Yin, yang, and YSC

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CURE *invited Suzanne Harp, a recently diagnosed breast cancer survivor, to serve as a guest blogger during the 10th Annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer in Atlanta, February 26-28.*

Every day eight women under the age of 45 die of breast cancer in America. Yet here at the Young Survivor's Conference in Atlanta I am surrounded by joy. There are literally shiny, happy people all around, to quote R.E.M., a band from just down the road. I'm not sure I have ever been part of such a happy group. If we had a soundtrack it would be gospel music.

From time to time I will hear survivors say they believe slogans like "Save the Ta-Ta's" or "Feel your Boobies" trivialize breast cancer. I do understand where they are coming from. If you have mets, you need your life saved, not your breast.

But I don't think you have to check your sense of humor at the cancer center door. On Loop, my website, we try to balance serious information with a little fun.

While creative art projects and quirky fund raisers are no way, no how, going to save every life, there is something to be said for keeping your spirits up--which is my favorite part about the conference so far. The information, too, is excellent. I went to a very strong session about living a full life after cancer by Julia Rowland, PhD. She implored us to develop good post-treatment strategies and to "Live life on the edge."

But what really makes this experience great is that you only have to walk a few steps to actually see women doing just that.

Some survivors start small businesses fueled by their firsthand knowledge of what cancer patients need. Others are drawn to create foundations or awareness campaigns. A few ladies write books, the younger crowd tends to blog. We heard this morning from breast cancer survivor and Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida. For women who have had a brush with a deadly disease, we have a heck of a lot of life in us.

At moments I do get wrapped up in the realization that cancer will cost some of the women here their lives. I think we all wish we could be the "Catcher in the Rye" and save everyone. But I will say, they sure went down swinging.

It's not lost on me that we are here in the hometown of Dr. Martin Luther King, because we also have a dream. And just as the road to civil rights is bumpy and twisty, so too is the road to a cure. It is a path that includes both mourning losses and celebrating victories.

Suzanne Harp spent 10 years as a television news anchor in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maine, and New York. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in September. She lives in New York City with her husband Ethan, and blogs at www.joinourloop.blogspot.con www.joinourloop.blogspot.com.