

Topic: A Close Family

Abstract: My sister was diagnosed with Leukemia at 6 years old and at such a young age does not know how to fight against it. But with the help of her family, great doctors, nurses, and the Make A Wish Foundation she found her drive to fight.

Key Words: Family, Leukemia, Cancer, Fight, Hope, Proud, Struggles

Ethnic Designation: *American*

Cultural Category: Social Practice: Informal Information Exchange

Growing up my family never experienced cultural or family bonding experiences. We were never a close family growing up. My family was always separated, either working, going to school, or at a friend's party. Our family was always separated until a horrific disease struck my family. One of the worst fears a family may face in life is losing a member of it. That is the fear my family had to face for 4 years. My older sister Stephanie was diagnosed with Leukemia at the age of 6. For anyone who has had a family member with any type of cancer knows that it is not only hard on the individual but it is hell on the family and their spirit. I am going to share with you, the reader the struggles that my sister and family went through during this rough period of time. I will also show you the heart-warming people and community that made our life livable while dealing with possibly losing a family member. Also I will show you the decisions we had to make and the people that we have all become from having this happen to our family.

I remember a night where my mom was being more crazy and loud than usual, the only difference being that it was not out of love or out of joy, and my mother was crying that night. The reason my mother was crying was because this was the night we found out that my sister had cancer. My oldest sister Ceci was old enough to know what was going on, she knew that Stephanie could possibly die, she at her young age had heard the world cancer before and associated it with death. My mother was hysterical unable to move, speak, or even contemplate that she may lose her youngest daughter. Stephanie and I were much too young to know what was going on, it was later explained to us the situation. And my Father, he stood cold alone with no fear or sadness on his face. He comforted and consoled the rest of us being strong for us all. Until this very day, of me writing this paper I never knew what he felt when he heard the news, but my mom showed me that this strong man with no fear that had cold look on his face was a broken man crying in the restroom trying to hide his tears from his family. My father was hurt more than the rest of us he could not imagine losing one of his children. Later when it was explained to Stephanie her only words she managed to say in a cracking, stuttering, and fearful voice was, "I don't want to die."

We had the choice of being a weak and allowing it to take a piece of our family away or fight against it everyday of our lives. We made our choice to fight, Stephanie being the commander of our army to fight her cancer. Stephanie began receiving chemotherapy to fight off her cancer. The chemo caused Stephanie to lose her hair and feel even more of an outcast when she went to school, so I decided to cut all my hair off with her. Two little bowling ball kids running around together. Stephanie fought the hardest fight out of us all everyday, throwing up all day and night, chemotherapy, not

being able to do anything on her own, feeling different than everyone else, and the fact that she not be here the next day. I could never even come close to imaging the fear that struck her as she went to sleep every night. Yet every morning she would wake up with a new desire to conquer that day.

Through all of our struggles we had a social community that could never be thanked enough, all of the doctors and nurses became like family helping us through this tough time. They loved us all as if they were a member of our family, in my eyes they are a member of my family and will love them to the till the day I die. Another way we were made to feel like we weren't the only people in the world was when the cancer society would due special events for the cancer kids and their families. My favorite memory was during Christmas time they held an event at an airport where we were able to meet Santa Claus, get presents, and they flew us over San Francisco to see the city all lit up at night. This is also where we came in contact with the Make A Wish Foundation; this foundation allows sick children any wish they can imagine come true. My sisters one wish was to go to Disney World, no questions asked the nice man and lady in the suits made it possible for this young girl and her family. Next thing we knew we were in Florida at Disney World; everything was paid for, our entire trip! We were able to see things and experience so much we would have never been able to with out the help of all these foundations and loving people. All of this help made the fight so much easier to deal with.

At the age of ten my sister was cured. Dr. Wong and his nurses did something that not many people can do, they gave my family their hope in life back, the relief that we didn't have to worry everyday, and the most important my sisters life back. It has

been fourteen years since my family went through this traumatic experience and we have all changed so much and have grown so much. Unfortunately we have not all grown for the better my sister has a very big drinking problem now. It is something that I will never understand, when you are given a second chance at life you don't go and mess the new one up. The basis of her drinking is due to depression caused by the fact that she feels that other children she had met during her therapy that had died should still be here and not her. She feels she is just ruining her life while they could have been doing something more. We have all tried to help her with her drinking problem though we have made a huge improvement on it; it is still another fight we must all face with her. Before she lead the fight to survive now it seems sometimes she is fighting against us.

Her new decisions have made us despise each other, though we live under the same roof we cannot stand to be near one another. We have no communication what so ever. She says and does too much while she is under the influence for me to forgive her. I have begged and pleaded for her to stop, I have forgiven so much, yet every time her stride seems a little bit faster and she seems to get a little closer to her goal she slips up and adds more weight to her shoulders and her goal is just that much further away now and that much more difficult to obtain.

My sister is back enrolled in school and is doing a lot better though we still do not talk I am very proud of her and what she has accomplished. We are all a loving family now that will do anything for each other and we are all ready to go to war once again if we were to ever need one another. The struggles we have had to face have made us a much stronger family, and though I am not happy with what my sister went through and what my family had to endure I am happy that it made us the way that we are. I will like

to end this essay by saying that today is going to be the day that I talk to my sister again
and it would not have been made possible if it were not for this assignment.