



# My Resilience After Colon Cancer Surgery

*Mallika*

## BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Read the title and the headings and study the image above. What do you think this article will be about?
2. What does resilience mean? Look it up and use it in your own sentences.

## Fearing Death

There was one particular time in my life when I was able to endure pain and sorrow, and still be resilient. I want to share this story with you.

In January 2022, I went for a routine colonoscopy. The doctor found that the polyp in my colon was cancerous. I had breast cancer back in 2008, and the surgeon performed a mastectomy of my left breast. I was already a cancer survivor, and I knew what to expect, but my thoughts were racing. I feared death, and the thought of dying overwhelmed me.

## Reflecting

I had profound thoughts about my past. I had a great time with my son while he was growing up. I carried him, even when he was so big that his feet dragged on the ground. I thought about the present and the things I was doing right then, which was not much. I was an introvert, isolated, and just striving to live in the present moment. Finally, I thought about the future and my plans for what I wanted to do. There was so much I wanted to learn, to know, and to explore in the world around me.

## Shifting My Mind

I had colon cancer surgery on May 5, 2022. As I recovered from the surgery, sitting on the hospital bed, thinking about death, something amazing happened: my mind shifted.

I thought if I died, I wouldn't be able to do the things I've dreamed of doing. So, after I was discharged from the hospital, I became more active. I started reading articles on different topics. I was focused, and I analyzed every sentence in detail. I recorded it all in my journal. I did this every day while I was recuperating. It *jump-started* my thinking. Because I spent seven to eight hours a day doing this, I progressed and had more endurance for reading than before.

## Gaining Empathy

I've read about World War II, the Cold War, the existence of the soul, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, election processes, the Russian war in Ukraine, LGBTQ rights and the Stonewall incident, and so much more. Because I've read a lot about war, I have so much *empathy* for all humanity.

## Looking Forward

The more I read, the more curious I become. Reading helps me to form my own ideas, thoughts, views, and opinions about the world. I now enjoy writing so much. Everything just pours out onto the paper with the help of an amazing instrument called the pen. I respect, accept, and look forward to what is to come in the future.

### AFTER YOU READ:

1. Read the box on the right and do the activities.
2. Look at the list of things Mallika read about during her recovery. Choose one and do some research to learn more. Share what you learn.

*Mallika is a student at East Village Access in New York City. She is involved with the Center for Wellbeing and Happiness. She writes short stories and poems, creates designs for t-shirts, and is involved with the FREE HUGS organization. She cooks dinner on Friday nights for her friends. She is busy all the time and she loves it.*

## Explore the Language



Mallika says that while she was recuperating, she did a lot of reading. The reading *jump-started* her thinking and gave her more *empathy*.

*Jump-start* is figurative speech in this instance. Usually, we use this phrase when the car battery is dead, and we need to get energy to the battery so that the car can start again. What does the author mean when she says that reading *jump-started* her thinking?

*Empathy* means to be able to sense or imagine what other people are feeling. How does reading about a wide range of topics help a person feel *empathy*?

The author says in the last paragraph, "The more I read, the more curious I become." Why do you think this would be true?

### You Try It!

- Write your own sentences exploring what helps *jump-start* your thinking and what helps you feel *empathy*.
- Write a few sentences using the model, "The more I \_\_\_\_\_, the more \_\_\_\_\_ I become."