

Essential Events Hire Inspirational Story

MEET NAOMI AND GRAHAM



In March 2009 Naomi had just started a new relationship, life was good! Until one morning at Graham's house in the bath Naomi felt a lump in her right breast. Naomi had previously had 2 breast reduction operations a few years before and had a few complications with the stitches. At 26 there was no way it could be breast cancer.... could it?

The next day Naomi went straight to her GP. He said, "Not to worry, I'm sure it's a hormonal thing. Leave it a week and if it has not gone down, come back and I can refer you to have it checked out." Over the next week Naomi must have poked and prodded the lump 100 times! The week passed and it was still there. Naomi's GP was great and referred her right away. In the meantime Naomi was going on holiday with her family and hoped she could forget about it. On holiday one day Naomi mentioned it to her mum and her friend but dismissed it very quickly, saying she was sure it would be nothing.

Naomi always thought in her life she would get breast cancer, Naomi didn't know why but she did. But she was pretty sure it wouldn't be now...

On her return Naomi went to see the consultant at the hospital with her new partner. She took her top off and the consultant pressed against the lump. He then put a needle into it to see what came out of it. It didn't look good for Naomi. He said he would send the needle off to be examined and a week later Naomi went back for the results. Naomi remembers sitting in the waiting room looking at all the sick people, watching the happy people leave the examination rooms followed by the ones crying. She was really nervous: her life could be about to change.

“As I went into the room I just knew there was something. The nurse's face said it all. They were pretty sure the lump was cancerous from the results that had come back from the needle. He then asked to take a biopsy. The biopsy wasn't particularly pleasant but the shock of what he had just told me numbed any pain in my breast. I was then taken to another room to discuss what was going to happen next. I didn't cry I just sat shocked. When we left the hospital armed with lots of leaflets and an appointment to come in yet again I decided it was time to let my parents know. I rang my mum and told her I had breast cancer. Saying those words was the hardest thing I have ever had to say and that was when the tears came. My family was devastated.

A couple of weeks later I was back having a lumpectomy followed by a portacath being fitted and my first dose of chemo. I was going to have 16 lots in total: 2 weeks on 1 week off. I was definitely going to lose my hair and be pretty ill. I had never thought about what chemo would be like, but I was really surprised that the process was so easy.

After my first lot I felt absolutely fine, I even went to the gym after! But as I got deeper into the cycles I became more and more weak and ill. I don't think I can ever explain how you feel after chemo. It is horrible. I lost my hair after about 3 weeks. It thinned out so quickly every time you brushed it, there was so much hair. In the end it started to look so silly that I just shaved it off with a razor. Luckily I looked ok but it was really weird. I managed to get through the chemo with no major problems. I even managed the Women's Challenge 5 k run in London towards the last dose.



After chemo it was decided that I would have radiotherapy as the last precaution, as I was so young. In the meantime, I moved from Devon to Nottinghamshire and in with my partner. Radiotherapy was a long old slog, having to go to the hospital every single day for a 2-minute procedure but staying 3 hours because they are always running late. Radiotherapy was pretty much a breeze. Afterwards, I returned to see my consultant who I thought would send me on my way with a well done you did it gold star.... no no no!

My consultant then told me that it would be wise to have 5 years of Herceptin and Tamoxifen! When I asked if I could try for a baby on these the answer was no. I knew there was a slim chance of me ever getting pregnant after I had been blasted with chemo and without any eggs being frozen but after the year me and my partner had had we knew we had a strong enough relationship to bring a baby into the world. So I refused the treatment on the basis that so far I'd had chemo and radio as a precaution... How much more precaution did I need? What if in 3, 4, or 5 years' time it came back and then I'd never be able to have a family.

My partner and I discussed trying for a baby and we decided that we would start then, as it was unlikely I would get pregnant until at least the summer. It was December now. Christmas came and went and in January I was given a special day organised by The Willow Foundation. My partner and I went to Centre Parcs in Cumbria for a long weekend break. It was great to get away and not have hospitals ringing or appointments to go to. Life was on the way up. My hair was growing back and I was re-starting my life.

The last bit of the chain for me in my fight against cancer was to have my portacath removed. I went to my hospital to have the operation and before I went down I was given a pre op, which included a pregnancy test! Would you believe it, I was pregnant! I had fallen pregnant whilst on The Willow Foundation Special day. We were both so shocked but so excited. We then realised that I had fallen pregnant only 1 month after finishing radiotherapy and only 3 months after chemo. Surely the baby wouldn't be healthy after all that being in my system? The pregnancy was a long old road. At each scan we felt that they would tell us there was something wrong, but they never did. On my 5-month scan I was told that I was having a baby boy and that he was perfect! I broke down in the corridor I was going to be a mummy. Could life get any better than this?!

From the 5-month mark I really started to struggle with back pain. It got worse and worse and worse but all the health care professionals kept saying was "that's pregnancy dear!" It got so bad at one point I was popping painkillers and didn't really care about the baby I just wanted the pain to stop. Towards the end of the pregnancy I was then on crutches or in a wheelchair and on the last weekend before my booked C-section we went out to the cinema and my back seized up. I couldn't move. I ended up in hospital where I didn't move until my son was born.

