



INTRODUCTION

MAKING LEMONADE

My chest still tightens when I talk about that day. It rocked my life—and not in a good way. After my diagnosis and treatment, I obsessed over why this had happened to me and dived headfirst into overhauling my health. I was a fit chick. I didn't eat double bacon cheeseburgers. I wore sunscreen. I treated cardio like a religion. How the *hell* did I have cancer? Many people had trudged the same complicated, scary-as-shit road before me. The proliferation of chronic diseases—autoimmune disorders, cancer, diabetes, heart disease—in otherwise “healthy” people—both stunned and scared me. I needed answers.

It took more than two years of poring over books, articles, and websites—plus consultations with nutritionists, internists specializing in integrative medicine, healthy chefs, various oncologists, and other experts—to navigate my way from healthy, to healthier, to my healthiest. There's a lot to process, and, man, did I wish someone had given me a road map. That's the reason I'm writing this book, an easy-to-follow guide to taking

small, manageable steps to live healthier, cleaner, stronger, and longer, and to help you discover the healthiest, happiest, most energized version of yourself.

I always try to set a good example for my two young daughters, so I scheduled my first mammogram right before the big 4–0, when experts recommend that you start getting “the girls” screened. The results came back clear, as expected. I was feeling fit and healthier than ever—but just 11 days later, while changing after a workout class, I found a lump.

D-Day

Somehow I managed to hold it together on the drive from my doctor's office, but now, the second I see him, my legs give out. Michael's loving arms envelop me as I crumble to the ground hysterical. The idea of facing our sweet, innocent girls, who are happily playing at home while waiting for Mommy, destroys me. I can't catch my breath. I can't stop shaking. I have cancer.

Concerned, I hauled ass to my ob-gyn, who said it was nothing, just a normal, glandular effect of getting older. I believed her. Why wouldn't I? Dr. E was my first doctor when I moved to Los Angeles at 23. She was my doc when I lost my virginity at 24. (Spoiler alert: late bloomer!) She coached Michael and me through two blissful pregnancies and greeted both of our girls when they came into the world. This woman knew me, and I trusted her.

So I returned to my world of working and workouts, shutting my kids around and sneaking in some date nights. Yet every time I undressed over the next few weeks, that lump stared me down, taunting me. *What am I? Why am I here?* To make sure I wasn't crazy, I asked my hubby if he could feel it. Yep. Could he see it? Ditto. So it made sense to have my GP check it out—just to be sure. He also said I had nothing to worry about.

Four months passed, and the lump was still freaking me out. My gut told me to be triple sure, so I scheduled a consult with a surgical oncologist. Two ultrasounds and a needle biopsy later, the oncologist said it didn't seem problematic. *Phew.* But she wasn't sure exactly what it was, so she advised we take it out just to be safe. *Hasta la vista, lumpy, and hola* to my first surgery ever.

Back in my surgeon's office, every indication pointed to getting the all clear. *No cancer, I imagined, but good for you for being vigilant and an advocate for your own health, and so on.*

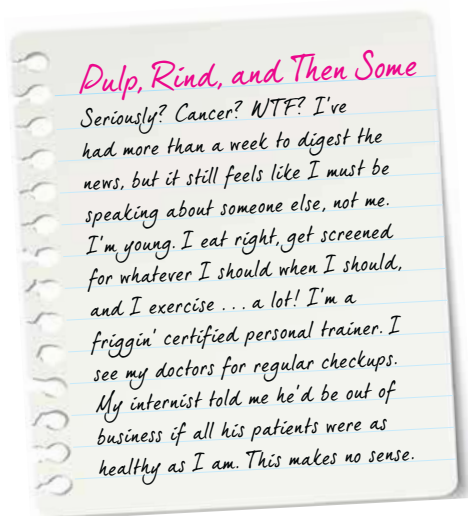
Then all of a sudden there it was.

Cancer.

CANCER.

A big, fat, goddamn lemon.

I had stage 1A invasive ductal cancer of the breast: two small tumors, one noninvasive and one smaller, scarier one. As far as diagnoses go, it was a pretty good one. (It's weird to think there's anything "good" about getting cancer, I know!) Treatment would prove complicated



because the second tumor was invasive, but, hey, it was treatable. The road ahead still felt overwhelming and horrifying.

Surgery options, radiation consults, chemo consults, reconstruction information—spending hours with six of the top surgeons in L.A. made my brain feel like it was about to burst. The first two surgeons told me, hands down, to have a double mastectomy. Cut off the girls, just like that? A third, highly respected surgeon recommended another lumpectomy to remove more tissue, followed by radiation. Either way, it looked like Tamoxifen, an antihormone drug, and I were about to become BFFs to reduce the risk of the cancer returning. Which meant saying hello to early menopause with the possibility of weight gain, night sweats, muscle cramping, hair loss, and vaginal dryness. Hooray!

Michael and I talked about the options for days. We made lists of all of the pros and cons, consulted just about every expert we could find, and flip-flopped . . . a lot. If my cancer was the Super Bowl, we were tied in double overtime.

Here's my first health PSA: Fondle yourself. Seriously, please touch your lady lumps. If you find something, don't wait. Rush to a breast specialist, STAT. Getting checked out can be terrifying, but not checking it out is infinitely scarier. Being proactive might have saved my life.

