

# S1:E20 - happy-warrior-bringing-joy-to-the-fight-against-can...

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

virginia beach, mammogram, gravy boat, years, women, people, life, metastatic breast cancer, cancer, boobs, hair, kids, gifts, dog, treatment, austin, wendy, christmas, smile, feel

## SPEAKERS

Wendy Ladley, Jennifer Malcolm



Jennifer Malcolm 00:10

Welcome to the Jennasis Speaks podcast, The Transformative Power of Women's Stories, a platform that empowers women storytelling, to promote collective vulnerability, acceptance and healing. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome to the next episode of Jennasis Speaks podcast, The Transformative Power of Women's Stories where every woman has a story, and every story matters. And that means you. I'm Jennifer Malcolm, your host, founder and president of Jennasis Speaks. And with me today is a lifelong and when I say lifelong friend, I'm talking like I was probably three, when Wendy when Wendy Ladley came into my life, so I am now going to be turning 45 next month. So we have over 40 years of friendship and family and staying connected and I have a short bio to read about Wendy and then we're going to jump into her story so so Wendy Ladley has been a part of my life. Like I said, since I was a toddler. Over the years we've kept in touch via social media. So it was among those stunned to learn what Wendy disclosed, she had metastatic breast cancer, also known as stage four breast cancer, or advanced breast cancer. But Wendy is an optimist. She brings light and joy to her cancer journey, and may be one of the few patients whose oncologist looks forward to seeing her because she makes him laugh. But she's also a realist. As she puts it, there is no stage after stage for MBC. There is no cure, she knows she will undergo cancer treatment for the rest of her life. And I am so honored and humbled that she joins me today to share her story. And I'm so excited to see

your face because we're recording it via zoom. But we are releasing it via a podcast, but I get to see your face. So welcome.

**W** Wendy Ladley 02:01

You agree. And so for those people who are doing math, they now know how old I am. So thank you.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 02:09

Okay, well, I'll just say you're a little younger, do I say? Enough? I said, I'm gonna be 45. So, you know, you're just like, you're just a year or two older than I am.

**W** Wendy Ladley 02:20

Yeah, just a few. We didn't say how old I was when I met, you know,

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 02:24

this is three. And it's in for those who are listening. Wendy and her family and my family. We grew up in the same Assemblies of God church, and for years, just growing up and having youth group parties in her backyard, and pool parties, and just lots of fun family activities. And then we went to a different church. And then we all got married, we had kids, you relocated to Virginia Beach area. And I really haven't seen you face to face in probably 20. Some years.

**W** Wendy Ladley 02:55

It's been a long time. It's been a long time. Yeah. I remember during Christmases with your family, though, like we would get together and and do Christmas and corn mazes, and just so many fun memories with your family.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 03:11

We had a lot of fun. And and I don't know how our parents had the energy because now raising teenagers and our kids are similar in age, but I've almost 2018 and 16. And I'm like the idea of like building corn mazes for the youth or putting on these parties. I'm like, that's a lot of work. But I'm honored. And that's it. This is a fun part of the podcast and the women's movement is that I'm having the opportunity to a meet new women and have a new line of sight to women and their stories, but also really intentionally reconnecting

with women who have been a part of my life for years. And so I'm really honored to have you here.

**W** Wendy Ladley 03:51  
Awesome, thanks.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 03:52  
You're welcome. So let's get into your story. You can tell a little bit about your life and your kiddos and to share who you are, and then we'll get into what you're dealing with medically.

**W** Wendy Ladley 04:04  
Okay. Um, so I am a mom to four, I have three boys and a girl and my oldest lives in Oklahoma City, and he is almost 27. And then my daughter lives right down the street for me, she is almost 25 and then I have two boys that are still in their teen years. I have a son who is almost 19 and a son who's almost 17. So their birthdays are November, December, January and February, which was like really poor planning on my part. Because we're broke for the holidays. Um, but they all turn. You know, they all turn the next year and so they all you know, they're all close. There's a 10 year gap between the oldest and the youngest, but they really love each other. Um, I was the stay at home mom when the first two went through high school, and I am a working mom now with the younger two. And it's a completely different parenting experience for sure. Um, love, love my kids. We are in Virginia Beach. And I had come to Virginia Beach in 87, as part of a church plant, and stayed here met the kids, dad. And then we're back to Ohio. And I got to reconnect with your family then. And then life took us to Texas. And then it brought us full swing back to Virginia Beach. And so I have stayed here. I worked for Operation Smile. I've been with them for seven years. It is an incredible organization, and they have really, truly become my family. And so they've walked through a lot of my journey with me. And I'm really grateful for them. So

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 06:03  
that's amazing. And I forgot the Texas stents. So I forgot that you went from Cleveland to Virginia Beach to Cleveland to Texas, back to Virginia. And then work took you guys back to Virginia Beach area, I believe.



