Article Series Inspirational Stories Lymphoma

Jordan’s story: Overcoming obstacles

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[cars driving by]

[Jordan] Columbia University. I'm doing my post-bac, pre-med program here.

It's all just a means to an end, I just wanna get this program done and then get on to med school.

I got that call and it was the night before my semester was supposed to start in the spring.

I was diagnosed diffuse large B-cell lymphoma. It kind of just felt like the whole world kind of ended for a second.

[laughing] He was the first phone call I made after I got the actual diagnosis.

[Director] How far apart are you guys?

[Jordan's Brother] Three years. He always is going to be my little brother, I guess.

We give each other a hard time, it's what we're supposed to do.

[Jordan] When I actually was on the phone with my surgeon, got the diagnosis myself, that was tough, but actually having to then spread the feeling that I felt with

the other people that I'm closest to in my life, that was actually the worst part for me.

[Jordan's Mom] I remember getting a phone call from him in school and I don't think I could breathe very well.

[Jordan's Dad] It's a parent's nightmare.

[Jordan's Mom] It is.

[Jordan's Dad] It's a nightmare.

[Jordan's Mom] You can't imagine.

[Jordan's Dad] It's the blackest cloud you can imagine.

[Jordan] You know when you're going through treatments and stuff, of course, yeah, there are days that are worse than all the others.

[Jordan's Mom] If you don't have your family, I don't know how people go through this without an immediate support group.

[Jordan] He actually handled most of the scheduling consultations and stuff like that.

[Jordan's Dad] Jordan and I would go into the hospital, and I would sit with him all day while he was doing chemo, but while I was doing that with him, Deb would scrub every surface of the house so that when he came home everything in the house was clean.

So, because his white blood count was wiped out, he would not get an infection when he came home.

[Jordan's Mom] We all had our jobs to do.

[Jordan] Em would just come over sometimes and just sit on the couch with me and know that I couldn't do anything else.

We've known each other since eighth grade, we went to high school together and everything.

[Jordan's Girlfriend] Besides for those really hard days physically and mentally, Jordan and I hung out all the time and we had a great time when we were together.

It was just kind of like, let's just forget about it, let's just be us.

[Jordan] Other than my parents and sometimes Josh after treatments and Emily, nobody else saw that or knew that side of it.

You know, I'm really stubborn and kinda almost proud of that fact. 'Cause I didn't want to show everybody that I couldn't do something.

Retaining that sense of normalcy is really important, so you don't feel like a cancer patient all the time, you just feel like a person who every couple weeks has to go in for a treatment.

[Jordan's Brother] There is nobody hands-down throughout this entire process that had a better attitude than him.

[Jordan's Dad] You have two choices. Your first choice is saying, "Why me?" And your second choice is get to it.

And if you sit there and you say, "why me?" the cancer gets the better of you, and if you get to it, hopefully you get the better of the cancer.

[Jordan] Whatever it is that you're doing with your life, don't let cancer overtake all of that.

There's always more to you than just the patient, and I think it's important to keep those other parts of you moving and going throughout the whole process.

JORDAN M.
LIVING WITH CANCER SINCE 2017

The road to medical school can be difficult for anyone. Now imagine being diagnosed with lymphoma at the same time. For Jordan, his plan has been to manage a challenging pre-medical program and his lymphoma with quiet resolve and the love and support of his family and friends.

> The support I get gives me the reason to get up and not feel sorry for myself. I have to get through it—if not for me, then for all the people that care.

After Jordan graduated from college, he switched gears to focus on going to med school rather than law school. This meant he needed to take the required courses before he could even consider applying to medical school. It was shortly after beginning his pre-medical program that Jordan was blindsided with the news of his diagnosis. "I felt like I had gotten hit by a train."

The first few days were surreal as he struggled to process the news. But after the initial shock, Jordan was ready to face this battle through any means necessary. He and his family adopted an attitude of acceptance, and then determination. There was no time to think about "what ifs" and fears. Jordan kept his eyes on his future, and his goal of becoming a doctor never wavered.

> Cancer has been an obstacle to overcome. But I haven't changed who I am or what I do. I see it as something that life threw at me and that I have to get through.

Article slides



Jordan is enrolled in the pre-med program at Columbia University.



Jordan takes a call while walking on campus.



Jordan laughs while walking with friends.



Jordan and his girlfriend, Emily.



Jordan and Emily take a moment to catch up.



Jordan studies his notes.



Jordan and his brother, Josh, play ping-pong with some friends.



Jordan and his parents in their living room.



Jordan and Josh share a laugh.



Jordan and his mom warmly embrace.



Jordan hugs his dad.

Jordan admits that things would be a lot different without having the love and support he has had. In fact, it's the love he receives from his family and friends that reminds him what he's fighting for. He knows there are people around him who are counting on him to get healthy. And Jordan has no intention of letting them down.

Emotional support and self-care have been key for Jordan. Even the small moments when people check in motivate him to keep going. And taking care of himself mentally has been integral to his healing. His worst days are the days when he is in a bad place emotionally. The best days are when he finds the strength inside to face the world with a smile. Fortunately, the support he gets from everyone around him makes the good days more common.

> It's almost surreal, the amount of love and support that's coming from all different angles. It's what makes those bad days much more manageable.

Jordan is someone who likes to be in charge, and that's no different with his treatment. He's made sure to face this challenge on his own terms and not let cancer overtake his life. For example, it was important for him to stay in school. The alternative of staying in bed and feeling sorry for himself was not an option. Throughout grueling treatments and scan anxiety, he finished the first year in his pre-medical program with flying colors. Having cancer hasn't stopped him from doing the things he sets out to do. Even though he's had to make big adjustments, he's living the life he wants to live—with or without cancer.

> The biggest myth about cancer is that it consumes your whole life. Just live your life around it, and keep doing the things you want to do.