



MEET DARA

DARA KURTZ is the creator of the popular blog, Crazy Perfect Life, and is a frequent contributor to The Huffington Post. After being diagnosed with breast cancer at age 42, Dara left her 20 year career as a financial planner to focus on writing, speaking and mentoring. She lives in North Carolina with her husband and their two teenage daughters.

In April 2014, 42-year-old Dara Kurtz heard the words “You have cancer.” This life-changing experience provided clarity and taught her to find meaning in her life every day. She figured out what truly matters and found the courage to make major changes. Dara had worked in the financial industry, first as a banker and subsequently as a financial advisor. She was a vice president at Wells Fargo Advisors when she quit her job to focus on her family and launch her website, Crazy Perfect Life.

A graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in finance, Dara has seen firsthand what happens when people don’t plan for their financial future and how small changes can produce big rewards. The same can be said about life. Dara would never have thought at her age she would be forced to deal with raising her teenagers while managing breast cancer. The diagnosis came out of nowhere, caused her to put life on hold and brought her some very hard days.

It wasn’t until she finished the difficult year of treatment that she began to see all the benefits her cancer diagnosis brought. She learned the true blessings in life aren’t itemized on a financial statement or balance sheet. Dara woke up, almost as if a switch had been flipped and saw a clarity to life. She started writing, found her voice and now talks with and helps people all over the world who want to make the most of their lives and don’t know how. Dara feels she’s one of the lucky ones and has a responsibility to inspire and help people going through their own personal challenges. There are a lot of people facing difficult situations who are searching for guidance, inspiration and direction. Peo-

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ple are able to easily relate to Dara and trust her wisdom and advice. Dara's down-to-earth approach makes people comfortable and her effervescent personality draws people to her. People feel as if she's their close friend, her speaking and writing resonates directly with them and her insight gives them something to hang on to with both hands.

Dara lives in Lewisville, North Carolina with her husband Jon and their daughters Zoe, 17, and Avi, 14. She lives each day with gratitude and joy and feels helping people is the something good that came out of something bad.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It's been two years since Dara launched her website, Crazy Perfect Life (CPL). Her success has been incredible. CPL has over 175,000 followers from around the world, and the audience continues to expand. Most are on Facebook, but CPL is also on Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. One year ago, Dara started Crazy Perfect Life at Home, a line of inspirational notepads, signs and cards. These items are currently sold in 11 North Carolina retail stores and online.

Dara is a frequent contributor to *The Huffington Post*. Her articles have been well received and continue to get the word out about CPL and its inspiring founder.

Dara also writes a monthly column, "Make the Most of Your Crazy Perfect Life," for Forsyth Woman, a print and online publication with over 75,000 monthly readers.

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CRUSH CANCER

This is the book Dara Kurtz needed when she heard the words, "You have cancer."

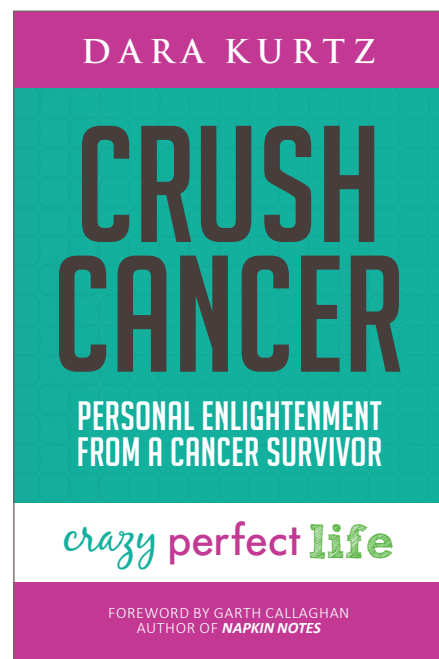
Dara was 42 when she heard those dreaded words. At the time, she was happily living life with her husband and two daughters. The last thing she wanted to deal with was cancer.

As she struggled to cope with her diagnosis and aggressive treatment plan, then later tried to figure out how to live her life after cancer, Dara searched for something to provide her with insight and guidance. But she came up empty-handed and decided she would be the one to provide this resource for those diagnosed after her. For

In this honest and powerful book, Dara shares her personal account and over 50 tips to make life a little easier if you or someone you love is facing a cancer diagnosis. Laced with positivity, humor, inspiration and a few swear words, the book shares the knowledge Dara gained from her first-hand experience and teaches readers how to move forward as cancer survivors. She proves cancer isn't a death sentence, that a person can not only survive, but actually thrive after a diagnosis.

Dara is the creator of the popular blog, Crazy Perfect Life, and a frequent contributor to The Huffington Post. She lives in North Carolina with her husband and their two teenage daughters. She loves spending time with friends and family, taking long walks in the woods and practicing yoga.

Visit Dara online at www.CrazyPerfectLife.com and on social media.



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ENDORSEMENTS

"Sometimes life is separated into 'BC' and 'AC'—before cancer and after cancer. That line only gets crossed one way, and how you deal with it will make all the difference. Dara is a perfect example of how a former cancer patient lives life to its fullest. Her words, her life, are truly inspiring! She embraces hope and living in the here and now."

—Garth Callaghan, author of *Napkin Notes*
and creator of *21 Days of Thankfulness*

"I love the way Dara is positive and inspiring. She shows each of us how we can find meaning in everyday life and shares the insights she learned when going through a challenging time in her life."