## Wendy Ladley 06:16

So we moved back here in 2011. And our 20, some year marriage fell apart. And we started over and I had been a stay at home mom. And when I became a single mom, I started to look for work that would suit me and I hadn't worked full time, you know, since I had my first baby. So we were living in Texas. And we ended up finding out that we were going to be relocating back to Virginia Beach. And I had a friend who had lost a child, he had been born with a cleft lip and cleft palate. And I was very close with his mom. And when I found out that we were moving back to Virginia Beach, I looked to see where Operation Smile was exactly because I knew that it was in that area. Sure. I went, I went online and saw that they had broken ground on a new building that would be located in Virginia Beach. And I noticed right away that they had broken ground on 923, which is my birthday. And I took that as a sign and told my friend Heather, I'm going to work for them. I am going to work for Operation Smile, and we are going to keep Carter's memory alive. And so I moved to Virginia Beach. And I found out that the building was nowhere near done. And they were in Norfolk and I didn't want to work that far away. And so I kind of put that aside. And Jordan, my daughter was trying out for volleyball and I met a mom and stands. And she asked me if I was looking for work. And I told her I really wanted to work for Operation Smile. This was my first meeting with her and out of my mouth is I want to work for Operation Smile. And she was like, Oh, she's like, I know some people that work for them. You know, and and it's a great place. And I said, You know, I said I see that they're going to be moving to Virginia Beach. And she said, Well, good luck waiting for that. She said they've been saying that forever. So I just put that aside and work another job. And it and I worked for that job for a couple of years. I worked with elderly people and high school kids in a community. And I worked on you know, getting them grants and and just helping this community with their senior citizens and their kids. And I loved my job. I was good at it. But I still knew deep down that I really wanted to be at ob smile. So one day, the girls had a volleyball game. So my friend that I had met in the stands who had told me about Operation Smile had ended up working for them. She got to the game late, and she said that the traffic was terrible, but it was the last time she ever had to make that drive. And I said why? And she said, Well, because the Virginia Beach building is done. And I was like Libby. I'm like, Hello. Why don't you tell me? Right? Why didn't you tell me like I want to work there. And I mean, this was years later and she said well, she said I've seen your posts about what you do in this community. And it seemed like you loved it. And I said, That's fair. I do love it. But I really want to work for Operation Smile. And so that was a Tuesday night, I interviewed the next day and had an offer the following day and gave my notice at the other job within a week, and so. So I've been at Operation Smile ever since it's been seven years. And so we travel around the world providing free safe surgery for children who are born with facial deformities. And I've had the opportunity to go on several of those trips. And it's just amazing.



Jennifer Malcolm 10:40

And I love that you had that whisper in your heart and that yes, and your spirit to be like, Alright, this is what I'm gonna do. I don't know when or how, but that you went for it. And seven years later, who Let's get into your diagnosis. Cuz I know when I saw your I think you're sharing on Facebook. And I believe it was



Wendy Ladley 11:01

about a year year and a half ago. Yeah, it was. I was actually diagnosed in July of 2019. I don't remember how long I waited before I shared it. But it was it was July 2019. And it came as an absolute shock. Because you you were



Jennifer Malcolm 11:20

diligent with your preventative tests and grants and mammograms and all that. Can you walk us through like just that journey of Hey, I'm doing my annuals, getting my regular mammograms and still having this shocking news? Yeah, so



Wendy Ladley 11:36

my last mammogram, I mean, I got them yearly, my last mammogram had been less than nine months prior. And one weekend. Can I say boob? Again, you're actually here, right? You're honestly boob and you're allowed



Jennifer Malcolm 11:54

to, you know, use some small profanity on this as well.



Wendy Ladley 11:58

So one weekend, I woke up and my boob was angry. It was red, and it was hot, and it hurts. But it felt like mastitis, which I had had, you know, when I was nursing my babies, so I was very familiar with what that feels like, I had not gone into any kind of pre menopausal status yet. And I was past 50. Um, but I just that hadn't started with it yet. But in the years prior, maybe once a year, for the last two years, I had gotten a case of mastitis. And you're not breastfeeding? Yeah, I would go to the document, I'd be like, I promise you, I haven't nursed 16 years. You know, and so, um, and so they were like, you know, it could be hormonal it, you know, it, it, it's, you know, weird, but, but we'll treat it and so they treated it with antibiotics, I think I had probably had two cases of mastitis

before this, and it went away. And so it was a weekend, I went to the urgent care, I told them, you know, you can look at my chart and see, you know, this is this is sort of, you know, just par for the course for me. And so they prescribed me the 10 day antibiotic. And at the end of the 10 days, it didn't feel any better. And so, at that point, I was really starting to pay more attention. And, you know, looking standing in the bathroom mirror with my arm up and feeling and looking and, you know, I would expect that if you found a lump that you would see. Absolutely. And instead, what it had done was it had like, there was a dimple at the bottom of my boob, like that drew in. And so it was it was like this, you know, it was like this evil thing inside was like sucking the center. You know, I'd never heard that before. And so I saw that and was like, and then in that area, I could feel along underneath there. Wow. So I went to my doctor, um, and we, you know, I knew that they're going to say we feel you know, I mean, I could see I could feel and, and so they they recommended that I go and have a mammogram and an ultrasound. Um, and so I scheduled those and, you know, they were able to say right away, yes, we see it. Yes, we feel it. You need to come back in two days, and we're gonna biopsy it. Sure. And so they biopsied and then you have to wait again. And so my biopsy, you know, I had to wait over the weekend and and then you're just waiting for the appointment to go in and find out And so at that point I, I resigned myself that this should not be here. It could be, it could be assist it could be. But I really just thought all right, whatever this is, let's just cut chunked out, cut the whole thing off. I don't know, I don't care, you know, just let's let's just do with it move forward and get this over with. And so, um, I found out at the appointment that, yes, it's cancer, and we've set you up with a surgeon already. We're going to get all these tests done. And so my life just went from, you know, summertime, my life went from floating around in a pool on a raft with a fruity drink in my hand, to all of a sudden just doctor's appointment after doctor's appointment after doctor's appointment. And the scans came in. And the doctor actually called me and just said, You know, I don't, I don't want you to have to wait a second more. He's like, it's not good. He's like, this has traveled to your bones and to your liver and to your lungs. I didn't really understand exactly what that meant, but I knew it wasn't good. And so, um, so I, you know, that was a lot to absorb. So, I, I went to the oncologist you know, and talk to him. And they explained to me that what I had is considered triple positive. And I laughed. I just looked at him, and I just laughed, I said, well, you say that again. And he said, Your triple positive. And I said, anybody who knows me is gonna find the humor in this. I'm like, I'm like, I am always beyond triple positive. And he's like, yeah, in this case, it's not a good thing.



