

Somebody once told me that attitude is everything. The way that someone acts and moves through their everyday life can reflect so much on themselves and others. Somebody once showed me that even when waking up to the toughest struggles, it is still possible to smile just from your personality, your attitude. That person was my mother.

In May of 1998, my mother Nannette and I were involved in a car accident. Little did we know the change in character and memory loss my mother had during the time before would lead to this. My mom had no idea what was going on at the scene of the accident. After being taken to the hospital, my family was later notified with the most shocking and frightening news. The accident was indirectly caused by a brain tumor and my mother was diagnosed with brain cancer.

My mom had surgery as soon as possible. After the surgery, my mother went through 6 weeks of radiation and 9 months of chemotherapy treatments. The medications always made her extremely tired and weak. She also lost all of her hair from the disease. Being so young I never really understood what was happening at the time. I was 7 years old and all I really knew was that my mother was never around. Time went by, and my mom was slowly getting better. With her strength and determination, she beat the disease.

Before I knew it, my mom was right back to her everyday life, continuing with her cleaning business and her role as a mom. She also continued to see the doctor every 3 months for a cat scan and check ups to insure no cancerous cells had grown. Even though my mom forgot little things, and often repeated herself, everything felt like home again. With 7 more years of memories, summer of 2004 came before we knew it, and I got a phone call that I knew would suddenly change my life. My dad told me that my mom woke up not knowing where she was or what to do. She was taken to the hospital right away. We later went to the hospital and stayed with her and we were all told together that the cancer was back. My family was in tears, scared to death of what was going to happen next.

The first thing my mom said was that if she could beat it once, she will beat it again. With a million things going through my head, I was still as confident as she was. Being now a teenager, it was harder to accept what was happening to my mom. My family and I went to see her as much as possible. She had her surgery as soon as possible. She was then treated with medications and chemotherapy orally. Even though she didn't lose all of her hair, she was still very tired and weak. Things progressed the next 4 months, and my mom was up moving and getting around. She was also cooking. She wasn't yet driving, but she still got out as much as possible.

It was then in January when things started to fall down again. She had to start walking with a walker, and eventually the time came where she was never going to be able to see the upstairs again. My family helped her with her everyday rituals, and it eventually came to the point where she was in a wheelchair. We had a nurse from hospice come to the house and help out with her also. Family from all over the country came to see her, and I knew that's what she needed. Things were getting tougher because even though she wanted to do everything on her own, she just couldn't. Finally, she was put in a hospital bed that was placed in our downstairs room.

Trying to stay strong, it was hard for me to think that everything was going to be alright. It was even harder for me to go into the room, look down at my mom and be able to talk to her. Fighting for her life, my mom never gave up once what she was forced to

deal with. Waking up everyday knowing what my mom was going through, tortured me and is one of the most painful things to look back on.

My mom was always the person who cared more about everybody else than anybody worrying about her. She always had a smile on her face and the confidence that everything was going to be alright. She never once complained of what she was going through and lived everyday to the fullest. One Sunday I finally knew there were things that I had to let out and say to my mom. I sat in the room, held her hand, and talked to her. Looking down at her, I remember exactly the way she looked up at me, and from that, I knew she heard every word I said.

March 27<sup>th</sup> 2005, Easter Sunday, my dad came home from church early because he said he got a weird feeling that something was going wrong. When he came home, my mother was coughing up blood, and making a horrible breathing noise. My sisters and I were notified about it that morning. Trying as much as we could to block out the ghastly sound, my family and I had a quiet Easter around the house. At about 6:00 that evening, my mother passed away.

All my life I never really realized how quickly things can change. It seemed like everything was happening so fast, and I didn't really know how to grip on to the situation. Growing up I dealt with a lot more responsibilities and change in my everyday life and it made me realize how a lot of people take for granted what they have. Nothing ever seemed to be easy any more after I lost my mother. I felt terrified to grow older because I could never imagine myself without my mom right there with me along the way. With the love and support from my family and friends, I knew how important it was to keep my head up. I know that I wouldn't have made it through without the strength from my two older sisters. I learned a lot from experiencing such a painful tragedy and I grew stronger as a person. I know nothing will take the pain away from living a life without a mother, and I know things will never really be the same, but I'm proud of who I've become. My mother pushed her way through her fight to cancer with such a positive and blissful attitude that still guides and keeps me going through my journey of life today.