Article Series Inspirational Stories Breast

Kimaya’s story:
The power of community

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KIMAYA S.
LIVING WITH CANCER SINCE 2013

When Kimaya was diagnosed with HER2+ breast cancer at the age of 34, it was her hopeful spirit and the support of her community that got her

through.

Born in Mumbai, India, where her mother, brother and many of her friends and family still live, Kimaya has since put down roots with her husband and three cats in the small community of South Orange, New Jersey. Her neighbors have become her second family, and she knows her community well through her role as a business owner. Kimaya owns a boutique where she sells handcrafted tunics and jewelry from India, Bali and Turkey.

> If you just watch movies and you haven't had someone close to you experience cancer, all you can picture is someone who is really sick with no hair.

That was the image Kimaya had in her mind when she was first diagnosed. After discovering a lump in her breast, her husband urged her to get it checked out. She went in for a mammogram and was promptly scheduled for a biopsy the next day. At that point, Kimaya realized something was wrong. A surgeon looked at her mammograms and told her it was likely cancer.

Her diagnosis was the scariest time in her journey. Kimaya wondered how breast cancer would affect her future, including her ability to start a family. Fortunately, she was able to harvest her eggs and freeze several embryos before she started treatment. Gradually, Kimaya's fears began to give way to optimism.

> Everyone around me was very positive. There was no feeling that it was the end of the world.

Kimaya's friends and family told her over and over again throughout her treatment, "You're going to be okay." It was a message she took to heart.

Article slides



Kimaya and her husband, Manoj.



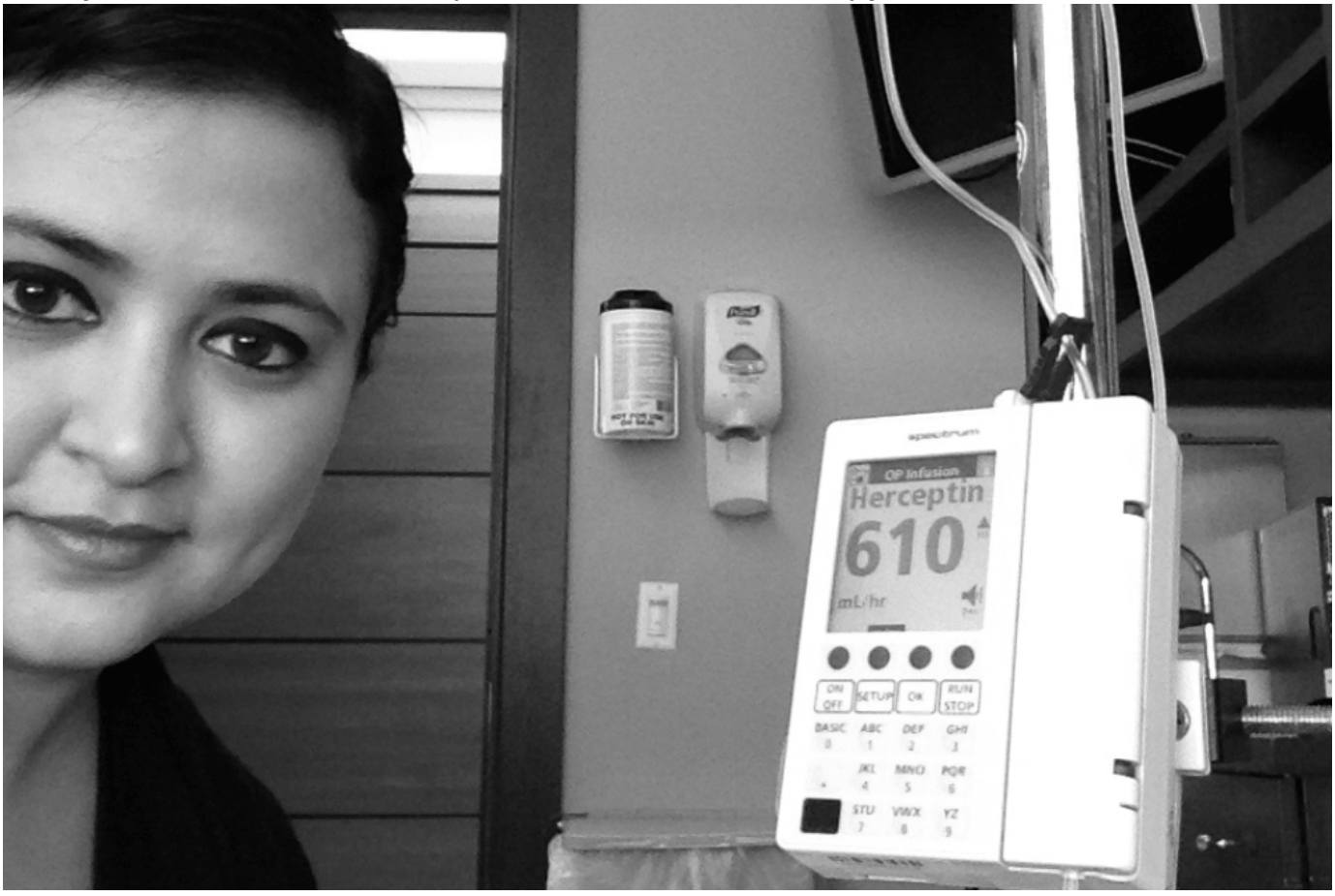
Kimaya and her mother.



Kimaya and her family visiting from India.



Kimaya with the nurses who provided her chemotherapy treatment.



Kimaya at a chemotherapy treatment.



Kimaya in her boutique.

Kimaya was comforted by the story of a survivor who went directly to work from her chemotherapy treatments and could continue most of her daily activities. Soon enough, Kimaya settled into her own comfortable routine, going in for her weekly treatments while continuing to work at her shop and spending time with her husband and friends.

> It was good to know that if I needed something, I could ask.

Kimaya was able to focus on her treatment and recovery thanks to the support of the people around her. Friends would prepare meals on the days she had her chemotherapy treatments. Sometimes, she'd come home to find care packages left on her doorstep. Once she even discovered that someone had dropped by and planted flowers in her yard. Neighbors and friends were always reaching out to see if she needed anything from the grocery store or a ride to an appointment. Her

husband, especially, stepped up to provide constant care and emotional support.

> All of their calm and confidence helped me take everything in stride and just carry on.

Now that treatment is behind her, Kimaya uses her experience to reach other people who are going through a cancer diagnosis. She knows firsthand how important it is to be informed and prepared about treatment and, above all, to find the support of a loving person or community.

> It's good to talk to someone who's been through it. You help them feel like there's a light at the end of the tunnel.