

MORE THAN THE COLOR PINK

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In the worst of situations, we find strength whether that be through our own individual tragedy or through the community we let into our lives. In those same struggles we gain knowledge, experience, compassion, and love. These are lessons I have learned from my great grandmother, or grandma, someone who lived an incredible 83 years before passing this June.

These lessons can stem from many things. Working up and down the coast of California in fields? Yes, absolutely. Having four kids and even more grandchildren? No doubt. But I think her biggest battle that gave her the most experience would be her battle with breast cancer.

Growing up, October was THE month. There was no October without doing a breast cancer walk, volunteering at a breast cancer event or fundraiser, and of course wearing lots of pink.

But breast cancer is more than the walks, events, and the color pink. It is something that can make us more afraid for both the men and women in our lives, while also giving those who have it and those

whose loved ones are diagnosed a sense of power, community, and knowledge.

This would probably be a good time to mention, I'm no doctor. I'm just a grandchild of a stubborn, yet loving, breast cancer survivor whose lasting lessons live on through me and my family.

One of these lessons directly traced back to breast cancer is the idea of being your own advocate. Growing up in a family of strong-minded and independent women one of the first lessons you can learn is being your own advocate; stand up for yourself, speak up, don't let people walk over you.

Whether or not I was in a doctor's appointment or on the playground during recess, I was never taught to take things lying down or put my issues in the hands of others. Only myself and myself alone should be responsible for how the events of my life, at least the ones I can control, go.

This all can be traced back to the head of my family, my grandma. I remember hearing stories of her talking with doctors and doing research so the events of her life were, to the best of her abilities, not completely made for her. If she

wanted to have her say, you best shut up because she was going to speak loudly and clearly, typical Latina grandma behavior.



Josiah Poynter with his grandmother, Virginia, at a Fresno State Football game for Breast Cancer Night in 2017. Photo/ Courtesy of Josiah Poynter

Losing this woman who for my entire life was the figurehead of my family and the source for many of the values I would learn wasn't easy, to put it simply. Grief isn't a one day, one week, one month, one year kind of process. It's a journey that has many smiles, tears, laughter, confusion, and questions.

In many ways this article is my thank you message to my grandmother who I couldn't say goodbye to.

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