On 23rd September 2010 I had my son Devon Joel. I felt like the only person to have ever had a baby and for that moment in the operating theatre the whole world stood still. I went home 2 days later and started to get into the routine of our new life.

Being strong through my chemo I felt had paid off, now I was being rewarded... Until 6 days after he was born. I was sat in bed and this huge excruciating pain swept over my body, I couldn't move. Every time I tensed or moved or anything a massive spasm came over my body. My partner rang for a doctor who said would come within the hour. I managed to stand up beside the bed propped on my crutches to try and take the pain away. I stood there for 1 hour or more, no doctor.

My partner rang back to be told that the doctor was held up and wouldn't be with us for a while. By this time I was screaming in agony. My partner rang for an ambulance. We were told it would be with us within 9-18 minutes. At least I knew help was on its way. They would be able to help me they are doctors.

The time passed still nothing; he rang them back to be told they were still on their way. 2 hours after the first call they finally arrived. I was given gas and air to start with, which had no effect at all on the pain. They then reluctantly gave me a bit of morphine. They needed to get me down the stairs to the ambulance but too much morphine would have left me as a floppy mess. The morphine didn't help. After about 4 more doses which was the max that they are authorised to give anyone. I was still unable to get down the stairs. The pain was still the worst pain you could imagine.

The ambulance crew decided that the only way to get me out was the fire brigade. 10 minutes later 8 burly firemen arrived to try and get me out. They tried to strap me to a board but the pain was so bad they couldn't tilt me on the board. So they carried me as stiff as they could one step at a time out of the house.

When I arrived at hospital I was given a room but with minimal pain relief it was the middle of the night by now so nothing was going to happen until the morning. I held onto the bed rail all night pulling myself up to stop the spasm through my spine. I didn't sleep at all.

Over the next 2 days I got very sick with my temp shooting to 39.9c very quickly. The critical care team rushed in but I was still in so much pain I didn't really realise what was going on. It was then found that I had MRSA from my C-section. I was going to have to stay in hospital for 2 weeks away from my newborn baby and have a long course of antibiotics. I had to stop

breast-feeding too, which really upset me. My partner was thrown in at the deep end, having never looked after a baby in his life!

Whilst scanning me from head to toe on a number of occasions and in different ways it was finally found that I actually had a fractured back in 3 places and a golf ball size tumor in my sacrum.

I was still in too much pain to really take it in, but eventually when I started to speak with my oncologist and breast care nurse it came apparent that actually I am going to die from this. My whole world fell apart right at that moment. All I could think about was leaving my family behind and my baby not having a mummy.

Over time we have got used to the fact that I won't be here as long as I should be and we make sure that we make every day matter. I've also started memory books and boxes and videos for my son for the future. I went on to have 6 courses of chemo. This time it wasn't so easy and my blood levels were so low I was always very very poorly and ending up in hospital. I also had a blood transfusion too.

I finally got to the end of my chemo after losing my hair once again. My life now is Herceptin and Tamoxifen and a lot of painkillers and nerve blockers! There is a chance that getting pregnant sped up the growth/spread of my tumor. But I decided to have a baby and now I have him I feel so blessed and know that I chose to do what was the best thing at the time. I may never have had him.

It is better to have loved and lost to have never loved at all"



Naomi has been engaged to partner, Graham, for nearly two years. Unfortunately they had to cancel their wedding last year due to the illness. Neither can work, as Graham has become a full-time carer for Naomi so as you can imagine finances are very strained.

Naomi raised awareness of her illness in January this year by organising a Pink Ladies Day in Sidmouth to help raise money for 3 charities that have helped her through her illness and received an overwhelming response from the local people of Sidmouth at this event. Over 400 people attended the event and approximately £4,000 was raised, an amazing response!

One of Naomi's wishes was to marry her partner Graham so Samantha Williams from 'Perfectly Planned Weddings' approached Essential Events Hire in the hope that we could work together with lots of other suppliers to ensure that Naomi and Graham's wedding could take place. "Naomi is an inspirational lady who deserves to have an amazing wedding and it would be lovely to give Graham and Devon a wonderful memory of the wedding day to cherish once Naomi has passed"

Naomi and Graham tied the knot at St Audries on Wednesday 6th June 2012 – Essential Events Hire feel honoured and inspired by this amazing couple and enjoyed working alongside the gorgeous couple and the other suppliers to make one of Naomi and Graham's dreams come true.



Sam and Naomi have decided to do the same to help other terminally ill people they have started up The Wedding Wishing Well Foundation that does just that.

www.weddingwishingwell.org.uk

'We just wanted to send out a group email because we are a little short on time before honeymoon. However, we couldn't go away without letting all the people who made our day the most perfect one ever know our dreams have come true. We couldn't have asked for a better wedding. The weather held off and all of the suppliers did us very very proud. Please find attached a photo of us on the big day.

We will be in contact again when we return from honeymoon at the end of June with photos, testimonials etc.

Thank you all once again, getting married has made our normal turbulent life very very complete!

Much Love

Graham, Naomi & Devon xxx