

Lisa's story: Speaking her truth

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LISA B.

LIVING WITH CANCER SINCE 2006

As a Brooklyn girl, Lisa can handle just about anything with her personality and chutzpah alone. But add to that a law degree, two graduate degrees and a Rhodes Scholarship, and Lisa doesn't shy away from speaking out about her endometrial cancer diagnosis.

I was a newlywed with cancer. It's not exactly the fairy tale you picture in your mind.

Lisa's journey began with a routine visit to a new OB/GYN. She had experienced a few months of spotting, which she chalked up to her busy and stressful life. Between getting engaged, working two jobs to pay for her wedding and studying for her second master's degree, Lisa had a lot going on.

But when she went to her appointment, the process was anything but routine. Her doctor immediately identified a concern and ordered further testing. The next day, Lisa's life changed forever. "It was surreal. I was standing in the middle of Midtown Manhattan when I got the call from my doctor." As cars were honking, streetlights blinking and people passing by, Lisa learned she had endometrial cancer.

When you're wearing clothes, people don't see your battle scars.

Lisa began chemotherapy to shrink a tumor that had grown into her colon. Over the course of the next three and half years, she had seven surgeries to deal with the cancer and its effects on her body. This included getting an ileostomy bag surgically connected to her abdomen to remove waste from her body.

Article slides



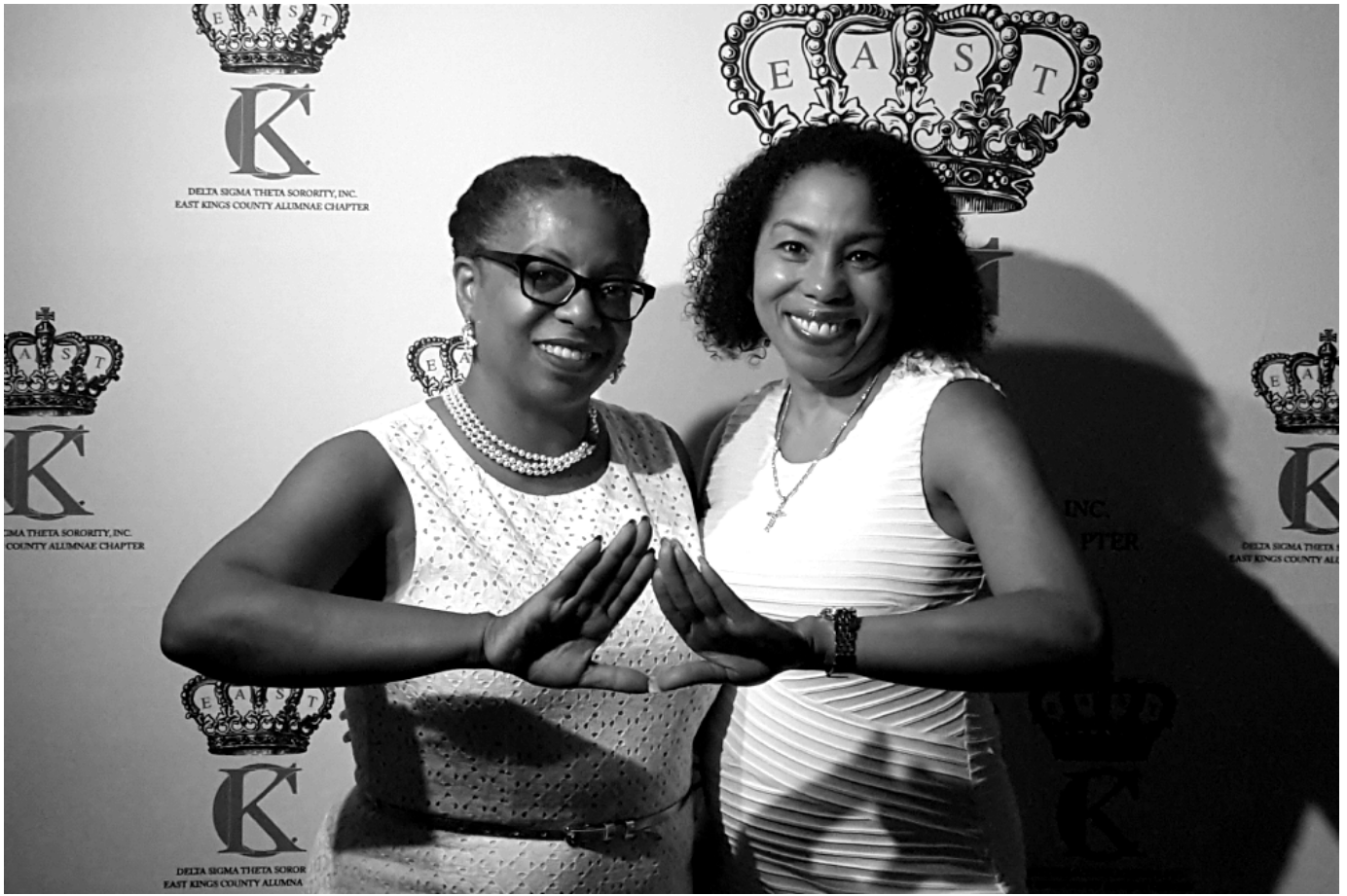
Lisa and her mother, Eunice, at a 5K walk.



Lisa and her parents, Eunice and Clifford.



Lisa at a cooking class in Ravello, Italy.



Lisa and her Delta Sigma Theta sorority sister, Kimberly.



Lisa and her partner, Shae, at Yankee Stadium.



Lisa and Shae in Antigua.

Through it all, Lisa had great admiration and respect for her doctor. In fact, she remembers feeling grateful when he returned from his vacation early to perform her final surgery. She credits him as someone who always listened when she said that something didn't feel right.

Writing is what helped me express myself, so people could hear or read exactly what I was going through.

Unfortunately, Lisa was frustrated that many other people in her life couldn't seem to understand what she was facing. And she discovered that sometimes "in sickness and in health" doesn't mean "until death do us part" when she and her husband divorced. Lisa knew she needed to make her struggles visible through her writing. Putting her truth down on paper has helped her share her passion, her pain and her joy with others. "It's been 10 years since I got diagnosed, and I have 10 anthologies under my belt."

Today, Lisa reminds others that even when someone looks fine on the outside, they may be struggling in ways you can't imagine. Her advice? It's okay to be on a rollercoaster of emotions, and feeling them all doesn't make you crazy. In fact, those emotions are an important part of the journey. Lisa takes great solace knowing that she, and others like her, can be strong, truthful voices for the hard and often messy reality of cancer.

You will be okay. It will take a while, but you will be okay.

Now Lisa is more than just okay. She is constantly on the go, traveling internationally, volunteering at her church (where she joyously rings the bells every week), and serving with her national sorority. She also celebrates warm and loving relationships with a new beau and her many close friends and family.