

My Motivated Moment: Meagan

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.

For Meagan, her moment happened in college. As a student of sexual health, she knew exactly what to look for when it came to suspicious lumps. When she found one in her own breast, she also had to find the courage to get it checked out. Let's hear from Meagan as she shares her story.

[Meagan] So I knew early on in my college career that I was fascinated about reproductive and sexual health. I guess this kind of stemmed from my cultural background. Growing up in an Asian household, we never really talked about puberty and sexual health. It was all kind of awkward. So I knew that it's also an important part of one's overall well-being. So as an overeager freshman, I joined the Student Health Advocate program and I sub-specialized in sexual health. And every week I would take out this breast jelly model and I would teach my peers about the various lumps and bumps that one could potentially feel in their own breast tissue. And I would also make note that sometimes these bumps turn out to be benign, but it's always important to keep track of changes in your body and to let a health care provider know if you do feel anything that shouldn't be there.

So, the next part may seem a little strange, but bear with me here. It's the winter break of my senior year of college, and I'm back in my hometown. And after a strenuous day of Netflix and chill, I was thinking to myself, "You know, Meagan, you tell your peers every week to keep track of any changes in your body, so maybe you should feel around and see if there's anything that shouldn't be there." So I did my concentric circles in my right breast and then I moved on to my ... oh sorry, I started on my left breast and moved on to my right breast, when all of a sudden I felt a small hard lump. And I thought, "Okay, this feels awfully familiar. It feels just like that pea-sized lump that I would teach my peers every week in the breast jelly model."

And I tried to push it off for a few days, but I realized that it just was in that fixed—like that 10 o'clock region—and I should probably see if my mom would help me out a little bit to see if it's something strange. And we do have a special relationship, kind of like best friends. So I'm sitting at the edge of my bed looking up at my mom. And I say, "Mom, I really need you to kind of touch my right boob and let me know if there's something there that feels unusual." And that's when she actually told me, "You know, Meagan, a long time ago, when I was young and your grandmother actually had a small lump in her breast when we were in Taiwan, and we prayed to the Gods that we would sacrifice a roast pig if it turned out to be benign." And luckily for my grandmother, it actually did turn out to be benign.

So, after some discussion with my mom, we realized maybe I should get this checked out. So I booked a gynecologist appointment back in San Diego, since I needed to start school again in the new year. And after a series of appointments and referrals, I finally had an ultrasound done to get visualization of what was going on underneath the surface. And even with the ultrasound done, the doctor told me that I should get an ultrasound-guided biopsy done. When I heard biopsy, I was like, "Okay, that sounds a little serious." But he reassured me that it could possibly be a benign mass called a fibroadenoma. So, of course, when I got back home, I had to do my research. I needed to know what fibroadenomas are, and I turned a lot to social media, especially YouTube, to kind of see if other woman out there experienced what I currently am experiencing.

And to my surprise, I actually found a lot of young woman who recorded themselves talking about when they discovered their lump, to getting their biopsy done, to actually recording their actual conversations over the phone of them getting their results. So, on February 10, 2015, I had a biopsy in the morning and I had an organic chemistry lab final in the afternoon. So, I'm waiting in the waiting room, kind of thinking to myself, "All right, you're 22. It's got to be benign. You have so much that you want to accomplish in life. It's ... it's going to be fine." And finally, when they called me into the room, I could feel my heart racing.

I'm not really that afraid of needles, but when I saw that biopsy tool, it's like very large. And thinking of it going into my small tiny right boob was pretty frightening. But the nurse and the doctor were all very reassuring. So, you could definitely feel the every nudge from the biopsy tool, so that was probably the most uncomfortable part. But the whole procedure only took about 30 minutes for me, and they put a little metal clip where they took the breast tissue sample to keep track of any changes in the next coming years. And that was about it. They put an icepack between my breast and my bra. I was driving back to campus. I took my organic chemistry lab final. And finally, after I took the final exam, I had a little bit more time to process things. And that's when I was able to think like, "All right, am I going to get my results for the organic chemistry lab final before I even get my results from the biopsy?" And apparently, yes, because in a few days I found out I actually did really well on the lab final, but I was very anxious to know what the biopsy results were gonna to be. And finally, a week later, the nurse called me, and I picked up the phone, and she told me that the mass ended up being benign and it was a fibroadenoma.

So I was like, "Okay. So it is a fibroadenoma." And I repeated the phrase like over and over again just to make sure I was hearing correctly, and I proceeded to ask her, "So it's not cancerous and it won't become cancerous and it could potentially go away, right?" "Right." Alright. So I make sure to get my gynecological checkups every year just to keep track of any changes and I let out a huge sigh of relief and hung up the phone.

So as I mentioned earlier, I was already very passionate about sexual and reproductive health, but this firsthand experience was kind of what channeled, as another motivating moment for me. It was kind of a tipping point for why I wanted to further my education to become a family nurse practitioner, sub-specializing in women's health. And the reason why this career path resonates so much with me is because it focuses a lot on health promotion and health education. So my hope is to be able to face my future patients and to treat them with comprehensive care, to be

able to talk about the uncomfortable, and to be able to speak freely and openly about reproductive health. Thank you.

[Announcer] Meagan was lucky to learn her lump was benign. But when it comes to advocating for your own health, you can't rely on luck. Knowing your normal, knowing when something is off, and seeing your doctor with any symptoms of breast cancer is so important.

We hope that stories like this will empower you to 'Bring Your Brave' and share your own. You can do that on our Share Your Story page at cdc.gov/bringyourbrave or at bringyourbrave.tumblr.com.

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