

## What helped me

My name is Alex and I am 17 years old and I love to play basketball and other sports. I consider myself very athletic. When I am not playing sports, I like to hang out and kick back with my friends. When I first found out I had cancer it was 1992 and I was 11 years old. Because of the cancer and the chemotherapy, I was bald for most of my elementary school years and was picked on by some of the kids at school. In 1995, I was finally completely done with chemotherapy and cancer-free. It took me a long time to really understand what cancer was and why it happened to me. After treatment and one relapse, I am now feeling really good..

During the time I was being treated, I went to the hospital almost every day and I didn't really know that other people lived differently. I thought that everyone went in for chemotherapy and that my doctor's appointments were just a normal part of life. I wasn't until years later I found out that I was different and had actually been treated for cancer.

I learned a lot about my experience with cancer through a support group at my hospital, Teen Impact. I first got involved when Teen Impact went on a retreat to Sea World, San Diego. After that trip, I decided to start going to the group meetings and that's when I started to get to know people and feel more comfortable talking to them, now they are some of my closest friends. Teen Impact taught me about life and about having cancer. The meetings are the best and my friends there have become like a second family to me.

I consider myself lucky because I have had some friends pass away from cancer. It was hard for me and some of the others to deal with, but we have learned that that's what cancer does. I have learned that all people can really do is be there for each other and pray that everything is going to turn out right.

In the future I would like to take my experiences and be a doctor that helps teens and kids deal with the fact that they have cancer. I don't want them to go through what I went through and I would encourage them to join a group like Teen Impact. Teen Impact has made me a stronger person, mentally and physically.