

A Mother's Resolve

Beth Fisher Overcomes Multiple Obstacles While Facing Cancer and Transplant



Beth is an author, speaker and hosts a podcast and syndicated show inspiring others to show up on their journeys

“Can you come back in here?” the doctor asked me over the phone. I may have only just turned twenty-five, but I had lived enough life to know that question wasn’t asked if everything was alright. My daughter, Liv, was six miles away at the Montessori school where she played, ate and napped during the days, as twenty-two-month-old toddlers like to do. I had just dropped her off and begun my work day as usual. Only after hanging up the phone that morning, I quickly realized nothing was ever going to be usual again.

I was in the middle of a divorce. My soon to be ex-husband had moved us to a new city four months prior; he was now back in our home state by himself. I had a new job, no local friends, and postpartum. And also, as it turned out, leukemia.

There was no history of cancer in my family to that point, but as I would later discover after intensive research, leukemia is not hereditary. It is typically caused by environmental factors. In my case, having grown up as a four-season athlete who was only ever inside to eat and sleep, the water source in my small hometown village was likely the catalyst for the chromosome mutation. A bone marrow biopsy confirmed the diagnosis: Chronic myeloid leukemia.

The singular option for survival was a bone marrow transplant. My only sibling, the one who is deathly

afraid of needles, was immediately tested. To this day, the image of my sister and I holding hands as we walked through the waiting room after her name was called is forever etched in our parent’s minds. I watched the tiny vials fill with my sister’s blood while choking back the tears filling my eyes. How could this even be happen-



Liv's high school graduation, 2015



Beth's parents and her sister, Sarah

ing? I thought. Nothing seemed real. Not her blood, not her pale and sweaty face, and certainly not the proposition of Liv growing up without me . . . without a mom.

Sarah, my sister, was not a match. Miraculously, four weeks after hearing that news, my oncologist had a list of three potential donors found through Be The Match (www.bethematch.org). Plans went into high gear. Rigorous pre-transplant testing occurred. Tomes of information read. Bags packed. Central port put in place. Goodbyes said. It was then and only then that I was able to sit down and write out eighteen years of parenting instructions for my daughter.

Never one for a loss of words, my fingers didn't move. My dearest Liv . . . if you are reading this, then that means that I . . .

