Not What She Expected

Teresa Foster thought she might be pregnant. Instead, she ended up with a uterine fibroid the size of a soccer ball.

January 7, 2022 By Teresa Foster

In May 2018, I thought I might be pregnant. At that point, I already had three grown boys and two grandkids. One day, I was with my husband when all of a sudden, I felt something coming out of me. The prior month, I'd had only light spotting during my menstrual cycle. I jumped up and made it to the bathroom, where everything just came gushing out. I got in the shower and continued to bleed very heavily for 20 minutes. My husband thought I had a miscarriage.

I went to see a doctor. She sent me to get an ultrasound, and I found out I had one uterine fibroid that was 14 centimeters and several smaller ones. My doctor connected me with an ob-gyn. As I waited for the ob-gyn appointment, I had trouble even walking across a parking lot without running out of breath.

On my first appointment, the ob-gyn sent me to a lab for blood work. Two hours after having my blood drawn, my husband got a call telling him to get me to the ER immediately because my hemoglobin was at 4.2 grams per deciliter when it should have been between 12 and 14. The doctor said I should not have been awake, let alone walking around.

I was admitted to the hospital and received four pints of blood. I was released the next day and given an iron supplement. The iron supplement made me sick, so instead I had to receive five intravenous iron injections within 10 days. I continued to see my ob-gyn, and he did a biopsy to make sure I did not have cancer. After the biopsy, I had a hysterectomy in October. I was done having kids, so having a hysterectomy did not bother me. My surgery took about three hours. Afterward, the doctor told me that since May, the fibroid had grown from 14 centimeters to about the size of a soccer ball. He was still able to operate laparoscopically, so I had five small incisions rather than one large one. As a result, my recovery took less time, and I didn't really need the prescribed pain meds, except for the first couple nights to sleep. I was up and around in no time and felt better than ever.

I do not regret my decision to have surgery, as I was almost 48 years old. Also, every woman on my mom's side of the family has had a hysterectomy for one reason or another, so I took it as being inevitable. I now feel better than ever. But it was the scariest couple months of my life.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Honest, faithful, kind.

What is your greatest achievement?

My three wonderful boys.

What is your greatest regret?

Not meeting my husband sooner. We have no kids together, but he took care of my two youngest boys as if they were his own since they were very young.

What is the most surprising thing you've learned about yourself?

That I am stronger than I think I am. I was a single mom taking care of three boys on my own while working full-time.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Never give up, and don't settle for less than I deserve.

If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?

For quite a while, I was an addict (which is a whole other story), and sometimes I have regrets. But I wouldn't be the person I am today without going through that experience.

What person do you most admire?

I most admire my mom. She raised five kids and was primarily the only source of income growing up. My dad worked, but he couldn't hold a job for very long due to PTSD from the Vietnam War.

What drives you to do what you do?

My life experiences.

What is your motto?

"Never give up."

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?

Pictures, because they cannot be replaced.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

Probably a tiger because they are fierce and protect their offspring at all costs.

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