



Speaking from Experience *Breast Cancer*

Transcript for chapter 1 of 6: Diagnosis

Glenise (diagnosed 8 years ago, aged 45) - My towel, when I was drying myself, actually fell when my hand was over my breast. Then I discovered the lump, this huge lump. And I knew instantly what it was. And it really put cold shivers up your spine.

Sophia (diagnosed 5 years ago, aged 49) - As usual, I got up and went into the shower. And as I was soaping myself I felt something in the middle here, like grains of rice, two of them. And I said: What is this? I've never had anything on my body, pimples or anything. What is this now? And of course I looked further and I found a bigger lump under my nipple. I didn't believe it was cancer. I thought it was something else that the ladies get in breasts, and this and that, you know.

Barbara (diagnosed 7 years ago, aged 54) & Husband - My local doctor really suggested I went for the mammogram. It was really just when I'd gone along for my hay fever prescriptions and things, and he said, "I think you should have a mammogram." So it was really as a result of the mammogram and then the blood test and then the biopsy that found I had the ductal carcinoma.

Ruth (diagnosed 4 years ago, aged 29) - As a teenager I'd had a lump for years, which, as I moved around it was constantly checked by new doctors with mammograms, etc. At one stage, a needle biopsy was done it as well. So through all of these tests everything was looking fine. Even with the needle biopsy it was okay. And then all of a sudden it just started to grow. It was a large lump and it was quite obvious. Me being a small build and the lump large, it was very obvious that it was growing, changing my shape. We could easily feel it. Yeah, we went to the doctors again then, to get it checked out again, and that's when I was diagnosed.

Barbara (diagnosed 4 years ago, aged 45) - One evening before going to bed I did a self-breast examination and found a lump in my right breast. I got out of bed and went to the bathroom and did the check, sort of like this, and had a look. It looked a bit funny, and I thought, oh... This was a Sunday night and so I thought Monday I'd better get to the doctor. So I went to the doctor on Monday. On Monday afternoon I had an ultrasound and a mammogram. How could I forget that?! And then back to the doctor's Monday evening and the results came back to us that it was probably fibrous tissue. So I had to go along to a breast specialist, which I was lucky to get into the following Wednesday. And I thought it was fibrous tissue, I'll be fine. So I went on my own. And no sooner saw the specialist and she just looked at my breast and said, "I don't like the look of that." She took a needle biopsy, and within twenty minutes she told me that I had breast cancer.

Sophia - But after three days I said, "I'd better go to the doctor." Because I just had the thought of my sister - I lost a sister from the same disease. And I said, "I'd better go and check myself." But I never believed that it is going to happen to another person in this same family. And I went there, and the doctor said... at first he thought it's not, but then he said, "I'd better send you for a mammogram." I had a mammogram and then I had the ultrasound.



Glenise - The doctor immediately said, "Okay, we need to get you off for an ultrasound and also a mammogram." So that was all done that afternoon. A couple of days later they sent in a surgeon to do a needle biopsy. Unfortunately that was before the weekend, so I had to wait about four days to get the results of the biopsy.

Barbara and Husband - I had to go for an appointment in a few days time, for the results from the doctor. And I wasn't at all concerned, I was still going along thinking that everything would be fine. And I'd rung in the morning - I was going out to lunch. And I'd rung for a result and he couldn't tell me anything at that stage. And he said, "Could you call in this afternoon?" I had a lovely lunch with some girlfriends and I said, "Oh look, it'll be fine. I have to go to the doctors, but it won't be anything." So when I got there it was even more of a shock to be told, "Well, it is a form of an early type of cancer." And I always pronounce it wrongly - carcinoma in situ - which is a very early type of cancer.

Ruth - My reaction was total disbelief, when he told me I had breast cancer. I thought he made a mistake. I said, "You must be joking." Because it couldn't be right - my age, my fitness, and everything, had to point to something else surely. I really didn't believe it. I was very shocked. So I guess it took a long time, a week or so, for it to really sink in.

Sophia - I don't remember if it was after one or two days, when the nurse called me from the doctor's surgeon. She said, "Can you come over? Doctor Griffiths wants to talk to you." I understood straight away that it's cancer. I said, "Okay, I'll be there." I took my car and went there. He was waiting for me, very sad. I understood it was bad. And I went inside and I said, "Don't worry, don't worry. I can take it." And he said, "But it's a real bad one, it's malignant." I said, "Doesn't matter." I said, "Doesn't matter" but after I started thinking, Oh my God, I might die. I've got a young daughter, and my son. And I want to live, you know? And as I was thinking of death, I felt like a door closed in my mind. I couldn't think anymore.

Barbara - So then this big wall went up and I thought, Oh, I wasn't expecting this. And all I talked about was the car park, how to get out of the car park, where I could get some change. And I didn't want to know about the cancer. And she was asking me, "Is there anyone here to help you?" And I said, "No, I'll be fine, I'll be fine." And she said, "We can either arrange a surgery and take a biopsy and find out what type of cancer it is, or we can take a biopsy now and an ultrasound and have the results when you go into surgery." So I thought, well I'll do that. I'm here, I'll get it over and done with.

Glenise - And I'm sitting there feeling as healthy as I have ever felt in a long time. I was down to a size fourteen, I was exercising viciously, walking - felt fantastic, felt absolutely brilliant. Didn't feel sick! And here's this man, telling me that I've got malignant tumour.

Ruth - At the time I was diagnosed, I was very fit. I was having a great time with life. I was running three times a week. I was swimming. My husband and I were running a farm as well as our jobs, our day-time jobs. We were very physically fit. So, when the diagnosis came along, I thought, this is very wrong. This can't be right. I'm fit. This can't happen. My body should be able to fight this, it shouldn't have happened.

Barbara - I was very healthy at the time I was diagnosed. The specialist actually said to me, "I suppose you've been feeling run down, a bit tired, head-achy." I said, "No, I'm in perfect health. Perfect. And I can't believe I'm feeling this good and I've got cancer."



Glenise - And I thought to myself, maybe he's got somebody else's results here. How can you possibly have this illness and you don't feel sick? How? So I didn't hear two words that the surgeon said to me at this stage. But towards the end the tears came, you started feeling very uncomfortable with the whole situation.

Barbara and Husband - Well I felt horrified, you know, at first. And I sort of put my head down and had a bit of a weep. But then I sort of pulled myself together and I thought, now I've got to be strong because of the family.