Jennifer Malcolm 17:03

And neither neither do you do anything half assed. So the total positive, and you give everything with your full heart. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. And so, you know,

W

Wendy Ladley 17:14

I'm learning a new language, I didn't really understand exactly what any of this meant. I would have thought, you know, my mind immediately went to, you know, I'm going to have to have respect me is and you know, all of that. And instead, what I found out was that, by the time you are metastatic, I'm typically speaking, the risk outweighs the benefit. And so they told me, you know, you, you, you get to keep your boobs. I was a little disappointed, I was a little disappointed, but I'm like, they're trying to kill me.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 17:52

You can have them.

W

Wendy Ladley 17:54

Yes, yes. And I had also found out in the meantime, through all of this research, that they have this awesome surgery where they take the originals, and they, I don't know, how do you dispose of a cancer assume? I'm not sure what they, you can't donate it at that point. It's toxic. So, um, so they take those off, and then they do this procedure where they take your belly fat, and they actually tunnel it up through your body, and they make you new boobs out of your belly fat, and I'm like, this is the best thing. But I don't care how bad

J

Jennifer Malcolm 18:35

that is. Like, can we just move a little, a little bit? I'm talking to myself here because I can't even see your body. Can you just move a little bit of that belly jiggle up to Yes, and create some new boobs for me?

W

Wendy Ladley 18:47

Yeah, and then tighten up, you know, so all of a sudden, you've got a flat stomach and you've got new boobs. I'm like, Come on, let's do it. But they said no. You know, here I am. I got their keepers I get to keep them for for forever. So, so my, my cancer was aggressive. My oldest was getting married within a month. And so I had to figure out how do I how do I go about this. And the doctors told me that if his wedding had been any further away, in terms of date, that I would not have been able to go there like we're we're gonna say go ahead and go. But as soon as you get back, we're starting treatment. And so I walked him down the aisle and he said his ideas and I got on the plane and landed and I don't remember if it was that day or the next day I went and had my port put in and that is where they surgically place. A medical device under your skin, and that's how you get your

chemo. And so it was the same day the next day, went into hospital had the surgery for that, and then started my chemo immediately. Wow. And so it was quite a journey. his wedding was really special, I was able to, you know, I told each of the kids separately, they're all so different. And I know you understand that having, you know, having different different kids with different personalities and, and different takes on life. And so each of them I had shared that I had breast cancer, I had not shared the details of it. But I had shared with each of them that, you know, this is the journey I'm on and the doctors are going to take good care of me and you know me, you know, I'm gonna, I'm gonna fight and it's going to be okay. And so we went to his wedding. And I requested of he and his fiancée that they not share it with anybody else. So the only people who knew at the wedding, what was going through was my family. And it really made for a special time for us, because we all knew. But I didn't want that to be the focus of that weekend. This was about him.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 21:26

Yeah, or overshadow anything that was about him. And I saw the picture.

W

Wendy Ladley 21:31

And I saw you walking him down the aisle, and it was beautiful. And you guys were all radiant. So thank you and I was in. I was in so much pain. So I didn't have any pain prior to my diagnosis. I mean, there was nothing. But in the span of that month. What had happened was the cancer that was in my bone was so aggressive that it was causing me just debilitating pain. So I got off the airplane. And my son and his fiancée picked me up. And I told them we need we need to stop at a CVS like I just was in so much pain. I was like I need a pain patch. And so I went inside, I got the pain patch because I knew which one I needed. And I came out and Austin and Tate, were asking me Do you want to wait until we get home? And I was like, No, I need you to put this thing on me right now. Right? So Austin was driving so tape got out of the car. And I asked him to put it on. And so he's like, you know, I had to pull my shirt up and he's trying to find the right placement. And I'm like, dude, it needs to go under my bra. And he so he unhooked my bra strap and put the patch on. And he got back in the car and he's like, Austin, I just got to first base with your mom. Absolutely. That second base. I'm not even sure.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 22:57

That's awesome. And I'm sure you're like, Okay. mother in law to be I just got like weight off your shirt. That's



W

Wendy Ladley 23:05

Yeah, yeah. When, when Austin first met Tate, um, you know, he had not he had not come out to his, his dad. And Tate's older than Austin and a little bit. You know, he's younger than me but older than Austin. So Austin wanted his dad to meet Tate. So we had an entire discussion about what if we say he's dating me, so that he can, so he can come to these family events?

J

Jennifer Malcolm 23:36

And if you like some dating, you know, that it's for Austin. That's hilarious.

W

Wendy Ladley 23:43

Yeah, so anyway, so so the wedding was really special, but I was in a lot of pain. Um, my sister had come out to the wedding. And I mean, she was able to, you know, see all of that it was, it was scary because you go from just being completely healthy to all of a sudden it hurts to move, you know? So I was ready to start chemo, came back and got it started. And I had so much support. Through those weeks of chemo, I had 12 straight weeks of the IV chemo. And every week I had a different friend of mine from Operation Smile, come with me. And we took selfies and when we use Snapchat filters and I lost my hair after the second round of chemo. And as soon as the hair started to come out, I just was like it needs to go like I don't want to be held hostage to my hair. And so we shaved it off and I bought a bunch of wigs and eyebrow tattoos. Is all kinds of things. But you know, I ended up realizing that I just felt better. Just being me, you know, I, I understand why some people might want, you know, might want to do the wigs and everything but, but I definitely I felt like that was not real. And and I wanted to be able to just go through this authentically. There's nothing wrong with wigs, but but they just didn't feel like me. I felt like I was hiding. And I didn't, that you shouldn't have to hide, you know. And so. So yeah, so I rocked the, the bald head and you're gorgeous,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 25:45