—Karen Salmansohn, creator of the website
Not Salmon and *Author of Think Happy*

"Dara can take the profound and make it accessible, or the simple and make it significant. Her writing and way of approaching life's everyday experiences as well as its big challenges and questions always give me food for thought."

—Keith Wells, writer and creator of the internet-based
personal development company, *Great Lives Are Made*

"Dara's *Crazy Perfect Life* is the essence of what life is all about, and Dara infuses love, celebration and inspiration through her words of wisdom, making the absolute most of every day...every MINUTE!"

— Maria Flynn, creator of *One Wise Life*

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"Dara is a perfect and shining example of how you can't let an illness get you down or stop you. She is an inspiration to all of us."

—Iva Ursano, founder of Amazing Me Movement

"Dara is one of those incredible characters who never fails to inspire those who cross her path in life."

—Steve Waller, founder of A Conscious Rethink

"Dara's personal story is both inspirational and life-transforming for anyone committed to living life to the fullest."

—Zane Baker, CEO and co-founder of Valhalla Mind

"Dara provides the daily reminder to all of us to live an inspired life. Her wit, empathy and realness shine through every page. She can find meaning in carpool. That's some amazing feat! We could all use a little *Crazy Perfect Life* in our lives."

—Dr. Catherine Perlman, founder of The Family Coach

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Q&A

What does it feel like to hear the words “You have cancer?”

Overnight, I became the mom in the carpool line everyone felt sorry for. We hear about people we know getting cancer all the time, but we don't think it will happen to us. When it does, your life gets put on hold. It's like life goes on around you, but your days are suddenly filled with doctor's appointments, surgery, chemo, and radiation.

What helped you get through your journey?

I surrounded myself with a team of doctors I fully trusted. People I knew I could count on. I also leaned on my friends and family. I had some really hard days, days I never expected to have at age 42. I wasn't the most positive person at that time, but I made it through because of the support I had from everyone around me.

You had young children, how did you tell them you had cancer?

That was one of the hardest moments for me. In fact, I will never forget the sound of my youngest daughter hyperventilating when we told her. One minute her life was great, and in the next, her world came crashing down. My kids were 11 and 13 at the time and had never been through something like this. They had seen other parents get cancer and sadly, those parents didn't make it. That was their perspective. As a result, it made it even harder.

What did you say to you kids?

We promised them we would always be honest with them, that we wouldn't keep things from them. This is very important. Kids can google things just like you can. Probably better than you can. They know what's out there. Don't keep things from them. You have to be aware of the landscape in terms of their experience with cancer.

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This is easier to do if you have a positive prognosis. What if your prognosis wasn't good?

You're right, I was very blessed to have a positive prognosis. It definitely made it easier. I think I would always present an optimistic scenario, because regardless of what you have, what stage you're in, or your prognosis, you always have hope. And you play to win. I would tell my kids we were in for a fight and we were going to fight hard. The age and maturity of your kids will play a big part in this.

You've had a lot of guilt about what your cancer did to your kids?

Yes, I felt badly about getting cancer and watching them deal with the anxiety my diagnosis caused them. But I finally realized I didn't ask for cancer. It's not like I wanted to get it. I gave myself a break and now I focus on the good things it's done for us. My family is a lot closer now because of what we've been through. My kids understand life is precious and they probably don't take things for granted. They're more compassionate. I hope I've shown them that life can be hard but you don't give up. You fight, you get through it, and you keep a positive attitude, which is so important when dealing with life's challenges.

How do you thrive once you survive cancer?

This is the big question. It isn't easy to go through a cancer diagnosis and not be afraid it will come back. You worry you'll have a reoccurrence. I don't care who you are, how early you found it or how positive your prognosis is, it's scary. Especially because we've all heard of someone who shouldn't have had a reoccurrence but did.

You've got to get to a place where you believe deep in your heart you're going to be fine. That you dealt with cancer and it's gone. You get comfortable with the follow-up plan and the way you'll be monitored. You do what you can to take care of yourself: exercise, diet, stress management. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, you count your blessings and focus on what you have, not what you lost.

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How has cancer changed you?

Am I glad I was diagnosed with cancer at age 42? Of course not. But, I'm a lot happier today because of it. I don't take anything for granted. I appreciate all that I have and know how blessed I truly am. I know what's really important to me now, and I make sure the way I spend my time reflects this. It's the relationships I have with the people I love that truly matter, not the size of my house or bank account. It's making the world a little better and helping people however I can.

What would you tell someone who was just diagnosed?

That I'm sorry they're going through this. That I understand how scary it is. But cancer isn't a death sentence. Thanks to research and science, there are more targeted therapies available today than ever before. Hopefully, this will continue to grow.

How did you help yourself mentally the most?

I told myself I was going to be OK. Even when I didn't really believe it at first. Whenever my mind started to go to that scary place, I would look in the mirror and tell myself I was strong. I was going to be OK. Eventually I started to believe it, and that's when everything changed for me.

What is the biggest lesson you learned?

Anything can happen to anyone at any time. Life is uncertain. Don't assume you're guaranteed a lot of tomorrows. The only thing that differentiates someone with cancer from someone without is good old-fashioned luck. Don't take your life for granted, ever.

You've written the book, *Crush Cancer*. Why?

This is the book I needed when I was diagnosed. It's what I needed to help me get through it. Everyone kept sending me flowers, so many that our house looked like a funeral home. While it was a nice gesture, I didn't need flowers. I needed guidance. I needed inspiration. I needed someone to tell me how to get through the hardest experience of my life. That's what this book will do.

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