



Asha Mevlana

About two years ago, Asha Mevlana, 25, found a small lump in her left breast. She didn't really think it a big deal, though. After all—who'd ever heard of someone so young getting breast cancer, right?

"When I got the news, I was in shock. I was walking around in a daze, trying to understand what was happening. I could barely function. I didn't know at first whether the cancer had spread. I didn't even know if I was going to be alive next year.

"To get rid of the cancer, I had to undergo chemotherapy and radiation. I had four chemo treatments—one every three weeks. The first week after each treatment was horrible. I'd be throwing up constantly. Sometimes my body hurt so much, I couldn't get out of bed. If that wasn't bad enough, my hair started falling out. I thought, 'I'm going to be bald—and I'm only 24! How am I going to be able to date guys?' I'd wake up and my pillow would be covered with hair. At one point, I stopped washing it because I was tired of seeing it on the bottom of the sink.

"I decided to be open about my illness with my family and friends—and I'm glad I did. They became my support group.

They cooked me dinner. They came to my chemo treatments. They also helped me keep my sense of humor. When I was bummed about my hair, my friend Brian kidded, 'You've got crappy hair anyway.' We even went wig shopping together and picked out wild hairpieces in purple and platinum blonde.

"I wouldn't wish what I went through on anyone. But in a weird way, my illness was one of the best things that could have happened to me. It gave me the opportunity to re-evaluate my life. I used to be afraid to take risks. But after my diagnosis, I realized I'm not going to be around forever. You have to do the things you want to do now. I used to work in public relations, but it wasn't my passion. I've been playing the violin since I was six, so after I recovered, I quit my job and concentrated on my music. Now I'm playing in a few rock bands. Sometimes a lot of good can come from even the worst situation.