

FIND YOUR MBC VOICE

Teri's Story

Teri Pollastro, living with metastatic breast cancer since 2003

TERI:

It was like any other night at my house, but it wasn't.

Tonight was the night I was going to tell my 7-year-old daughter, Maddy, that I had metastatic breast cancer.

As I stood in the doorway watching Maddy throw her toys into the tub, I knew that her life was going to change that night, and I didn't like it.

I'd been practicing for weeks with my therapist on what I would say if she asked me if I was going to die.

I could barely understand it myself, so how could I explain it to her?

I had to make sure that whatever I told her was truthful, and simple, and easy for her to understand.

I wanted to tell her in a safe place. Just the two of us. No dad, no little sister, just us.

I got into the tub and I waited for her to settle down.

As I told her about my new diagnosis, I could feel the heaviness coming over her.

And, when she finally asked me the question, "Are you going to die?"

I answered her with the words I'd been practicing. I said, "As of right now, I'm not dying.

If something changes, you'll be the first to know."

She seemed satisfied with my answer.

She took a deep breath, plugged her nose, and went in for another lap.

I was mentally exhausted.

Happy, but exhausted.

I had a chance to ask Maddy very recently if she remembered the tub story, and she said she did. It was a pivotal time in her life.

And her response took my breath away.

When she told me, that when I told her I had breast cancer, metastatic breast cancer, she said she dove under the water and silently screamed.

She didn't want me to see her cry.

And that makes me so sad that she felt like she had to have that kind of strength.

When she came up from the water, goggles still intact, that's when she asked me if I was going to die.

And, she remembers my answer, and she did tell me that it was the right answer, at the right time, for her age.

So many times over the last 16 years, I've had to push myself out of my comfort zone and find my voice.

I had to do it with my care team, my family, my friends.

This is one of the first times that I found my voice.

TERI VO:

My name is Teri Pollastro.

MBC won't keep me quiet. I found my voice and I've been speaking up ever since.

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