

and listen to all the way through: “Fallin,” “Empire State of Mind,” “If I Ain’t Got You” or “Unbreakable”?

AK: I mean, I don’t want to sound crazy, but I’d listen to *all* of them all the way through. I love them. I love those songs!

PS: Your husband, Swizz Beatz, has said that your relationship is “a blessing.” Do you feel that way too?

AK: Yes. It’s beautiful because rarely, I think, do you find a relationship where you can experience things equally. In fact, I think that’s my favorite word and the most important word when it comes to relationships: equality. And that’s what we’ve been able to find. We encourage each other equally. We’re excited for each other.

PS: Do you remember the moment when you fell in love?

AK: I do remember the exact moment. If I told you, I would have to kill you, but it was something that he planned, and he planned it so beautifully and thoughtfully that in that moment I remember thinking to myself, Oh my God, I’m so in love with him.

PS: What makes you giddy? I bet I can guess, and he’s just about a year old....

AK: Yeah, my son, Egypt, makes me super giddy, especially when he laughs. His laugh makes me laugh like a maniac!

PS: Do you ever think about the kind of man you want Egypt to be?

AK: I do think about it a lot. He’s going to be a *man* in this world. It’s a beautiful blessing that I get to help raise a man. And I want to show him as much as possible.

PS: You went to Egypt, and you had a sort of breakthrough moment, right? Is that why your son is named Egypt?

AK: Definitely. It was a time of transition. There were certain people [I was working with] who weren’t right. I had friends who weren’t right anymore. I was tired and I had overworked myself and burnt myself out. So I went to Egypt by myself. When I saw what was built there, it made me understand how powerful we are, that we can create anything. And I felt like I needed to create things that were timeless too.

PS: See, I call a nervous breakdown a “nervous breakthrough,” because every time I ever had one, it was a breakthrough. It sounds like what happened to you.

AK: Exactly.

PS: So what do you hope for your family?

AK: We’re such a bonded happy family, and I hope that we’ll always be able to be that. For me, the most important thing is that we always take the time to understand each other and grow together. We’re all going to change. Otherwise, it’s boring. Who wants to stay the damn same all their life? ■

If Your Friend Had Breast Cancer...

...then *this* is what she’d tell you: what it feels like, how to help her and how to protect your own health. These discussions, like the ones **Jan**, **Demi** and **Alicia** are inspiring with *Five*, can be lifesaving, says Susan Love, M.D., president of the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation and a breast cancer pioneer. “Today, young women aren’t afraid to urge each other to get checked out if something seems off,” she says. “This generation will be a crucial voice of hope and change.” So what are young women survivors telling their friends now?

BY ERIN ZAMMETT RUDDY



Zeytinoglu today, healthy and helping others

“Share your story. It can save lives.”

NAME: Meltem Zeytinoglu, M.D., 28, internal medicine resident at the University of Chicago

FAMILY HISTORY: Zeytinoglu’s mother died of breast cancer.

DIAGNOSED: 2005, age 22

TREATMENT: lumpectomy and radiation

“I’ve been a daughter of a breast cancer patient, a survivor myself and a doctor—so I’m pretty comfortable talking about the disease now, but I wasn’t always. After I lost my mom, I hated feeling pity from others. So when I was diagnosed myself just a few months later, I kept it quiet. The nurses would say, ‘What are

ZEYTINOGLU: INNA ROMANENKO PHOTOGRAPHY, CHICAGO. ALL OTHER PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SUBJECTS

you doing here? You're too young!' Yes, the stats say young women shouldn't get breast cancer, but those statistics don't mean anything to those of us who *do* get it. I felt so alone. Finally I realized that something had to give, that I had to start talking about it. I got involved with several great breast cancer organizations, like Bright Pink, and I now share my experience with my patients. It's still hard to tell my story, but I know I'm a better advocate—and doctor—when I step out of my comfort zone and do it. When we tell our stories, it reminds people that no one is immune and, more important, that no one is *alone*."

