

Lynn's story: Embracing the unknown

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LYNN S.

LIVING WITH CANCER SINCE 2008

If you're looking for Lynn, you'll probably find her out in her garden or kayaking or soaking at Starkey Hot Springs. She lives in Idaho, about two hours north of Boise. She enjoys spending time outside with her husband, three children and three grandchildren.

But for Lynn, life wasn't always so serene. In 2008, after spending nearly three years telling her doctors that something wasn't right, they couldn't get to the root of her symptoms. Finally, after a second biopsy, Lynn was diagnosed with stage III breast cancer.

I went through chemotherapy and radiation. I was also depressed, and I needed to treat that along with my cancer.

For Lynn, a breast cancer diagnosis was a relief on the one hand; finally, she knew she hadn't been imagining her symptoms. On the other hand, the diagnosis was difficult to accept. Lynn couldn't get back the time she'd lost—time that she could have spent treating her disease. Lynn describes herself in the year following her diagnosis as being on "autopilot." A cancer diagnosis is emotional for anyone. In Lynn's case, she felt regret for not speaking up sooner and more forcefully about her symptoms.

Article slides



Lynn and her family at her son Will's graduation party.



Lynn and her friends at Burgdorf Hot Springs.



Lynn celebrates her daughter Annie's wedding in Palm Springs.



Lynn and her husband, Jeff, at the Obama inaugural ball in McCall, Idaho.



Lynn on a camping trip in White Bird, Idaho.



Lynn and her family at her daughter Annie's wedding in Boise, Idaho.

In addition to treating her cancer, Lynn began treating her depression and anxiety. She tried counseling and medication, as well as yoga and meditation, with limited success. Ultimately, it was a six-day wilderness adventure on the Salmon River in Idaho with other cancer patients and survivors that changed her life and helped her overcome her emotional struggles.

I've learned to break out of my comfort zone because who knows what will happen next.

Lynn found that being in nature was the best medicine for her soul. While on the Salmon River, she pushed herself physically in ways she hadn't since her youth. She made connections with other survivors that last to this day. It was a life-changing, emotionally and physically healing experience. Becoming comfortable with the

unknown helped Lynn work through her depression and anxiety. Now Lynn is more willing to try new things and to embrace change. She takes nothing for granted.

Friends help. Being outdoors really helps. Massage helps. If I can help other people in any way, the experience is more meaningful to me.