



Molly's story



Molly's best ideas come as she's driving home from the office. She dictates into her phone: "Workout-class anxiety. Grandpa. The weird thing about wedding season."

Any of her musings might end up on hellogiggles.com, the humor and lifestyle site for young women where she's a regular contributor.

It's her first hobby, and it feels good.

"I very consciously thought about what I wanted my hobby to be," Molly says. "I'm married, I have a job and friends, but what am I doing in my life that's not watching TV or going out all the time?"

Molly's journey from non-hobby person to blogger began with a dramatic decision she made in her mid 20s. It could have been the one big story of her life, but it turned out to be just the beginning.

In 2011, Molly's father died of cancer at the age of 55. He had a gene mutation that predisposed him to the disease, and he was a doctor. He encouraged Molly to be proactive with her own health.

so she got tested and learned some unsettling news: She, too, had the BRCA1 mutation, which gave her at least a 50 percent chance of developing breast cancer.

After a lot of research and consideration, Molly decided to have a double mastectomy with immediate reconstruction.

She was 25, a year away from getting married, and no one in her age group could answer the questions she had. She kept thinking how nice it would be to find such a person online. Then she decided she'd just have to be that person.

She had her first surgery in April 2014. A month later, between work and planning her wedding, she Googled instructions for starting a blog, did online tutorials and bought a domain name.

"Really everything happened in a few days," Molly says. "I got my mind set and then I just powered through it."

Her first post on themollyeffect.com - about Angelina Jolie, who had the same genetic mutation - was the first time many in Molly's circle learned of her situation.

She felt like a weight had been lifted. Now things would be less awkward. People would know she didn't mind talking about it - wanted to talk about it, even, so other young women would feel empowered to take charge of their own health options.

On the blog, she shared all that she'd learned - about pre-surgery workouts, genetic counseling, the previvor movement. Sprinkled throughout were personal stories, like the time she tried on wedding dresses at Kleinfeld's in New York. ("Umm, there's something I think I should tell you," she said, to which the dress-fitter responded: "Honey, that doesn't bother me one bit. I've seen it all.")

It felt good to put herself out there. It felt right. But at the same time, Molly didn't want cancer prevention to define her. Could she connect with her peers about normal stuff, too?

When she saw that [hellogiggles](http://hellogiggles.com) was seeking contributions, she dashed off an email, offering to write a piece on her medical journey.

It was accepted.

"You would have thought I just won the lottery," Molly says. "It seems like something so small, but to me, it was, Ok, I'm finally doing something right."

Soon she was pitching other, non-medical ideas, and those were accepted too. She became a regular contributor, riffing on everything from finances ("Saving was more of a thing I did only when I was done spending,") to the thoughts you have on week 2 of your New Year's resolutions. ("All those fancy-looking healthy meals on Pinterest just do not look so fancy when made by me.")

One piece, about long-distance friendships, was posted to [hellogiggles](http://hellogiggles.com)' Facebook page, and suddenly Molly's friends were sending her screenshots of the response. Sixty thousand people

were talking about the post. Then 127,000. It turns out she has a knack for this.

"It's exciting every time. It feels like an accomplishment," she says.

She intends to keep writing for a long time. It's how she gets through life, she says. And who knows, maybe someday she'll take all the stories swirling around in her head and make them into something bigger. Like a book, maybe.

She's pretty sure it's doable.

-Molly McKnight works in mortgage marketing at U.S. Bank