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Reader story: "I beat cervical cancer!"

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Julie, 33, was diagnosed with cervical cancer but she didn't let that stop her. She's now a personal trainer and marathon mentor!

"Many years ago, my mum suffered with stomach cancer. Seeing her sheer determination as well as the devastating impact her illness had on our family, drove me to join Can Too's running program in February 2008 to both honour her, and to help to defeat this dreadful disease.

I signed up to the half marathon program, which I found fantastic in so many ways. Not only was I contributing to a worthy cause in honour of my mum, but I was making friends and keeping fit! It soon became my main prerogative to run as fast as I could and raise as much money as possible, as I'm known to get quite competitive when I get going!

Of course, the program was also extremely challenging, and taught me a lot about the sport of running, but also about the human spirit and the ability to push beyond your boundaries.

I remember running most Wednesday nights in the pouring rain, and other times while running 16 kilometres on a Saturday morning and ending up in tears from the emotional and physical exhaustion. But despite all of that, every training session ended up being brilliant because you were among your inspiring and motivating team mates, all working together for a common goal.

Ironically, two weeks after completing my half marathon in honour of my mum, I was diagnosed with cervical cancer at a fairly serious stage. Obviously I was in complete shock. I was only 32. It was May of 2008 and the only treatment option was radical surgery, so I was forced to stop running for three months to recover. While I was in hospital, I made the decision to completely change my career. I was so bored and missed running so much - I realised that I would always want to be fit and healthy and help others to do the same. So I made the decision to leave my career in human resources and requalify as a personal trainer.

I was so determined to get back into running that I was back in Can Too training as soon as I could and completed the 9km program in September 2008! In September of 2009 I am heading back to Can Too to mentor the half marathon participants. I feel that my experience as both a Can Too runner and a cancer survivor could help to inspire, motivate and encourage my fellow participants. Not to mention my new qualifications as a personal trainer!



It is the best move I have ever made, challenging, yet rewarding, I am of the mindset that I have now tried it, so what will be will be!, as long as you are enjoying the journey it is important to pursue your dreams. I am excited and unsure, it is a bit of a roller coaster at the moment starting your own business in a brand industry is a challenge and one hell of a ride, many ups and downs!

Surround yourself with positive people, ask for help and support. Accept help from others and see the best in people during your challenging time. Be kind to yourself, care for yourself and try to remain positive even when you don't feel that way ... sounds cliches but you really do have the power to help yourself. take time to heal and recover, you will have good and bad days but the bad days will get less over time.

I learned that I need to be more self confident, love myself and accept who I am, both the good and bad points! I have become more relaxed and can let things go more easily, although i am a worrier by nature! I am incredibly opened minded and enjoy having friends and family involved in my life, having people around makes me happy.

The best things that I have gained from Can Too are an abundance of new friends, the ability to inspire others and to believe in myself. Getting fit while surrounded by encouraging and like minded positive people was such an invaluable experience that it has totally changed the direction of my life! I can't wait to mentor the 9km runners this year!

To find out more about how you can protect yourself from cervical cancer visit, www.cervicalcancer.com.au, or to get more info about Can Too, visit, www.cantoo.org.au.

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