

Chapter 6

The Balder the Head, the Bigger the Earrings

Okay. Here it is: the part of the cancer journey most despised by women—hair loss. Losing your hair can be one of the scariest symptoms during your journey, because it is a direct attack on one of the physical attributes that make us stand out as feminine.

But, in these next few chapters, we will help calm your fears about hair loss and hair substitution, and give you the tools to boost your image confidence. Remember, for most of you, this is a temporary condition. I cannot promise your hair will return exactly the way it used to be, but it will return. And we are here to help you with the transition!

“We’re all born bald, baby.”

– Telly Savalas

So, Where Do the Earrings Come in?

The title of this section is “The balder the head, the bigger the earrings.” Okay. My mom taught me from the time I had my ears pierced at a young age that you are not completely dressed until you have your earrings in. “It completes your look,” she would say. I cannot tell you how many times I have left my house, after forgetting to put earrings in, and gone back home to get them before starting my day.

Now that you have had some hair loss, I would wear earrings every day, all of the time. It keeps the girl in you out in front and foremost in your mind. So, go get yourself some fun, big earrings. If people are going to stare, give them something to stare at!

Why Is Hair So Important to Women?

The Examiner.com states that in a documentary film produced by Chris Rock, Maya Angelou states: “Hair is a woman’s glory.” Even as far back as Ancient Egypt, a woman’s hairstyle indicated her age, status, role in society, and political importance.

Diva’s, Inc. states that our “hair is an extension of who we are... Hair is intimately connected to our self-image, and when it looks good, it makes [us] feel good.” It shapes our face and makes our features stand out. So, when there is a chance that it may be taken away, it can hit us hard emotionally.

2 Millimeters

So, there may be some of you who are reading this book and the thought will cross your mind, “Why even bother?” or “I have no hair, no eyebrows and no eyelashes. How can any of this make the least bit of difference? HOW???”

I am going to share with you a story from someone whom I consider to be a mentor, Anthony Robbins—a wonderful motivational speaker. Tony talks about “the 2 Millimeter Difference”—how two millimeters, even though a very small thing, can make all the difference in a situation.

Tony told a story about a plastic surgeon friend of his that was

considered the top in his field, and was flown all over the world to work on some of the most famous faces out there. As Tony sat waiting for the doctor in his office, he noticed a book of pictures. These pictures were of beautiful men and women. He noticed that adjacent to the different parts of their faces the doctor had placed numbers, as if they were measurements. Tony came to find out that this doctor had mathematically figured out what made gorgeous people gorgeous and other people, well, not so gorgeous.

For example, the doctor had calculated that on a drop-dead gorgeous woman, the distance between the top of her upper lip and tip of her nose was the same distance as the width of her eye. Only a one-millimeter difference, either way, and the look of the woman becomes average. A two-millimeter difference and the woman is considered unattractive. Now, I have not tried this to see where I fall. I am not sure I want to know. But my point is that one millimeter can make a very drastic difference—two millimeters, an even bigger difference. I know you have days when you don't feel well—you might even feel downright lousy—but put on a little lipstick, put in some big earrings and brush a little blush on your cheeks.

Two millimeters *can* make all of the difference, trust me!

Just to give you the concept, there are approximately 25 millimeters in one inch!



1 inch/25 millimeters

Lori's Story

When Lori was diagnosed with breast cancer, a big concern for her was the loss of her hair. Lori is a high school teacher at a prominent military academy. She wanted to make a seamless transition into a wig to make sure that the students in her classes were comfortable with her appearance.

Lori's doctors told her that she had a 50/50 chance of losing her hair. She wanted to be proactive, so we found a wig that was close

to her current style and we sent the wig home with her before she began her treatment, just in case the chemo started to win and her hair began to fall out. Two weeks after chemo began, Lori started to lose her hair. She called me and told me that she was ready.

She came to the salon with her daughter and we shaved her head. She felt empowered from the precautions we had taken and decided to have a little fun. I shaved the breast cancer ribbon into what was left of the hair on her head. She wore it with pride, but her wig was ready whenever she felt the need.



Lori Before



Lori After

Personal Preference

When my aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer, we cut her hair into a shorter style so that it would be a bit easier for her when her hair started to fall out. But as cumbersome as it was when her hair was falling out continually—having to pick up her own hair from all over her house and her clothes—she never wanted to shave her head. She wanted to keep as much of her old self as she could. And that is okay.