you're gorgeous. I didn't even are the pictures you sent over, that will be a part of the podcast, you're absolutely gorgeous and, and it's courageous for you to do that. And just to really fully embrace, and not take on an additional layer of shame or embarrassment and be like, this is just me, this is who I am. Yeah, here's what I'm walking through. And I'm beautiful, bald. Thanks. So as you are going through the treatment and losing your hair, and obviously also, as a Mama, I know that you're caring for your children's hearts. Did you lose positivity through it? Or were you able really to keep a layer of optimism and

hope and outlook that helps you and your family? Or no? Did you hit rock bottom to kind of describe your motion motions through this?

W

Wendy Ladley 26:36

They were all over the place. It's kind of a blur. Um, you know, I I mentioned that each of my kids is very different. And so walking through this with each of them was was a challenge because they all were handling it, you know, so different. And Austin was a newlywed and, and, and so I had my moments, I'm going to show you here we're gonna we're gonna take a walk real quick. I'm gonna show you, my, my job, we had an employee engagement thing for our department where we were going to go to this place where you make a sign. Yeah, and you had to register and you had to give them your word ahead of time. I don't remember what my word was. It was something you know, bright and shiny. And and I was just all Oh, I'm gonna make this happy sign for my for my house. And then I got the diagnosis. And so I showed up ready to make this happy sign. And the girl who owns the art shop said something happened with yours. And I'm not sure why. But I wasn't able to print out your word. And I said, Oh, I have a new word. And I'm like, I'm like, is it allowed to be offensive? And she's like, honey, you can say whatever you want. And so here, I won't say it out loud. Here is my sign that I made. Let's see. Can you see it?

J

Jennifer Malcolm 28:04

I can see it. Yes. For those. For those of you who are listening, it starts with an F. and sounds like a quacking animal. Yes.

W

Wendy Ladley 28:18

But I want you to note that at the end of it after the K, there's a semicolon. Yeah. And so I told her I'm like, I want to do this. And I want it with a semicolon because I'm going to embrace this moment and just say it's a pause, quack. Quack. And, and then let's regroup and let's breathe and and continue. And so I brought that sign home. And my 18 year old was like that. And I was like I did. I made that. What do you think? And he's like, I like it. He's like, he's like, but where are you going to put it and I'm like, wherever I want to. And so that baby went on the mantle. And we all felt that we felt that but I decorated around it for Christmas. And so I had you know, twinkle lights and holiday cheer and quack.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 29:22

Quack like a duck.

W

Wendy Ladley 29:24

Yeah, and, and, and it's just I think it's okay to coexist with both of those emotions. I'm in the middle of all of this. I went through a breakup with someone that I had been seeing for three years and it was somebody that my kids loved. And obviously, that I loved and the there was just a lot of grief and loss in this entire period. But there was also hope and there was a strength there. I can't, I can't take credit for you know, it just I was surrounded by my Operation Smile family and, and they loved me through it. And so, um, I I laughed a lot. I cried a lot. I slept a lot. And I don't remember at what point during this but it was sometime it was sometime after the breakup. And before the holidays, I went to the shelter and I found a dog who was owner had passed away. And I kind of was afraid to tell the shelter people about my diagnosis because I want them to not divert to this poor dog, you know, because I mean, I had no idea how my dream was gonna go. But, but we, her name was Ziva. And to me, that sounded like Zika, which sounds like a, you know, that's a virus and I'm like, I don't want my dog

J

Jennifer Malcolm 31:06

to have a virus while I'm dealing with cancer. Thank you.

W

Wendy Ladley 31:10

Exactly. So I named her Ziggy. And I, and I came home. And I mean, we had already decided we would name her Ziggy. And I came home and looked it up. And Ziggy means victorious. Peace. Wow. And she has been stuck to me. I mean, I mean, everybody who has met us is, is just like, this is unreal, this dog. And I know that they say that dogs can sense sickness. But she has been like a service dog. And my friends joke and say that I'm her service human because I think she's probably more needy than I am. But she's been my ride or die. And she's been here for me. And it's been so healing. It's all you know, just to have. Yeah.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 32:04

So, and it's funny because when I got remarried Chad, Chad inherited three teenagers, I inherited a dog. And, you know, I know when we grew up, you guys had a Doberman, we had Mandy and pepper. Actually, Mandy was your guys's dog, that you guys are family. And so we grew up with dogs. And, and so but in my adulthood, I've not had a dog And you know, through my first marriage, and then second, or through my first marriage, no dog, and then being a single mom for 10 years was did not have a dog. So when he got the dog in, I was not thrilled. But the joy and comfort, and just closeness and snuggling

and just petting and Barbie, it is. It's oddly so therapeutic. And yes, it could be a pain in the ass at times, but their dogs and their animals, but there is something about the gift of it of a pet like that, that I have found. And I'm sure even more so. Just that proximity.

