

War - Jaime's Story

When I was a kid starting to live life, I had no idea what I would have to face when I turned 14. Up until then I lived a very happy life with my family, friends and teachers. When I turned 14 something happened that would change my entire life forever.

As soon as I turned 14, strange things started happening to me. Every single day when I got home from school, all I wanted to do was sleep. My parents thought I was tired of going to school so they just let me sleep. No one knew what would happen to me later on.

After a little while, my parents started to notice some things going wrong with me. My mouth was changing position – it was starting to droop a little on one side. On Friday I woke up from a long sleep, and my mom said to me, "You got home and slept because you had a terrible headache." On Saturday I went to my sister-in-law's house and vomited. On Sunday we went to the beach and I fell down. My dad told my mom on that day "You are going to take him to the hospital tomorrow."

August 8, 2004 will be a day that will always live in me. That morning, I went to the Hospital thinking I would go get checked by the doctors, and then would go back to my home on later that afternoon. No -- that did not happen. Instead the doctors told me terrible news. They said that they needed to tell me a very hard thing -- or at least that is what my mom tells me they said. My mom said that they told me, "You have CANCER". But I don't really remember this. You see, before all of this happened I had lost my memory because of the brain tumor I had.

The same day they told me that I had a brain tumor, they transferred me to Children Hospital Los Angeles. August 12, 2004 was when my surgery was done to remove a part of the brain tumor. After the surgery I was completely paralyzed. Not only was I unable to move, I couldn't remember anything, or even talk. My mom says that my doctor came to visit a week after my surgery and started to make me walk even though I wasn't sure I was ready to. Later on, after being hospitalized for three weeks, they moved me to the sixth floor of the Hospital where they do rehabilitation. One week after that the nurse told me I could go home. I was very exited.

But this was just the beginning of a never-ending story. Three months of very aggressive chemo followed. I vomited for seven days and nights in a row. It was a life I would have never wished for. Later on I faced 15 endless radiation treatments. This was a very hard thing to go through, but I made it to the end -- always thinking positive, always fighting for my life. This was

the end of the terrible war with cancer. Many more things were coming up. But I knew I would beat them as I had done with my cancer.

After getting through surgery, chemo and radiation, and finding out that the cancer was in remission, I knew that the first war against cancer had passed. But the second war was just coming up.

Soon after my treatment ended, a depression hit me. That was the most horrible experience I could have ever confronted. During these days I was constantly asking myself, "Why me? Will it come back?" To stop these thoughts immediately I knew what I had to do. I had to talk -- I had to get the word out there to help myself and to help others like me.

The first people I went to talk to were my teachers. All of them listened and helped me. I needed to tell people, "This happened to me and I am alive!" Soon I did my first presentation about my experience to students in my school. Later I did another presentation, and I plan on doing a lot more in the future. But that was not it -- I still had to get more out of my heart. So I later on talked to a psychologist and she helped me a lot. But that was still not it -- I had to let more out-- until this one day I went to Teen Impact, a support group for teens with cancer. I knew this was my place to talk to people who had similar experiences. Right now I am helping some people with depression. Hopefully, by telling my story, I will be of great help to them.