Consequently, when my friend Lori was diagnosed with cancer, her approach was different. As soon as her hair started to fall out,

she wanted to shave her head. She wanted no part of watching it fall. She wanted to be in charge and take care of it herself, before the chemo did. That is okay, too.

I have discovered that there is no right or wrong way to do this. It is completely *a personal preference*. I would like to educate you on what we have found to be helpful in this area.

Not all chemo will make you lose your hair. Chemotherapy is designed to kill fast-growing cancer cells. It also ends up killing many other fast-growing cells that make up your hair, eyelashes, eyebrows and fingernails. In order to kill the bad, some of the good has to be killed as well. I have found that breast cancer patients who take chemotherapy as part of their treatment almost always lose their hair. In other cases, the hair can be affected but not necessarily lost. If the hair stays during treatment it may become dry or brittle, even change colors to a lighter or darker color. Here are some steps you can take to make this transition easier:

1. Decide if you want a wig.
2. If you know that hair loss is a possibility, it may be easier to cut your hair into a shorter style. If the strands are shorter, it can be less traumatic when the hair loss begins.

Give people something to look at other than your bald head or changing hair. Find some really big, fun earrings. Wear a different pair every day—something that makes you feel sassy and girlie. Remember, the balder the head, the bigger the earrings.

Shaving Your Head

In my many years of doing Hello Gorgeous! and my experiences of helping hundreds of women who are battling cancer transition their looks, I have shaved a lot of heads. And I can assure you that, when you make the decision that it is time to shave your head, there is no right or wrong way to do it.

- You can make an appointment at a *Hello Gorgeous! Affiliate Salon* and have it shaved by one of our Makeover Specialists.
- You can go to your salon and have a professional stylist shave it for you.

- You can have a head-shaving party and allow your children, friends, and family to shave it for you.
- Or, as one of our fantastic Gorgeous! Women did, you can turn on some comforting music, pour yourself a glass of wine, borrow some clippers and have your own, private moment.

One of our Gorgeous Women, Anne, wanted me to shave her head as both her daughters were sitting in the next chairs in the salon getting their updos for Prom! There really is no wrong or right way to do this. This is your head and your fight, and you can do it however you see fit. If you choose to shave your head, the amount of hair you leave there is also your choice. When I shave a woman's head, start with the longest setting on the clippers that I can use and still remove hair. I then work my way shorter, changing the guards. That way, she can tell me when she is comfortable with the length, or when to continue.

The whole purpose of shaving your head is so that you are not shedding all over your house, your car, and yourself; and that you are not constantly bothered by the reminder. The pieces of hair are not nearly as bothersome if they are short. If you prefer, you can use the shortest guard and leave little or no hair at all. This is your choice.

How long do I have before my hair starts to fall out?

You may have some warning that you will begin to lose your hair. Many women have told us that they experience head pain a few days prior to the start of their hair loss, like a bad sunburn. It has been explained to me that this is the feeling of the chemotherapy as it is killing the fast-growing cells inside the hair follicles. However, the healthy cells are repaired quickly, making your hair loss temporary. You may lose some or all of your hair. According to the MayoClinic.com, hair generally starts falling out one to three weeks after you begin your cancer treatment. It could fall out very quickly, in clumps, or more gradually. Your hair loss could continue throughout your treatment and up to a few weeks after your treatment has stopped. (par. 6, 7)

When my hair falls out, what should I do?

First, even though your hair is gone you should not neglect your scalp. I would recommend washing your scalp with *professional salon shampoo*. The shampoo will remove any impurities and dead skin cells that may accumulate on your scalp and it is gentle. Moisturize your scalp with the same product that you use to moisturize your face.

A stylist I have worked with told me a story about a 74-year-old woman that she had helped to get through her cancer journey. This phenomenal woman found a great way to help keep normalcy in her life during her struggle—she kept her standing weekly appointments with the stylist, just to retain her connection with her salon. She had her head shampooed and massaged, and engaged in her regular conversations with the members of the hair salon staff, as she always had done. This helped her keep a feeling of normalcy about something very important in her life, and she smiled and laughed and enjoyed every moment.



K.I.S.S. Tip

Some health insurance policies cover the cost of a hair-piece needed because of cancer treatment. It is also a tax-deductible expense. Be sure to check your policy and ask your doctor for a “prescription.”

***“I don’t consider myself bald.
I’m just taller than my hair.”***

– Seneca

