

"I Did What They Told Me I Shouldn't Do."

NATURAL LIFE NEWS INTERVIEW:

A Survivor's Cancer Journey

Trudy Samuelson was diagnosed with Stage 3, triple negative, invasive ductal carcinoma, a highly aggressive form of breast cancer in 2002 at age 54.

Three years later, ongoing chest pain would reveal her cancer's return; this time behind her sternum where it would be labeled 'inoperable.' Her doctors presented treatment options that ranged from palliative care for an incurable disease, to dose dense chemotherapy, more radiation and, if all went well, multiple surgeries.

Trudy's disease, unfortunately, is not uncommon: over 350 individuals are diagnosed with a major cancer every day in the US. What makes her story unique, however, is her calculated approach towards preparation, recovery and a deep belief in her body's ability to repair and recover when given the right, supplemental support.

Today, this two-time breast cancer survivor is the thriving Founder and CEO of Survivor Supplements, a Montana based business manufacturing dietary supplements to help cancer patients prepare for, and recover from, the effects of treatment. —Editor

Trudy, when you say, "I did what they told me I shouldn't do," what exactly do you mean?

Almost all doctors involved in my cancer treatment told me that

I shouldn't take antioxidants, herbs or dietary supplements during treatment. I found this stems from the theory that antioxidants protect cancerous cells against free radical damage, the mechanism of chemotherapy and radiation. There are a number of recent studies that illustrate the opposite effect. Antioxidants may actually *potenti-*



As a thriving survivor, **Trudy Samuelson** uses her cancer experience to help others recover from treatment.

ate the effects of these treatments, while protecting normal cells from damage. My treatment regimen included therapeutic doses of a wide range of antioxidants and many other dietary supplements plus chemo, radiation and surgery.

Can you tell me about the time around your diagnosis?

Yes, as soon as I heard the word cancer, I walked through a door that changed my reality forever. My head was spinning with emotion and fear, I was facing an endless schedule of doctors' appointments; the pressure to begin treatments felt like an emergency. All that attention around your disease can feel comforting, but it's a terrible time to be making really important decisions.

Unfortunately, this combination of fear and attention convinces many people to just say "whatever you think, doc." Cancer drains us, emotionally and physically, making it hard to tap into our own power. For me, it seemed like the doctors were only worried about my cancer. I was worried about surviving my treatment.

How did you respond to this initial, very confusing, period?

Although my initial diagnosis started with confusion and fear, I knew that I had to be in the driver's seat and control the pace. In my case, though it still rattled me to my core, I was no stranger to cancer. While my experience came in the form of heartbreak around losing family and friends to the disease, it also made me uniquely prepared for what would lie ahead. I had experimented with supplements for years and experienced the positive results. Some results were quite remarkable. I also had seen up close the devastation that cancer and chemo can cause. I knew what biases awaited my ideas about nutritional therapies, and I had seen how the attitude of a patient affects the outcome.

After a week of bouncing between appointments, I knew that I wasn't prepared to make the decisions I was being pressured to make. I literally said STOP! I cancelled my surgery, my other appointments. Instead I chose to understand, as fully as I possibly could, my disease called cancer, before making treatment decisions.

How did this affect your course of treatment?

Treatment decisions are very hard and very strange. It can feel like the length and quality of your life are reduced to playing the odds and throwing the dice. Nothing about that scenario worked for me. My learning curve was steep, but I found that the more I learned, the less I feared; knowledge truly is power and I was ready to put my strategies into action. I also quickly learned to look away from statistics.

So while I chose my doctors

carefully and believed they would do their part, I also knew that wasn't enough. I knew that I would be responsible for building up my system to withstand toxic exposures; supporting my organs and overall health; cleansing and rebuilding afterward. These critical steps

allowed me to minimize damages, side effects and late effects. For the most part, patients are advised to eat a balanced diet, but I don't think this provides nearly enough support, especially when eating can be a challenge. My treatment was built around the knowledge that while I needed medical treatment to survive, there was so much action I could take on my own to increase my odds and improve my quality of life. That's a very empowering realization.

What supplements did you take? How do you know if it was an effective step?

Through my own research and the guidance of an excellent naturopathic doctor, I began an intensive regimen of glutathione, vitamins, herbs, antioxidants and proteins. After a three week course of this therapy, I scheduled my surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, AZ. After surgery, I arranged to have slides of my tumor sent to MD Anderson, a leading cancer research hospital in Houston, Texas. I wanted to compare my original biopsy with my tumor after 30 days of supplement therapy.