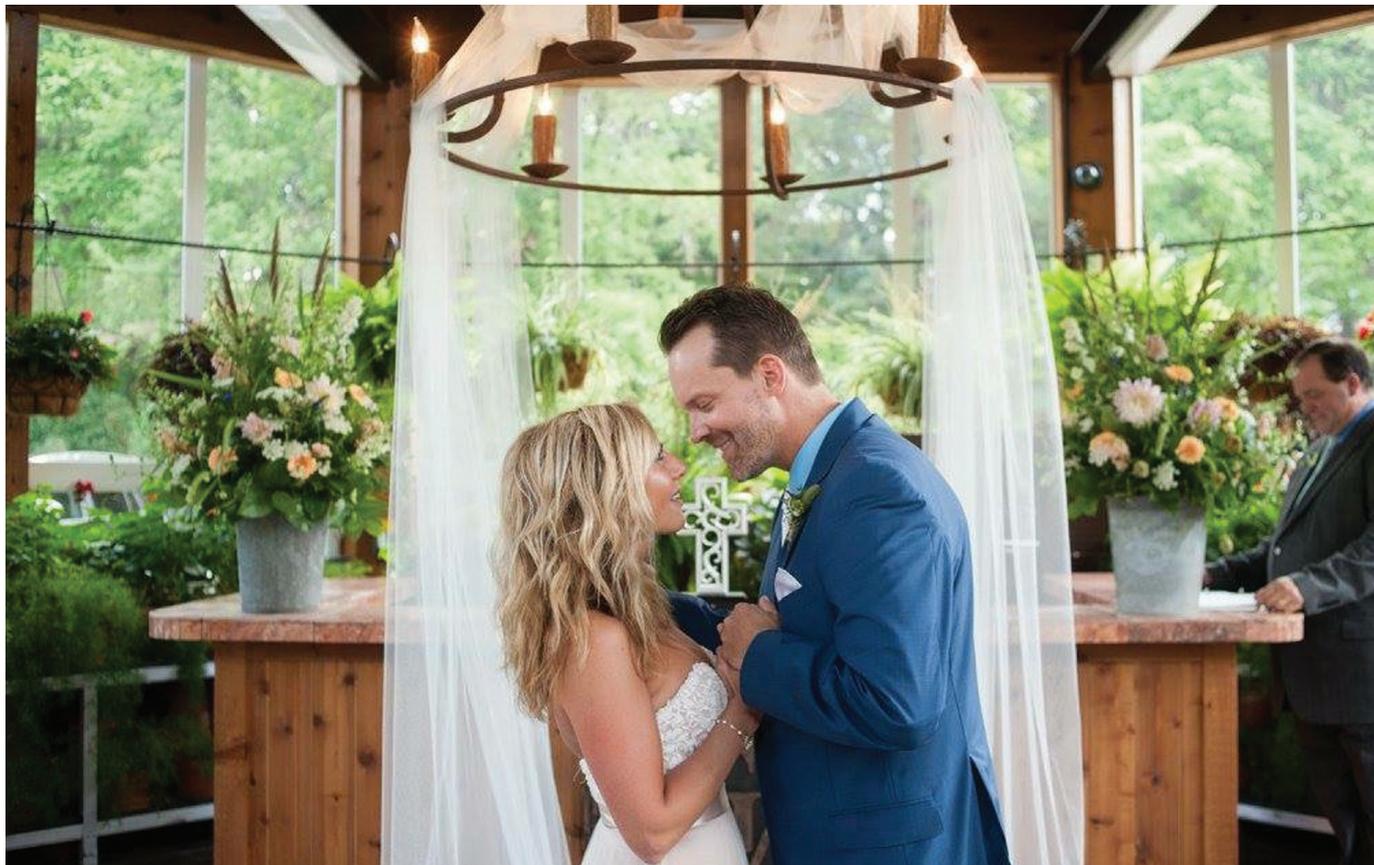
Tears. Anger. Balled up paper thrown against our tiny apartment wall. When you are in the throes of grief, oftentimes you don't recognize anything other than anguish. And there's nothing really to be done other than go through each grievous phase—one step at a time.

After acceptance, I became resolute in my mission. I would do everything within my control to make my

