

# Leonor Amaral

Portuguese patient with ABC



I'm just a Lisbon girl who grew up, had a happy childhood, a life considered normal, with highs and lows, good things and bad. And then at 32, I was diagnosed with cancer. And there is a change in your life, an impact, it's unexpected news. Despite being aware that anyone, of any age, can fall ill, it's not something that you expect.

The impact of the diagnosis wasn't hard at first, as I didn't have much awareness of what was going to happen, or even what this diagnosis implied in terms of life, the everyday, the treatment.

On my part there really was some unawareness about what awaited me. Gradually I started to become aware that my life had changed and it had

“ We keep travelling and keep living, and the cancer comes with me. I don't stop being who I am, I don't become the girl with cancer. ”

changed drastically. It had changed forever. I think it was a bit like suddenly travelling to a foreign country which was totally different, with a culture and way of living which we find it hard to adapt to, but then slowly we start seeing that the journey might even be good, that we're in a country where we might even find something positive and beautiful. I don't mean that it becomes easy or straightforward, but despite the path being hard we manage to keep living and don't let the cancer transform who we are.

We keep travelling and keep living, and the cancer comes with me. I don't stop being who I am, I don't become the girl with cancer. We acquire tools to cope with the situation which is difficult and we still manage to have many happy times.

I come from a middle-class family in Lisbon. A family which, for social and professional reasons does not live in the same city. Curiously, my disease is a factor that has brought us closer. And now that I have more free time, I am enjoying my family a lot more which is spread across the country and abroad. Strangely, living with this disease has given me the pleasure of sharing and being a lot closer to people who I really love and who are very important to me and my life.



I was surprised when the medical team asked me to give my contribution with a testimony about how I live with my disease. Then along came some documentaries, some testimonies from women going through the same as me, and I rarely identified with how they live with the disease as I don't feel like a heroine or an extraordinary woman just because I'm fighting and living with this disease.

I still feel like a normal person, without needing to be the best daughter in the world or the best worker at my company, or the best wife ever. Because it's really difficult with this diagnosis. Therefore, the feeling exists that we don't always manage to contribute or to do something extraordinary. For me, accepting this in a natural way was a very important step in the way I have managed to enjoy my day-to-day life.