In my case, the surgeon who deals with breasts each day made the right call. My other nonspecialist doctors, who are truly fabulous in their own fields, didn't. It's hard not to fault them for thinking it was nothing, but even my lumpectomy surgeon said the *only* person who could have known for *sure* was the pathologist looking at the tissue samples. That's why you gotta be your own health advocate, my friend.

You might be feeling the same way I was in those early days: anxious, confused, and scared as hell about the long road ahead. Feeling desperately lost when it came to my health *sucked*. So I drew on my skills as a seasoned journalist—researching and seeking expert opinions—and called on my background in fitness and nutrition to turn myself from the formerly healthy woman totally stunned by cancer into a stronger, healthier, better-informed survivor and thriver! Along the way, I learned a ton (a whole book full!) about how to forge my own path to better health and happiness, fewer toxins, less stress, and more energy. It's easier said than done—just ask my hubs how many times I wanted to curl up in a ball and, well, bawl—so I'm here to help you figure it out and guide you every step of the way.

During my mastectomy, Dr. Armando Giuliano, my incredibly gifted surgeon, found that the cancer had spread to one of my

Making Lemonade

It's been two weeks of emotional hell. How am I even uttering the words, "I'll be undergoing a double mastectomy"? I can't believe I'm going to lose my breasts. But this surgery will give me the best peace of mind and chance of getting through what hopefully will be my long life without ever having to wear the scarlet letter "C" again. Either I can take it lying down or I can stand up, be strong for myself and our girls, and fight! Boobies, I'm gonna miss ya.

lymph nodes. Hey there, stage 2! Thankfully, he was able to remove it all, so after the mastectomy and two reconstructive surgeries, my oncologists gave me the all clear. Major blessing. My surgery, however, came with some pretty serious aftermath: a newly scarred body, coming to terms with that, zero feeling in my breasts, the back of my arm, and my armpit where they removed several lymph nodes. But if that's the worst of it, count me lucky.

Life gave me a big, fat lemon, which is why, as I lay in a hospital bed, recovering,

my hubby reminded me: "Babe, you gotta make lemonade." That little cliché impacted me so much that Michael and I founded a website, GottaMakeLemonade.com, where people dealing with all kinds of life challenges can come together to share their stories, find support, and snag some sweet inspiration in the face of adversity—but more on that later.

Here's where my cancer lemon started to become lemonade. In my new, postcancer reality, reexamining my "healthy" lifestyle became paramount. I had no genetic predisposition for cancer. I went far beyond testing for BRCA mutations; I did a full panel, which tested for any DNA red flags that might spell health disaster, and came up clean. I've done enough planks and burpees in the last decade to make a boot camp instructor sweat, and my habit of ordering egg-white omelets and cheeseless pizzas (extreme, I admit) prompted almost everyone I knew to give me a Healthiest Eater award. Here I was, the "healthiest" one in the room, but my sports bra had that hot pink "C" emblazoned on it. WTF was I doing wrong?

Cue a flood of questions. Could the food I scarfed between interviews, TV sets, and my kids' dance practices have created the C-monster? I didn't think so. What about my beloved fitness routine? Did my sweat sessions have the right goals?



A little research opened the floodgates. Turns out my low-fat, low-cal, diet foods—by-the-boxload way of eating did need an overhaul. My gym sessions absolutely needed some shaping up. The more I read, the more I felt like Alice falling through the rabbit hole into a Wonderland of research-backed information. I started to wonder about skincare, makeup, and hair products.

What about the scouring, spraying, and sanitizing cleaners we use in our homes? I mean, if the causes weren't inside my body—and we can't control our genetics anyway—could my environment, what I put in, on, and around my body, have invited cancer to come knocking?

You're holding the answer to all that questioning in your hands, my soon-to-be-

healthier friend. This book will help guide cancer survivors, those who have never had cancer (let's keep it that way), and those who worry about the other chronic diseases that strike too many of us every year. Take the lessons I've learned and use them to create a healthier, happier life for yourself and your family.

It's not always easy, though. Navigating the labyrinth of sometimes-conflicting health info to figure out what foods are truly healthy, what products are actually toxin-free, and what screenings are absolutely necessary can feel dizzying. This book provides a map out of the labyrinth, one manageable step at a time. Here are the first three steps you need to take:

STEP 1 RESOLVE TO PURSUE YOUR HEALTHIEST SELF.

Since you're reading this, you've already done that. Congrats! Ten points for completing step 1!

STEP 2 EVALUATE WHAT'S WORKING.

Look at every area of your life: diet, fitness, relationships, and beyond. You'll learn

what you need to embrace—green and purple vegetables you like, workouts you love, people who support you, and more. This step also includes being honest with yourself about what's not working and the negativity and toxins you need to ditch.

STEP 3 TAKE BITE-SIZED ACTION.

One small step can lead to huge results that will revolutionize your life with hard-core healthiness.

By taking advantage of my experiences and research and the best advice from science and experts, I took something from the cancer monster that it never planned to give: better health and a happier life. Use this book—including the Resources section at the end—combine that with your own experiences, and you can create your own action plan for a better, longer, more energized, all-around kick-ass life. I call it your healthiest healthy, and I'm here to help you find it. Hold my hand, laugh at my corny jokes, and let my inner Laker Girl cheer you on. We're in this together. I know you can do it!