**W** Wendy Ladley 33:04  
Yes, he's great.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 33:06  
So when you went through your breakup last year, was that because of cancer too? Or was it just life circumstances and heading that way? Or? No,

**W** Wendy Ladley 33:15  
it had nothing to do with the cancer. I was dating somebody, and I had no idea that the entire time we were together, he had been seeing somebody else as well. And so the night before round five, that was exposed, and I went to bed that night, just, you know, I'm not even sure if I slept like it just was. So I had I had no idea. It was so shocking. And, um, you know, you're already dealing with all the emotions of everything else, but then to add that so the next morning was round five of chemo. And I showed up and you know, my eyes were swollen from crying, but I, I didn't tell anybody what was going on. I'm sure they see crying patients all the time, you know. And so they took my blood pressure, and they were like, We are going to have to send you to the emergency room, your blood pressure is dangerously high. And, and so I cried more at that point and ask them, will I get to come back? And they were like, no, if your blood pressures was high, we can't do your treatment. And I just got so angry and was like, I will not allow this to affect my treatment. I won't allow this to take away something that is trying to save me. And so I told them I said if you could just give me a couple minutes and they I'm sure there were steps But I was like, No, really, you know, really and, and, and, sure enough, I mean, I was able to just breathe and release in a release what I was holding on to, and we carried on and I didn't miss a single demo. And, you know, it was, it was definitely a challenging time in my life. But, um, there was an immediate cut off with that there was you realize very quickly, like, this is not something I'm going to cry about or mourn. Um, this is a blessing. Because if I do, I can't carry that, and also be trying to fight something that's life altering, you know what I mean? And so, yeah, so it's just, um, maybe that's, I don't know if that's a healthy way to deal with it. But it was just a done cut off.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 35:59

I think it's a beautiful and powerful way to really dig deep and say, You know what, this right now, every ounce of my energy is for my healing, and for my health, and my wellness. And as much as this hurts, or as much as this is unfair, or betrayal or any of that loss, that you were able to segment and say, all right, I have to just focus in on my healing. And I think that's powerful. And I think women tend to try to disperse all of that, and caretake and manage and feel and it does not serve us well, mentally, physically, emotionally, psychologically, because we tried it caretake so much. And I think it's a really healthy boundary of like, Alright, that that's done. And I have to dig deep and focus and that you were able to use breath, to get your body Calm down, and, you know, be a fighter for yourself to say, I'm not going to miss something that is here to heal me. That's powerful. I don't think that's weakness, I

W

Wendy Ladley 36:57

think strength pictures, that pictures of my chemo that round. My eyes are just, I, it's ridiculous how swollen I am. But, but there really was, I mean, there was just a piece and a strain that came and I'm really proud of myself from from that night forward. I never initiated any contact. And like I said, this was a, this was a almost three year relationship that was you know, every day all day long. And I didn't want to waste another second. And so, um, you know, there was definitely outreach from the other side. But I never initiated another conversation and just close that door.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 37:49

And again, the power of your starts with an F sounds like an animal with a quick sound. Oh, no, but all the more so it's just that and I love the semicolon, it's just a pause. It's a resetting, it's a, you know, you didn't put period, you didn't put an exclamation point. It's a progress, and it's able to catch your breath game perspective. And it's beautiful. And it's funny because seeing it from the outside, you know, just via Facebook, you only get a glimpse, without the stories behind, you know, what you are dealing with at that point. I'm like, I don't know what that means, but like, supporting you, but not understanding in fullness. And it's an honor to hear what you are all, you know, holistically going through and not just physically going through as well.

W

Wendy Ladley 38:39

So this is gonna sound crazy. I went through the holidays, and Austin and Tate flew out to be with me. I put up my Christmas tree last year, now everybody's doing it this year, I feel like I was ahead of the curve on all of this. You've always you've always been ahead of the curve. Always, always, always a rat. So last year, on November 1, I was like, putting the tree

up, you know, I want the lights and the chemo, I knew that the fatigue would be cumulative. And I wanted to be able to just come home from treatment and lay on this, you know, on this leather sectional that I had found on Facebook, and just lay there and sleep with twinkle lights and a black side, you know, and and so I had put the lights up and was just really processing my diagnosis still. And so I didn't know if there would be another Christmas for me, you know, and so it was very sobering like decorating that tree and putting the ornaments on and picking out gifts for my children. I was super intense, my daughter had just moved into a new place right around the corner for me with her roommate with her best friend. And they were excited to be setting up a home. And so I'm thinking of my kids and, and really picking out gifts with the mindset, that this may be it for me, and, you know, I didn't have a lot of money, but I wanted it to be gifts that they would have that, that they would be able to hold on to, as you know, mom's last Christmas. And I don't know, I didn't obviously communicate that to any of them. You know, I've got a smile on my face. And I'm like, you know, Merry Christmas. It wasn't.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 40:49

You mean, it wasn't a morbid? Like, you weren't more belief, you know,

W

Wendy Ladley 40:54

I don't think I did all the things like I kept all the traditions, you know, we, we were matching pajamas that we got on on Christmas Eve and ever since my kids were little we had started the tradition of doing three gifts each in, in reflection of the fact that the wise men brought Jesus gifts. And so if Jesus only got three gifts on Christmas morning, then who are here to be getting more than that. And, and so my kids have, you know, my kids have come to know that and and it would prioritize for them. What do you really want for Christmas? Um, so my daughter had collected for her new condo, she had collected a bunch of the redone dishes, you know, that that are the black and white, and they've got the words on them that say, you know, eat and drink and be married, whatever. And so I was at a store, um, and I saw mixing bowls, and I and they said, like, whip Ben, you know, whip some stir and, and I just thought, you know, I'm gonna get these for her, she'll have these forever. And, you know, but I knew that she would like them. And so there was a gravy boat on the side, and it was on clearance. And I think it was black and it says poor and I've never made gravy in my life. I know you're a cook. I'm not. I've never made gravy. I teach my kids how to cook. I just thought everybody should have a gravy boat, you know? And so, um, you know, gave all that to her. You know, she said, Thank you. Um, a couple weeks ago, I had coffee with her and I was trying to pick her brain about what she'd like for Christmas dinner. And can I be honest, and I was like, of course. And she goes mom got me a gravy boat for Christmas. And I just looked at her and I was like, yeah, and