"Go ahead and ask your friend the tough questions."

NAME: Bridget Spence, 28, event planner, Boston
FAMILY HISTORY: none
DIAGNOSED: 2005, age 21
TREATMENT: lumpectomy, bilateral mastectomy, reconstruction, lymph node resection and ongoing chemo



"Having cancer changes you. I'm never going back to the person I was,

but I *want* to be her. Talking about work drama over a glass of wine makes me feel like one of the girls. But my friends also understand that I'm going to cry sometimes; that I want us to talk openly; that I *want* them to tell me what scares them and ask me the tough questions. It's a tightrope they have to walk, but they do it well. I get chemo, which causes me foot pain and makes wearing my pumps difficult. My friends chipped in and got me a pair of Louboutins as something to work toward. How awesome is that?!"

"There are more options than ever."

NAME: Jamie Pleva, 32, assistant manager at an event company, Nanuet, New York
FAMILY HISTORY: Older sister diagnosed at 31; grandmother had it too.
DIAGNOSED: 2008, age 29
TREATMENT: bilateral mastectomy, reconstruction, chemotherapy



"I learned I had the breast cancer gene when I was 28 and immediately

scheduled a double mastectomy. I had been watching my sister, Tracey, lose her nine-year battle with the disease and was terrified that would happen to me. In my pre-op mammogram, they found I already had a growing tumor. They moved up my surgery, but my doctor agreed to let me freeze my eggs before starting chemo. (I'm single.) On February 20, 2009, Tracey passed away. My doctor retrieved my eggs the morning of her wake, and four hours later, I was reading her eulogy. My story is sad, but it's also hopeful—we have come a long way since Tracey was diagnosed, and my still being

"I've had breast cancer once; I do not want it again."

here is evidence of that: My cancer was detected early. I got to take a brand-new chemo that wasn't available to my sister. I preserved my fertility. Cancer has taken so much from my family, but I took back control, and I never lost hope. There are new and better treatments being developed every day—that should give us *all* hope."

"Don't forget about what comes after treatment."

NAME: Elissa Bantug, 29, co-coordinator for the breast cancer survivorship program at The Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins, Baltimore
FAMILY HISTORY: Mother had breast cancer.
DIAGNOSED: 2003, age 23
TREATMENT: lumpectomy, radiation, chemo, bilateral mastectomy



"I tell my friends that after treatment I got no education about what

I should expect. Would my fertility bounce back? Could I learn to love my body again? Would my libido ever return? In my job I hear women talk about vaginal dryness, inability to climax—issues I can personally attest to (let's just say I felt like a 60-year-old menopausal woman). So at hospital meetings I'll say we should have vibrators in the gift shop, and people must think, Oh my God, did she just say *vibrator* in a room full of doctors?! But discussing these issues is the only way to change the culture. More women are beating this disease. We have to talk about life *after* cancer, too!"



"This disease isn't just about your breasts."

NAME: Nikia Hammonds-Blakely, 33, motivational speaker and Ph.D. student, Dallas
FAMILY HISTORY: none
DIAGNOSED: 1994, age 16 (one of the youngest cases on record)
TREATMENT: partial mastectomy and radiation

"I was only 16 when I found my lump, and I caught it in the nick of time. African Americans tend to get a more aggressive [breast cancer] that's found in later stages. Too many of us remain silent until it's too late! After the scare in my teens, I went into schools and talked with girls about taking care of their health and advocating for themselves. And I was in remission for years. But it hit me last year that I was a hypocrite. I was nearly 100 pounds overweight, I had diabetes and high blood pressure, and for the first time in 16 years, I had an abnormal mammogram. It turned out to be nothing, but it was a wake-up call. I've had breast cancer once; I do *not* want it again. Being vigilant isn't just about getting your breasts checked. I knew that staying at a healthy weight is one thing that's proven to lower your breast cancer risk, and I had to start heeding my own advice. Since then, I've lost 70 pounds, I do Zumba, I jog. I feel amazing. I have a new lease on life—for the second time."