

My Motivated Moment: Emily

This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Announcer] What was the moment in time when things changed for you? What motivated you to move forward or take action? Welcome to My Motivated Moment, a podcast featuring young women bravely facing a breast cancer diagnosis or risk of breast cancer, and the people in their lives who support them. In these live recordings, you'll hear all about the moment everything changed for them. And how their experiences inspired them to become empowered advocates for their own health.

Emily's moment occurred right after she graduated from college and was figuring out what to do next. What she didn't expect to do next was face her mother's breast cancer diagnosis and her own BRCA gene mutation—a genetic mutation linked to breast and ovarian cancer. After coming to terms with her situation, she made her plan and took her future into her own hands.

Join us as we listen to Emily's story.

[Emily] So, I was excited and nervous. I had recently graduated college and was going through that transition period of starting a new job. It wasn't the ideal first job, but it was in the field I was interested in working in. So that was a really exciting thing that I was happy to have. And I was really just getting used to being on my... that 'adulting phase', as they say, of getting used to being out of college and not having a trajectory of what comes next and figuring that all out. I was living at home at the time and just kind of figuring out what I wanted to do. I had been working for a couple months and really just focusing on myself, not really focusing on anything else going on. Just really trying to figure out what was going on in my life.

And then we found out that my mom had cancer. And so that just kind of was a moment (tearing up), excuse me, where it kind of changed just thinking about myself and was like, "What does this mean? How does this impact me? How does this impact my family, my sister, my brother, my mom? How are we going to deal with this?" So it just kind of created a change in what was going on at that time in my life. And luckily, we were there for my mom. She went through treatment and is now cancer-free, but through that time, we found out that my mom had the BRCA mutation.

And again, I was really focused on myself and I couldn't really think about what that meant, what does it mean for like, if I could have that mutation, I really couldn't focus on it. And so I just kind of continued with things and didn't think about it. I was young; I was 23 at the time. I'm healthy. I'll be fine. And then, kind of, my sister went through genetic testing and all of that, and it was kind of around that moment where I was speaking with her and started thinking, "You know, this is something I should think about. I should get this testing done." I had my own apartment at the time. I was more adapted to work. I had friends. I had a life. So, I was like, "Okay, it's time. It's time to make that decision." And luckily for me I knew from talking with my sister and doctors and things that I was 24 when I was going through this process and decided to meet with a genetic counselor, and I had time. I knew that nothing would have to start until I

was 25. So it was like, I'm someone who's a planner. I like to be on top of things. I like to just...I go to the doctor. I like to check it off the list. It's done.

So, because of that, I just thought, "Well, why not find out, and then I have time to decide what I want to do." So, I made an appointment with genetic counselor, and I went, and I got tested, and I really didn't think about what will it mean if I have the mutation. I just kind of thought, we'll find out. I'll get tested. That's what you do. You go to the doctor. So I went in. I went to work. I went about my life, and a couple days later I got an email from my genetic counselor saying, "Hey, we got your results. Let me know when you have time to talk."

So, obviously I wanted to know right away, I didn't want to be waiting around. So I emailed her. I said, "Hey, I'm free now. Let me just step outside from my office to talk with you." So I went across the street to a little office courtyard and I called her up. And in that moment was when it kind of like I started getting a little more anxious about it. And she said, "I'm sorry to tell you, you have the BRCA mutation."

And in that moment it really hit me like, okay, wow, I have this mutation, now what? What do I do? I had talked about it, but I hadn't thought really about what it would mean if I found out I had the mutation. So I was very emotional, and I talked with my sister, I talked to other people in my life. My sister did a lot of research already on stuff, and I was able to kind of wrap my head more around it. When I had that information, and again, I knew going into it I was still young and had time on my side with that and what I needed to decide. I decided that for me, in that moment, I didn't really need to make any big decisions about surgery. That was just not somewhere I could...my head would go at that point.

I knew in my head, my mom had had breast cancer later in life. It wasn't something that I thought, "Oh my God, this could come at any point." I decided that for me it made the most sense to just keep going through the surveillance when I turned 25, and that's what I did and what I'm doing now. At the time, I was single. I was, as I said, getting used to just being a young adult. And as I'm getting older, I'm still single, and... and now that I'm 28, I'm definitely more comfortable with the idea of what the future may be. And I know that for myself, I will eventually have a double mastectomy, but I know that that doesn't need to happen now, and I'm really glad that I found out when I did so early in my life that I have the BRCA mutation and can now take charge and move forward in the best way for me.

[Announcer] Once Emily had the critical information about her hereditary risk, she was able to start forming her plan. Learning her risk was important to her, just like knowing yours can be the key to early detection.

We hope that stories like this will empower you to 'Bring Your Brave' by talking to your family to learn more about your own risk for breast cancer based on family history, and sharing your story. You can do that by visiting our Share Your Story page on cdc.gov/bringyourbrave or bringyourbrave.tumblr.com.

This episode was brought to you by Bring Your Brave from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Take care of yourselves. And thanks for tuning in.

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