she goes, Mom, please, please don't don't get me another gravy. And we just laughed and and I was able to explain to her I'm like, you know, babe, I was in chemo. First of all, you're lucky you didn't know anything. And, and later on, we were texting back and forth. And I had to explain to her I'm like, you know, those gifts. I I wept over them as I wrapped them. And I'm like, and that's not something I wanted to share with you guys but but looking back at it and heading into a new season this year, you know, I was approaching that season as if it might be my last and and in all reality it might have been but I have responded so well to treatment, and I'm doing so well. And I'm realizing that in some ways I was living as if I were dying, and I won't do that anymore. You know, this is um, I don't know how my body will continue to respond. But right now things are good and and i don't i think she's gonna look at that gravy boat and future and laugh And remember, you know, but um, but I want to celebrate with my kids. I don't want to go through another day, not just holiday season, but another day with the intent that I might not be here tomorrow. I want to live to the fullest. Whatever that looks like,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 44:30

and then it has to be hard emotionally because there is a reality that you're you're a battle that you fight every day and the hope and the intentionality with your kids to be joyful to be present to you know, create new memories to try new things. Jordan will love that gravy boat till the day she it's gonna be an iconic piece. Yes. Even she goes to the grocery store and gets the can jar of green And don't heat it up and don't say it'll be an iconic piece because now she also knows some of the story behind it and the intentionality and your why behind. Okay, it wasn't a gravy boat. It was the theme of Kurt you know, rounding out your your condo, and the things that you were collecting, and that'll be a gift and it's gonna be a joyful memory. It's funny though, because there's things that I've given my kids through the years. And I just laugh because Paige turned 18 last month, and she is my one that's an you know, pre vet program driven, but she's really crafty and artsy, and she sews and she knits and she crochets and she does all this stuff. And so for 18th birthday, I got her a sewing machine, because she's done some quilting. And it was unique. And so Reagan for 16th we're trying to figure out what to get her for her birthday. Did you not get me a sewing machine? sweetheart, of course I'm not going to get you a sewing machine you hate crafting. But Paige though, you know something that I said you'll use it for years to come and maybe not right now you're a college but you will use it and and so it's just funny to see the difference and and you know, a mom's heart of why we get them the gifts that we get give them and then their response of like, Great. Thank you.

W

Wendy Ladley 46:19

I actually think that I may hit up some thrift stores and try to find another one. as ugly as possible.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 46:28

Yeah. Like the tradition for like the ugly Christmas sweaters now you'll have So in awareness, everyone is aware that October is cancer awareness month. And you know women wear pink and you chose not to wear pink this year, you chose to wear black.

W

Wendy Ladley 46:50

I wore black every single day.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 46:55

Tell the audience your why behind that because I can you march to the beat. And you know, knowing you for 47 years, like you've always marched to the beat of your own drum in a very confident, confident way and in a joyful way. And what what was the reasoning behind the black.

W

Wendy Ladley 47:12

So last year, you know, I was fresh in treatment. And, um, you know, I am so grateful for every single person who was so thoughtful to send me surprises last year, but last fall in the midst of my diagnosis. Um, my bedroom looked like a like a pink. Pink explosion. I mean, I had pink socks and pink blankets and pink pins and pink water bottles and pink pens, and pink everything. And so what they actually call it is pink tober. And I think it's great. There needs to be an awareness for women. I'm one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. And that number is staggering. You know, it just one in eight women is diagnosed with breast cancer. But three to 6% of women are diagnosed right off the bat as metastatic, or stage four or advanced cancer, where you don't have any warning, you go to the doctor, and you know, it's already it's already surpassed where it could have been. And so that's a huge percentage of women who are getting the earlier diagnosis. But all of the focus and all of the breast cancer awareness is really geared toward those women. There's not a lot of research done for stage four, advanced metastatic breast cancer. And so they get a very, very small percentage. And I think along with many others that there needs to be more research to stop you know, before it gets that far. I think people are very fully aware that October is Breast Cancer Awareness. There's pink everything everywhere. And I just I just feel like the pink is so um, you know everybody's gonna wear pink and we're going to be happy and cheer that you know,



we're going to beat this we're gonna you know some people aren't going to beat it, you know? And and so I I don't it wasn't really is a rebellion thing. It was just you know what, I don't want to wear pink I don't I I want to be able to share with people but Yeah, I just couldn't do it I, I need people to be able to understand I had a really a defining moment where a friend of mine who's older, who has since moved away, had lunch with me one day, and it happened to be the shear on metastatic breast cancer awareness day. And she didn't know what metastatic breast cancer that it had a day, she didn't know what MBC was. And this is a breast cancer survivor. And she didn't know how. And so that's when I sort of just realized, like, I think I'm speaking a language that people don't know when, and there's no, you know, I didn't know this language before, either. So, but I realized that what I'm I don't think a lot of people understand what metastatic breast cancer is, you know, when I got my first set of scans back after the 12 weeks of chemo, um, you know, people, a lot of people at work, just were like, Oh, my gosh, you beat it, you beat it, you did it, you know, and, um, you know, so you're done with treatment. And the reality is that I'll never be done with treatment, you know, I will, I will be in treatment. And until I'm not, you know, and so, um, and that's just, that's just facts, research. You know, research needs to go toward how do we keep this from happening? I think, um, I think that every woman should not only get a mammogram, but also an ultrasound, I think that should be mandatory. They can't see everything with a mammogram, and an ultrasound, which shows so much more. And, you know, and I wonder if, if my last mammogram had been accompanied with an ultrasound, would they have found something? Right, sooner? Right, you know, well, it's interesting, I'll never know. Yeah.



