Video: My Journey, Why I'm Passionate About Breast Cancer Care Transcript

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Welcome to the Summit

Hello and welcome to the Breast Cancer Breakthroughs Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Jenn Simmons, and I am so delighted to have you here. As you might imagine, summits are a huge undertaking and no doubt a labor of love.

And I want to share with you why I do it.

Personal Connection to Breast Cancer

So I really don't remember a time in my life where I didn't know about breast cancer. It was ever present in my childhood. As a young girl, I had a first cousin.

Her name was Linda Creed. She was a singer songwriter in the 1970s and 1980s. She was beautiful, brilliant, larger than life. She wrote 54 hits and all, and her most famous song was The Greatest Love of All.

She wrote that song in 1977 as the title track to the movie The Greatest, starring Muhammad Ali. But it really received a decline in March of 1986, when Whitney Houston would release that song to the world.

At that time had spent 14 weeks at the top of the charts. Only Linda would never know because Linda died of metastatic breast cancer just one month after Whitney released that song.

I was 16 years old and my hero died. Her life and ultimately her death gave birth to my life's purpose. And I wanted to make sure that no other woman, no other family, no other community had to suffer the way that mine suffered.

And so I dedicated my life to doing that. I did the only thing I knew how to do. I became a doctor. I became a surgeon. I became the first fellowship trained breast surgeon in Philadelphia.

And I did that for a long time.

Becoming a Surgeon and Facing Diagnosis

I did that long enough to see my art diagnosed. I did it long enough to see my mother diagnosed. And it was in my 15th year of practice, still thinking that it was somehow not going to happen to me, that I went from being probably one of the high, most high functioning people that you've ever met to losing my health in a day.

I had a three day extensive workup at which time I found myself sitting in the office of my friend and colleague and physician. And he told me that I needed surgery and chemo radiation and that I was going to be on lifelong medication.

And despite the fact that these were things that I said all day, every day to everyone that came into my office, when these words are coming at you, it's a whole different experience.

I knew that what he was telling me was the standard of care, and I knew that he would tell me that if I refused treatment, I would die of my disease, just like I had told thousands of women the same thing before.

I still don't know what to call it. You can call it God. You can call it Universe. You can call it a higher power. But something made me walk out of the office that day in search of something more.

In search of something better. And I didn't know what that more or better was going to be. And so I went on a journey, a journey to figure out how to heal myself.

Searching for a Better Way to Heal

This was a selfish journey. This wasn't about solving the breast cancer problem for anyone else. This was about me and me trying to figure out a better way to heal.

I started my journey at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, and this is a certificate course for health coaches. And I entered in this in my 20th year of practice, and I entered into it with a lot of trepidation.

And one of the first lecturers was a man named Mark Hyman. And he walked on the stage and proudly introduced himself as a functional medicine physician.

And my snooty beauty self said, I've been a doctor for 20 years. There's no such thing as a functional medicine physician. What is this quack talking about?

And then I remembered that I was sick and I was there for a reason. And so I checked my ego at the door and tuned in to what this woman had to say. And they thought I did.

Because within moments of him speaking, I knew that this was my purpose, that this was what I was meant to do, that this is what I was meant to bring to the world of breast cancer.

Because what he was telling me was that in conventional medicine, we are completely focused on disease. And what we think about. Grows. We are completely focused on the suppression of symptoms.

Discovering Functional Medicine

Rather than thinking about why those symptoms are there in the first place. And we're never going to solve a problem unless we get to where why now? That day was really profound and really meaningful to me, because that was the first day of the rest of my life.

And I am an early adopter. I get very enthusiastic. I get very excited about things. And so on that day, I decided to enroll in the Institute for Functional Medicine.

On that day, I decided to become a functional medicine doctor. On that day, I decided that I would spend the rest of my life helping women to truly heal.

On that day, I immersed myself in the study of functional medicine and did so over the next three years, and I learned everything I could about how to help women truly heal after a breast cancer diagnosis.

And so that's why I'm here today.

What to Expect from the Summit

I'm here today because I want you to have all the tools that you can possibly get to make this journey a meaningful one for you, not only to find the house that you had before, but to improve on your health, to make sure that after this part of your life, you can go on to be better, to be stronger, to be healthier, to be more connected, or to lead a better, more fulfilled, more meaningful life.

So tune in here. I have amazing things in store for you. I also have my partner, Dr. V, who also brought in some brilliant, brilliant people who are sharing what they are adding to the breast cancer world and to the breast cancer conversation because there's so much more than meets the eye and it's time that we talk about it.

So stay tuned. Stay right here. And I look forward to going on this journey with you. It's Dr. Jenn. Bye for now.