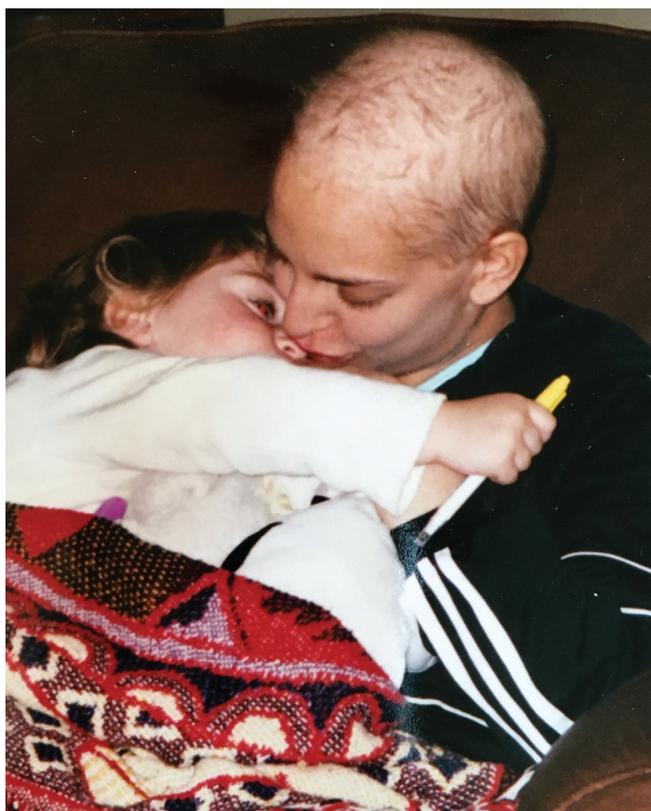


A brand new mom, Beth holds Liv hours after she was born on February 23, 1997

FIND YOUR INSPIRATION



August 13, 2016 – Marrying Ryan in their home state of Ohio



May 1999. After 35 days in the hospital, Beth holds Liv for the first time post—bone marrow transplant

transplant successful. From the time I heard the words, “You have leukemia” to the time I walked through the revolving door at the entrance of University Hospitals of Cleveland’s Ireland Cancer Center, four months passed. It would be another thirty-five days until I breathed fresh air again.

As a lifelong competitive extrovert, I rolled my chemo pole to each of the neighboring rooms on the transplant unit every day during my thirty-five day stint, looking for either a race or newfound friendship. “Hi, I’m Beth!” I said. “Fancy meeting you here!” From looks of disgust and dismay to those of welcome relief, I never wavered in my intentional connection with others going through the same fear and uncertainty. Many days I was too tired to get out of bed, but knowing that Kirk, Jeff and Bob were on the other side of my confining four walls, brought me additional fortitude. “We got this, you guys!” I said with a bald nod of encouragement.

I was the only one who walked out of the hospital’s revolving front door.

To say anyone is ever fully prepared for a life-altering diagnosis and subsequent transplant is a gross understatement. However, to say that everyone who has gone through it firsthand—donor, recipient, family members, friends—is forever changed, is spot on.

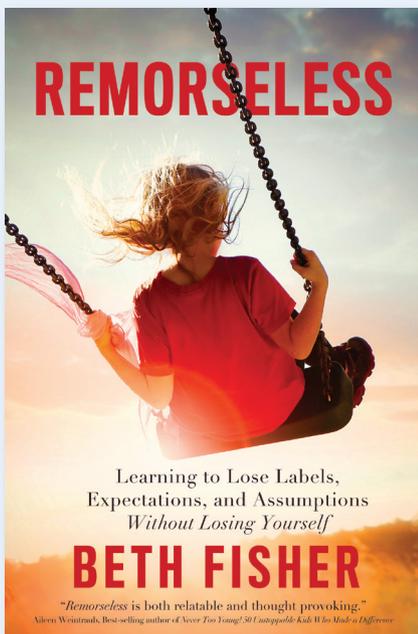
Today, twenty-two years later, I recognize the incredible journey I've had the blessing to endure. I realize that I am not alone, a recognition which is, at its core—one that unifies us all as part of our human existence. I remain in contact with my (now retired) oncologist, my case manager, and my transplant nurse, Robin, who snuck R-rated comedy movies into my room and lifted my spirits. I also remain in contact with my donor, whose name is also Beth—and Jeff's wife, Karen, who stuck by his side until the very end.

While we never know the roads we will travel, the ones traversed with the most unexpected sojourners can lead us to the most beautiful destinations. ☆

Beth Fisher is a contributing editor for TransplantNation.



After completing the Glass City Marathon (Toledo, Ohio) and qualifying for the Boston Marathon in a time of 3:34:52.



Beth Fisher is an author, speaker, business leader, cancer-survivor, and marathoner with a passion for helping others overcome adversity. With what she calls a “checkered resume,” Beth helps bridge the gap between making decisions based on what others expect and instead, living remorselessly, based on who you were created to be. She is a passionate inspirer of people, especially those seeking to understand their true meaning and calling. Beth holds two master’s degrees in Theology, is a certified mentor, and teaches personal and professional development through her coaching program, The Next Right Thing. www.bethfisher.com. Her book, *Remorseless*, is available on Amazon.