### Jennifer Malcolm 52:08

And it's interesting, because, you know, I did my mammogram about two months ago. And again, like the technology is, you know, do you want to do a 3d version? There's, there's a different layers of, you know, of preventative, you know, treatment or care, I should say, that we're, we're supposed to do, but you were doing that. And so, there's a lot of, you know, awareness to say one, women aren't even aware of MVC, and that the severity of it, but even if you're doing all the right things, there has to be something more as far as technology medical treatment that women can learn to gravitate toward. And maybe it's the ultrasound, maybe it's because every in the last several times, I've had a mammogram, it always comes back that you have dense breast tissue. And I was like, What? Yes. breast tissue, like, I didn't even know that was a thing. And I was like, Okay, and so, you know, it's one of the things like, we're not concerned, but there's areas with on within your breast that, you know, are more fibrous, and so we can't see underneath the next layer. And so I bypass like, No, I'll be fine. But that's probably the wrong, that's probably the absolute wrong approach to be like, Alright, let me make sure that everything's okay. Because I don't want to assume that I'm okay.

W

Wendy Ladley 53:25

Right. And, and Jen, my mammogram results always came back that way, they always came back that you have dense breast tissue. Now that I know what I know, if I could go back, I would be having a conversation with my doctor and asking, How can we, how can we get insurance to pay to do an ultrasound as well, because I'm concerned, you know, I, from this point forward, I would recommend to women, you know, and and i'm not obviously like, I don't have any medical background or anything, but based on my experience, I would be asking my doctor, you know, I know somebody who was getting her mammograms every year and had no history of breast cancer in her family, on and on and on. And she was diagnosed, it's called de novo, if you're diagnosed de novo, which is stage four, right off the bat. And, you know, you don't want to be part of that three to 6%. And so I think it's okay to say, you know, I want an ultrasound to I don't know if they would actually do it, but I think that that should be absolutely an automatic. Absolutely. And I'm shocked in the groups that I belong to. How many younger women are being faced with this? And it just, um, you know, I don't I don't know, I don't I don't understand why it's happening so much more, and it's happening to younger people. But again, that's where I really, I just, I didn't want to partake in the pinktober

J

Jennifer Malcolm 55:09

get it, I get it. And I think the other piece that is interesting, which is the awareness of breast cancer, but I think that in a lot of people's minds, we've we are or situations, I've had numerous friends, colleagues, you know, people in my world that that have had breast cancer, they did their treatment, they either had, you know, a lump lump lumpectomy or a mastectomy, and then they're fine. And that, you know, they either preventative measures. And so there has been so much medical progress over the last, you know, 1520 years where women are surviving it. But there is a reality that there are still so many women that are battling that are new, we have a new neighbor that has moved in two weeks ago. And his wife died on my birthday last year, which is December, I says that daughter's birthday, but he is going to this December be honoring his wife's one year passing and 55 years old, from breast cancer. And I was just like, in awe of a you know, how young she was. And, and the that breast cancer is not something to be ignorant of, because we have so many success stories, and so many things that women have overcome, but it is something that is still very, very much an issue that needs to have deeper medical, you know, community around it as well. And I'm not an octarine Oh, so a couple of last questions for you. I know that through the years, you are a positive person, but I know that in the pre interview process, you know, the how your positivity impacts others, where they're like, Oh, you've beaten it, and how it can be an anger button or a trigger button or like, Alright, just because I'm positive doesn't mean that I'm okay. Or my emotions aren't hurt. So how are you dealing with people around that, you know, are are

on that positive train with you, but you may not be feeling positive today or tomorrow or last week? How are you dealing with that?

W

Wendy Ladley 57:22

Um, that it's a challenge. Um, I have been that obnoxiously positive person to other people. And so, you know, I've definitely learned in this in this journey, that it's okay to, to not have the words to say to somebody, you know, I, sometimes you just have to say, Oh, this sucks, or life's not fair. You know, I'm here, you know, when I was diagnosed, I had to go into this office with this woman who is called a nurse navigator, and she's the one who explains to you, you know, what this journey is going to look like? her office is just all of these signs, you can do this, you've got this cancers, ass, you know, you're, you're a warrior. Being a warrior requires that you get dirty, you know, you know, there's this, there's this image of being a warrior, and you know, you've got this gorgeous Wonder Woman with our teeny waist and her big hair. And, you know, and she's just standing there looking flawless. Warriors are scarred and dirty. And, you know, and maybe dragging on the ground. So, am I warrior? Yes. But, you know, but not always in the mindset that people think, you know, I think you hear the word warrior and and it's this bright, shining, you know, on top of, you know, on top of a mountain declaring victory and that's not always the case. Yeah, so, I've learned to, um, I am an optimist through and through. But I have also become very, very real. Um, I don't, I don't cry often. I have not cried a lot on this journey. Um, I do sometimes realize that I'm struggling when I get angry about something stupid. And those are the moments where, you know, I am learning, um, that that it's okay. I don't typically allow other people to see that. Um, But internally there are there are times where where you really do just get you do get a little bit angry. That's not an emotion that I am comfortable with. Yeah,

J

Jennifer Malcolm 1:00:13

but it's human. And it's Yeah. Okay. And it's Yeah. So all the emotions, I can't imagine because they would be up and down but you Your heart is wired toward joy and laughter and and optimism and so that anger or sadness as it triggers your it's a healthy outlet doesn't mean that you necessarily know how to deal with it because you're so you're like me, you're you're geared, you know, one way in the positive manner. But I'm sure that those things around people who are whose intentionality is to be supportive. Yet you're like, you know, screw you, like back.

