

## **Bear It & Wear It**

### **Genesis**

For 47 years, I was ridiculously lucky. (I still think I'm lucky, but hear me out. That was "inarguably lucky", now you could at least make an argument.) I was strong, healthy and well-employed. My siblings and parents and family were all strong, healthy and well-employed. I am a kind and generous person. I enjoyed participating in charitable activities, probably more often than most, but I had little personal exposure to prolonged medical endurance. (I rarely got a headcold, and when I did, I complained.) Diagnosis, prognosis, drugs, procedures, decisions, side effects - I had real sympathy for those who suffered! But they were other people, and those were other people's hardships.

Exactly halfway through my 47th year, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Even then, I thought I knew what to expect. I knew the treatments were advanced (lucky!), the survival rate was fantastic (very lucky!), and at 1 out of 8 afflicted, I was a pretty common statistic. I am headstrong, optimistic, and determined by nature. I shrugged and got on with it.

Within a month, I had been topless, poked, cut, tested, imaged, biopsied and infused until I felt like a ribeye. My hair fell out. My eyebrows and lashes, which it turns out are really critical in making YOU look like YOU, fell out. My fingernails and toenails turned colors and fell off. My guts were emancipated. My muscles weren't mine anymore. My skin gave up. I was SO tired. I felt horrific and looked worse. I couldn't workout. I didn't enjoy socializing. I wasn't working, and I didn't feel up to seeking work. I had a few months of COBRA health insurance coverage left. I couldn't believe where I had arrived. I wasn't shrugging anymore.

I have so many friends and family, and everyone wanted to help. (See? Still lucky.) But I found that being sick is an intensely personal thing. People can bring you food and clean your house, but they can't participate. They can't change the frustration, alleviate the malaise, or banish the what-if thoughts. They can't fix the professional directionlessness. They can't move time along any faster. No one can make it go away. This is your real life, this is really happening, and there is no referee to call a penalty on the unfairness of it all.

But the human race survives because we are ultimately a self-centered, self-important species! I mean that in the best way. We have the audacity to think we are in control, and that we will surely prevail, and thus we make our way forward. If we weren't selfish in the face of a caustic universe, we wouldn't have made it this far.

### **Opportunity**

Sickness happens. And the most miraculous of treatments can be brutal.

As long as these are the facts, and as long as every one of us is eligible, it seems to me we can only benefit by building community and familiarity around the trappings of sickness. For me, laughing with my closest friends and family, often about the awkward and horrible new habits and features of my compromised physical self, was incredibly therapeutic. We are a social species. We want to be part of something, in sickness and in health. For me, sickness was best tolerated in the light, rather than alone behind a curtain. Applied properly, humor really might be the best medicine.

## **Brand**

The Bear It & Wear It brand is meant to:

- establish that we are all in this together,
- find some humor in the often difficult details of being sick, and
- build community around the milestones of prolonged treatment and slow healing.

We are all in this together, and with few exceptions, we each eventually take our turn as patient. Through the power of humor, we seek to bring the awkward, inconvenient and frustrating existence of the sick, and not-yet-sick, into our common vernacular. We believe in the power of a good celebration, and we want to help everyone share in your positive milestones. Our products are designed for the patient and the rest of the team too.

We think the most important thing about our brand is the team spirit that erupts among our shoppers. To be human is to be a warrior! We are all on the same team! It is us against the universe! Your accounts of sickness and fighting and laughing and celebrating and general human defiance are invaluable to whoever is next! We will always enjoy publishing some of our favorites.

## **Products**

Our T-shirts and other merchandise have something to say! Our products are designed to be comfortable, durable, and of high quality so you actually enjoy wearing them. We hope you use them to laugh, to make other people laugh, and to celebrate positive milestones in treatment and healing.

## **Philanthropy**

A TBA percent of annual profits will be granted to organizations who support the sick and who research disease and treatment.