

# Allison Meyerson

## Beating Breast Cancer and Living Life to the Fullest

By Michelle Nickens

There's nothing better than a diamond—that shimmering vibrant gem harder than anything on earth. When you come across this treasure, you never want to let it go for it holds the power needed to survive any obstacles. Allison Meyerson is an example of this, as lovely as a sparking diamond, but tough. She is a true survivor.

In March 2007 at the age of 42, Allison began the fight of her life when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. A lump far back under her arm caused concern, propelling her to immediately contact her doctor. After an ultrasound and biopsy confirmed the lump was Stage 2 advanced breast cancer, the mass and lymph nodes were removed. Initially, doctors thought chemotherapy would not be needed, but after further analysis by an oncologist, both chemotherapy and radiation were necessary. At that point the strain on her life grew.

Even under the best of circumstances treatment is tough. But for Allison, there were additional challenges. A single mother of three children, a fulltime worker, and sole owner of a small business, Kidznpay Sitters, Allison had no choice but to continue to work to support her family while dealing with her treatments. And that was not easy. Although Allison's first chemotherapy treatment, an eight-hour session, seemed to go well, suddenly the effects of the chemotherapy hit, causing Allison to become deathly sick. But she didn't give up—she endured several more rounds of chemotherapy and radiation.

Allison stressed that the treatment was rough, both physically and emotionally. "Everything is a shock," she described. "From the moment the doctor announces the diagnosis and the hair disappears to sitting in the chemotherapy chair listening to the stories of new friends. You're hearing everything, but not processing it."

Emotions run wild with thoughts of the unknown and Allison explained that treatment has a tendency to change your personality. You are angry and often lash

out. You feel bad about yourself. She reminded her family and friends that the anger was not directed at them. Allison is independent, but recognizes that it's hard to go through this alone. "I learned that it's okay to accept help." And Allison's help came from her then boyfriend Casey, and his mother, Royce, a woman she endearingly calls "Mommy Dearest." Allison says "She was the person who helped me get through the toughest days who pushed me and told me never to give up. She took me to every treatment and



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Inga Finch Photography

was there for me—always.”

Although Allison lost all of her long hair and remained bald for two years, she didn't wear a wig, except once at a Christmas party. “It didn't feel like me,” she said. “You need to be comfortable with yourself.” Now, her beautiful brown locks flow around her angelic face.

During her journey, the cancer and treatment were not the only strings pulling Allison as she was not a stranger to cancer. When Allison was just 29 years old, she lost her mother to the disease. Memories of that experience resurfaced after Allison's diagnosis and remain close to her heart.

When Allison speaks of her children, her two teenage sons, Louis and Matthew, and her youngest, a daughter named Shayna, it is obvious that their well-being, future and security are at the forefront of her mind. “It is hard,” she said, “explaining the situation to your children and reassuring them.” But the concern for each other was equally shared. Her children and family are her rock and she appreciates all their love and support.

When it comes to your health, knowledge is power. You know your body better than anyone. Listen to it and arming yourself with as much information as possible will help you to make decisions, stay focused, and balance life's demands. “Be vigilant and proactive with your health—be an advocate for yourself,” Allison says.

Everyone's story is unique. Each person is different. But, we can all learn from Allison's story. Balance your life. Be an advocate for yourself and others. Know that you are not alone—there is support. Be brave, be strong, but let others help you. Love and cherish those around you and live life every day to the fullest. 

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