

Chris Velardi:

As you continue on this journey, and obviously the goal is to get healthy and to beat this, mean that's always the goal. But because of where you are, the stage you are in your life and the newfound side mission of helping to spread the word, how has that affected your outlook?

Danielle Koppenaal:

I think I obviously didn't see this for me, this is not something I could have-

Chris Velardi:

You could.

Danielle Koppenaal:

I couldn't have predicted this from a mile away, but I think having it be such a passion project at this point like I was saying it just really keeps me positive and I definitely foresee being something hopefully for the rest of my life, helping people as much as possible through these tougher times. So I think that's just been really important to me and I'm finding that each day the messages I get from different cancer survivors and their stories. I just want to keep continuing and doing this as much as I can. It's definitely a passion project for sure.

Chris Velardi:

Yeah, it's a very personal passion project without a doubt. I know you're early into this, but has there been any story in particular that you've heard that has just really rung true with you or inspired you or moved you in a way that you found powerful?

Danielle Koppenaal:

In terms of having a cancer survivor on the podcast?

Chris Velardi:

Yeah.

Danielle Koppenaal:

Yes. Well we just had actually our first interviewee. We have a whole season one book, which is so amazing, but so our first one somehow beat a very advanced diagnosis within six months and hearing that I was just like wow, anything is really possible. And I think having that right mindset and having no other thought processes in your head negativity wise, you can really do anything and you're capable of anything. And being so young, our bodies are so tough that there's just... Keah was saying it keeps me going and helps me stay positive.

Chris Velardi:

I mean, obviously hearing stories of success and knowing that things are possible, but the idea of the mental aspect of it, how do you keep that mindset in the process of all of this? I think you hear about it all the time. You hear about the importance of being positive and having that mentally tough, but also positive approach. How do you work to keep

Danielle Koppenaal:

It's tough. I'm not going to sugarcoat it. I think it comes in waves. I think I try to keep 90% positive, but I would say keeping your life as normal as possible. Now everyone says that when you get a diagnosis like this, but it's true. You can't let it overtake you and just consume you because if you do, I think you get too much in your head and you can't control the narrative at points, I could imagine. So I think just for me at least also working out, clearing my head in that way, going for walks, going for a run, doing something always has helped me pre diagnosis. So that has helped me a tremendous amount. And then just trying to keep a routine, staying as normal as possible.

Chris Velardi:

Something you said that I think the authenticity of it is really powerful and that is it's not all the time. You can't be positive all the time and accepting that has to be a really important part of the process too. I wake up in the morning and say, "Okay. You know what? Today may not be a great day. Today may be a bad day. I may not be in the right head space or whatever." But then allowing yourself to know, but that's just one day. It's not all the time.

twenties, you think, "I don't have anything. I can miss this annual doctor's visit, I'm fine." And God forbid, you can have a very scary diagnosis. That's really my main mission with this right now.

Chris Velardi:

Yeah. Is that mentality when you're at a certain age or maybe before you reach a certain age where you feel like, "You know what? I'll deal with that when I'm 45, when I'm 50. It's, not something I have to think about." Whether it's a colonoscopy, a mammogram, whatever it may be.

Danielle Koppenaal:

And we interviewed someone like I was saying who had a nagging cough. It was winter time, he thought nothing of it. Turns out it was something more than he thought. So just things like that where we aren't invincible even though we're 20 something years old. You may be scared but go and see your doctor, get the right testings done and get ahead of whatever you can. That's just important.

Chris Velardi:

Yeah. It's important. And to hear from people who are living examples of why it's important is crucial. Where can we find you? Where can we find your new podcast? And you mentioned you're doing some blogging as well, where can people continue to follow your journey?

Danielle Koppenaal:

Yes. So right now I have an Instagram account with my co-host, Bevin O'Brien. We're friends from home, and the Cancer Chats handle @cancer_chats, and then our podcast can be found on both Spotify and Apple Podcasts under just Cancer Chats. Then I also, as you mentioned, have a blog where it's at cancer-chats.com. That way you can find me. I've been recording all the runs that I go on and how I'm feeling and things like that. Those are the few ways you can find us.

Chris Velardi:

You mentioned that you are finding inspiration in talking to survivors, talking to people who are finding those ways to live normal, as you say, and I'm sure others can find the same inspiration in hearing your story and seeing how you're pushing through and battling and trying to live as normal as possible.

Danielle Koppenaal:

Yeah, I hope so. That's another thing too is having this podcast and showing that even though I'm having hard times, you can get through something like this with grace and with the right support system and everything around you. That was really the goal of this podcast too, is yes cancer is a very scary topic, but let's talk about it. And I've already mentioned this, I'm young and my body's tough. If you are going through something like this and you can listen to my experience hopefully that can bring you positivity and hope as well.

Chris Velardi:

I encourage you to do just that. Follow Danielle's journey through her Cancer Chats podcast Instagram account. Be inspired by her story, show her your support. There are links in this episode's description. My thanks again to Danielle Koppenaal for sharing her story with us. As I mentioned during our conversation, there are takeaways for all of us in her efforts to maintain a positive mindset and celebrate those smaller milestones. If you don't have to be going through some major battle

benefit from those things. I'm Chris Velardi. Thanks for listening to the Cuse Conversations Podcast.
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