How did you know this was an effective step?

The MD Anderson Pathology Report stated, "tumor shows morphological changes suggestive of therapy effect." Bingo! It went on to describe the tumor as less aggressive and smaller. I had accomplished this through a completely natural, self-administered protocol—and I had proof!



Whey protein and the necessary precursors for glutathione production helped her body repair.

Your therapy was working, but you continued with traditional treatment. Why?

Because I wanted to survive. I realized that my journey couldn't be about choosing between

traditional OR alternative treatment. It was about adapting to the best resources from all disciplines. For me, being diagnosed with a highly aggressive form of breast cancer, I knew I could rebound from surgery. Radiation was an option I was willing to consider, especially since the surgery was unable to achieve clear margins; there were foci of cancer remaining that had grown into my chest wall. I wanted to kill this cancer but still couldn't justify chemo. I signed up for 8 weeks of radiation with a 'boost' at the end.

Your first treatment regimen consisted of supplement therapies, surgery and radiation: what happened next?

After my first diagnosis, treatment and successful recovery, I was on top of the world. I felt intensely connected to my body and was basking in my personal cancer triumph. I maintained my nutritional protocol and my energy, spirits and physical health were all strong. As time went on, however, I was working too much, under too much stress, skipping meals and ignoring my diet and supplements. Over time I allowed my lifestyle to once again damage my health. It wasn't anything I was consciously aware of, it just happened.

Then the nightmare began: a deep pain in the middle of my chest. Red rashes appeared. After many tests, x-rays and worsening symptoms, they found it: my cancer was back. It was located behind and around my sternum and was initially considered inoperable.

Your cancer came back. Did this make you want to try a different approach?

Not at all. While my first diagnosis was marked with self determination, research and even excitement, the second diagnosis felt hopeless. I



A complex blend of immune-boosting mushrooms are found in our most popular drink, Defend Blend.

knew instantly that this would be a different fight, but it didn't take long for my resolve to return. I had done the groundwork. I already knew my disease and I understood how it had gotten the upper hand. I already had a trusted team in place. I had proof that supplements work. And I still had deep faith in the ability of my body to heal and recover.



Green Tea is loaded with antioxidants and is an easy way to help your body fight free radicals.

This time around, however, I had to face my biggest fear of all, chemotherapy, and find ways to change my attitude. My oncologist was very direct in saying, “Surgery is not an option; we can’t re-radiate tissue; your only hope is chemo.” Despite all of my biases against it, I knew I had to get on board. I ramped up my nutritional protocol, listened with full acceptance to Bernie Siegel *Getting Ready* CD’s and did my best to accept chemo as my healer, not my poison. After the first two, dose-dense Adriamycin/Cytotoxin treatments, I could FEEL my tumor shrinking. The pain stopped. This was followed by Taxol and traveling out of state again for IMRT and one remaining surgery: now possible due to the reduction of my tumor size. That was seven years ago. I take my supplements consistently now. Twice is enough!

Where did the idea for Survivor Supplements come from?

The idea came from my own “see a need, fill a need” circumstance. After my second cancer, I knew I had to stay on my protocol of supplements. I look back now and know that, in my case, my cancer came back because I ignored my health. Carrying all those pills, teas and powders every day—it just got to be too much. I own my own business and was working 50–70 hours a week. It’s very hard to stay with that kind of

intensive regimen.

I wanted to develop, for my own use, a means of getting the supplements I needed in an easy-to-use format. The idea for *Survivor Supplements* came from the desire to share it with others, knowing it

would make a difference in their quality of life. The development of our nutritional drink powders has been a four-year journey that has included input from experts from a variety of fields and many other survivors.

Our products have been on the market for about a year now and the response is outstanding. I never would have imagined that my cancer journey would lead me here, to this business, and it is the most rewarding endeavor I have ever done.

Trudy, what is the best advice you could give to someone affected by cancer?

Stand up for yourself. Be open to all your options, but question them thoroughly. You will be an unpopular patient at times, but that’s OK. There are so many people out there beating or living with cancer very successfully. Remember, you have been diagnosed with cancer, not sentenced to death. The journey will be hard and you have to work hard, but this will strengthen your resolve. Above all, be vigilant about nutrition. Chemo and radiation may save your life, but they can also destroy your health. It doesn’t need to be that way: I’m living with better health and a fuller life than ever before, eight years after my second cancer. ■

Want to learn more about Survivor Supplements line of products? Give us a call at 406-745-3500 or visit us at SurvivorSupplements.com.

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