



Thankful for Kidney Disease

By Danae Horn

I began life with a single right kidney coupled with urinary reflux (when urine from the bladder flows back up to the kidneys). While growing up my family and I were vigilant to watch for urinary infections and hoped that my reflux would correct on its own as I grew older. At 16, we found out that not only had it not corrected, but frequent urinary infections were quickly becoming kidney infections. My precious, hard-working single kidney was scarred. What was a quirk at birth became kidney disease. I had the reflux surgically corrected and started a regimen of daily antibiotics to prevent further damage.

I was now hyper-vigilant to protect my single asset. My kidney had to get me from 19 to 99. Throughout my college years, I explained numerous times to sorority girls and fraternity boys why I didn't drink and was always met with supportive reactions.

When I was 23 the realities of my prognosis hit me, as a high-risk pregnancy specialist said to me, "If I was your mother or your sister, I would beg you not to get pregnant." Kidney disease has some major implications. A pregnancy would put enough stress on my kidney to cause my blood pressure to rise uncontrollably or result in needing a transplant. That was a tough statement to swallow. I remember leaving the exam room feeling like I had been punched in the gut. I sobbed into my husband's arms. I had to grieve my perception of what starting a family was supposed to look like. I was being asked to choose a different path in life, and it was not a choice I wanted to make. Stepping into my grief was the only way I was going to get beyond it.

After four months and a lot of soul searching, my husband, Phillip, and I came across the The Learning Channel (TLC) program Adoption Stories. We began a conversation about what it meant, really meant, for us to have a family. We realized that we had a calling to adopt. We both received a deep sense of intuition that our future child was going to come to us through adoption. Without kidney disease, I never would have discovered this profound path. We are now in the early stages of discussing what adoption journey we will be pursuing and are so thrilled to be participating in this amazing gift.

Focus on Health

Three years ago, I switched nephrologists as part of a larger state-to-state move. During one of my initial visits, the doctor mentioned that I would probably need a kidney transplant at some point. That was the first time I had heard that my kidney would statistically not be able to carry me through my life. As I confirmed the doctor's statement, he explained that due to my young age, 28 at the time, a kidney with 30 percent function lasting years and years was a long shot.

That simple statement really set me back. I internalized it. I instantly saw myself as a sick person. Every time I had a cough, itch, fatigue, anything, I was on the internet searching “kidney disease and X.” I began noticing that I was having discomfort in my kidney on a weekly basis. My body had determined that if I was going to need a transplant then I was going to get it over with, and I was going to need it now.

Fortunately, I realized that the only thing that had changed in my health status was the hypothetical statement my doctor had made. That motivated me to take charge of my mind, adopt a relentless positive attitude and focus on health. Within days, my symptoms lessened and the discomfort I was feeling decreased. The next time I returned for my checkup the doctor actually changed his statement to declare that since my function had been stable for a number of years he wasn't sure that I would need a transplant.

I am still actively managing the health of my prized single kidney through blood pressure medication, exercise and a vegetarian diet. I embrace the reality of my health. I have become very clear about what my body is requiring and where it is asking me to go. My reactions and fears can have a big impact on my health, so I keep my chin up and thank my kidney for its amazing support. I live life. It will tell me what the next step is.

Danea Horn started, A Positive Statement, a coaching and public speaking company, in the spirit of empowering others to choose their highest potential. Visit her online at: www.DaneaHorn.com.

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