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## Survivor Stories 2014: Leigh Hurst

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#### 1. How did you first find out you had cancer?

I felt a lump in my breast for about two years before being officially diagnosed with breast cancer. I was in my early 30's and living in NYC at the time. When I would go for my routine annual exams, but the doctors didn't feel my lump. I would point it out and put their hand directly on the lump. Even then, it was dismissed as nothing. Being an avid runner and having no family history of breast cancer, I trusted as well that it probably wasn't anything to be concerned about. But after moving back to my hometown, in an

effort to simplify my overly busy lifestyle, I brought the lump to my new doctor's attention. This was the first time a mammogram was suggested. The mammogram showed suspicious activity around the lump so an ultrasound was done, which showed the lump to be a mass. A biopsy a couple of weeks later confirmed it was cancer (Stage 1). I was 33 and that was in April 2004.

**2. How did you react when you heard the news?**

I received a call from my doctor to get the news about having breast cancer. I was on a conference call and clicked over thinking I would just hear that everything was fine. But it wasn't. I was alone in my house (I worked from home), and I wasn't quite sure what to do next. I was single and had just moved back to my roots only 6 months earlier to simplify things. That phone call made things really complicated. I drove around for a while before having the courage to go to my parents house to share the news. Telling people was the hardest part of being diagnosed.

**3. What course of treatment were you prescribed?**

I had a lumpectomy, 4 rounds of chemotherapy (A/C), and 7 weeks of daily radiation. Then went on to take Tamoxifen for 5 years. The great news is that after all of that, and even at the age of 40, I went on to give birth to two beautiful healthy boys.

**4. What most surprised you about your treatment?**

A couple of things surprised me about my treatment. When I was initially diagnosed I remember the doctors telling me it was "best case scenario", which is a hard thing to grasp when talking about cancer. Knowing that even though it was "best case" that 6 months of active treatment was required to treat the breast cancer was scary and humbling at the same time. The other thing that surprised me about my treatment was that I didn't get sick on chemo. I feared the worst when I learned that chemo was suggested for me. I had visions of me being couch bound for months. But I was able to continue running and working, and while I felt more tired than normal, I felt pretty good during treatment.

**5. What would your advice be to anyone who's just received a cancer diagnosis?**

The most important thing I tell other women facing a new breast cancer diagnosis is to "be kind to yourself." We are so used to taking care of everyone else, sometimes it's hard to find compassion for YOU. I had to learn to let myself have bad days, feel sad, feel upset and just know that it was part of the process. I would often feel like "hey, this is best case scenario, things could be so much worse." But that doesn't mean you can't be scared or sad about what you're going through. I also experienced pretty severe depression after my treatment was completed and I always share that with other women because sometimes people are too afraid to talk about that. It's a lot to go through and getting back to "normal" is NOT easy. Sometimes seeking help from a counselor or therapist can be a life-saver in working through all of the emotions that come up after going through something like breast cancer.

**6. How long have you been cancer free?**

10 years!

**7. What lessons did you learn from the experience?**

The biggest thing I learned from going through breast cancer and starting the Foundation is to trust in time. I'm a type A overachiever and wasn't born w the gift of patience, but some of the best experiences I've had after breast cancer have been a result of sitting back and allowing time to work its magic.

**8. If you could send one message to all the Good Enough Mothers out there – what would it be?**

Being a mother is something that has to be done by following your inner voice. Everyone has an opinion about what is best, but only you know what feels right for you. Learning how to truly trust your instincts can only serve you well when it comes to being a mother.

**Leigh Hurst is the Founder/President of the Feel Your Boobies Foundation. She was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 33 (in 2004) after a lump she felt on her own went undetected by the doctors. Leigh had no family history, was a marathon runner, but prior to being diagnosed paid little attention to messages about breast cancer. This led her to create a simple t-shirt with the phrase “feel your boobies”, which quickly caught national attention. Over the past 10 years, this simple message has evolved into an international campaign focused on using unconventional methods to promote proactive breast health to young women...and the campaign has saved lives. Leigh is the mother of two young boys (Eli 3, and Leo 2) and runs the Foundation out of her home in Pennsylvania. She uses her background in media strategy and behavior change to create campaigns that spread her lifesaving call-to-action “feel your boobies.” You can follow Leigh on Twitter at [@feelyourboobies](#) and like her [Feel Your Boobies Facebook Page](#).**

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