W

Wendy Ladley 1:00:54

Up. So, yeah, I have, I have felt it the most, um, on my hair regrowth journey. I, I felt, I felt

like when I was bald, that, you know, people look, and they recognize that you're going through something. And so there's sort of just this, oh, you look really good. You know, you look, you're lucky, you know. But when your hair starts to grow back, you don't any longer have this. This like sign over your head that says, I have cancer, or I just finished treatment. And so it's very humbling when your hair looks terrible, or you think it does, but along the way, you know, it came in white, and it was coming in curly. And it was little old lady hair. And I would have little old ladies who would tell me like, honey, your hair is darling. And internally, I'm like, I want to punch you. That's what I'm like, Okay, you know what, like, this is this is bothering me. at a level that I have not, I will say I have not punched this old lady. In mystery. No old ladies were injured in the regrowing of my hair. But, but it's still my hair. I mean, I you have to have a sense of humor about it, it is awful, my hair is awful. And, and I hate it. But, um, it's part of it's part of becoming healthier, you know, that the drugs have the drugs have done, you know, all kinds of things to my body, there are side effects that just are not fun at all. But I have to remember that the side effects as they present are the the drugs leaving my body and the toxic pneum of that and, and my body is fighting this cancer. So

J Jennifer Malcolm 1:03:06

well, at least we know that there's no old ladies, you know, it's just small victories. So there's a there's a scripture that your friends have said about you. And when I read this in the in the notes for today, I was like this is absolutely Oh, and it's from proverbs 31:25. And it says she so Wendy is clothed in strength and dignity, dignity, and Wendy laughs without fear of the future. What does that scripture mean to you?

W Wendy Ladley 1:03:37

Oh my gosh, it's one of my favorite favorite verses. Um, you know, I, my future has many times looked very unsteady. Um, but I have continued to laugh. And, and I believe, you know, my sister at one point shared with me, she was like, you know, she's like, I think that your gift of joy, like, it truly was a gift. It's not, it's not just a personality trait in in, in me, it has been a gift in my life. Um, you know, I've had so many things, and we all do, but I've, I've had, I think more than my fair share of things to overcome. And I've never lost my joy. It's always been there and it's always it's just always been a part of my life. And I can't imagine doing this journey. Without it. I don't know how to do this journey without it. Right? It's, yeah.

J Jennifer Malcolm 1:04:46

And it is you it's your banner, scripture and, and knowing you from again, I keep going

back up for all the years you've always been that joyful person and it's not you know, the positivity that, you know, people are like with cheerleaders that gets on your nerves like it is a well a joy that comes from, you know, the core of your being and the core of your belly, that just flows out. And it's beautiful. So, in closing, what are some things that you would like to share to the listeners, an activation, a leave behind words, just something of provocation to the listeners to do something, to think about something to ponder something to look at something a little differently, an activation, what are some words of wisdom that you can share?

W

Wendy Ladley 1:05:36

I think going back to that verse, I think we need to laugh without fear of the future. In 2020, has sort of just been this, this trip for all of us that, you know, we can't I mean, with so many things with our, with our health and with politics, and with, you know, our jobs and the economy, and, you know, school and our children, and there's, there's so much unknown in life. And I think I, you know, that verse feels like it was written for me. But the truth is that that verse is a verse that has been written for women, you know, to close ourselves with strings, to close it, and to close ourselves with dignity, and to laugh, truly laugh without fear of what's around the corner. And I'm so glad that my, you know that my daughter brought up the grub gravy boat, because it's giving me an entirely different attitude. As I approached the holiday season this year, it has made me very much aware that we need to not be afraid of what the future holds, and to embrace the moment that you're in right now. Um, you know, do the best that you can to prepare and to be aware, and you know, and certainly take care of your health, and, you know, and and check yourself and all of that, but, but move forward with the knowledge that none of us is guaranteed another day, and you can do everything right. And still, you know, find that you have something that you're going to have to face in the future. You just can't, you can't live in fear of that. And the opposite of fear is in in this case, and this scripture is laughter. And I think we all benefit from that.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 1:07:41

And that can be applicable across the gamut of whatever you're dealing with, whether it's how, yeah, you know, kids, marriage, divorce, any of that stuff there, that will be a great banner to put over and to replace fear with laughter So. So for those of you who are intrigued, this podcast, we will have on our website, the link, but we'll also have, there's a GoFundMe that Wendy doesn't even know that I know about it, but we're gonna put that link on our website as well. So if you feel just drawn to her story, and we'd like to contribute to her medical bills, are going to be a lifelong journey. And her friend Monica set up a beautiful GoFundMe page or encouraged her to set up a GoFundMe page to help

offset some of those bills. So we'll put that on our website as well. And we'll try to get some resources, I'm sure when he could provide us with some articles, websites to educate ourselves further on breast cancer and MBC. And the things that we need to do to self care and self protect our bodies and our boobs. So, Wendy, it is a joy to be with you today. And I honor that to call you my friend I my heart, I'm not going to go to sadness, because I'm gonna go to joy and they use that as my strength badness for what you're walking through as my friend. And I'm here for you and my family's here for you. And you've always been a part of our family since I was a little girl. So thank you for being here today and tell your sister I said hi.



Wendy Ladley 1:09:13

I will. Thank you, Jen so much for talking to me. I love you.



Jennifer Malcolm 1:09:17

I love you, too. All right. Thanks, everyone. Tune in next week to listen to our next Jennasis Speaks podcast. And have a great day, ladies. All right, bye. Bye. Thank you for listening to the Jennasis Speaks podcast. If you love the show, one of the best things you can do is to share it with a friend. Tell them what you like about it, how it inspires you and invite them to listen. Subscribe to the Jennasis Movement to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.