

Andi Hasley Family Interview-Part Three

Guest: Audrey and Grant Hasley Family

Lauren Hixenbaugh (00:00):

Hi, and welcome to Living Beyond Cancer. I'm Lauren Hixenbaugh, your host for today's episode. Living Beyond Cancer is a series of podcasts created for cancer patients, survivors, and their caregivers. This series is sponsored by the West Virginia Cancer Coalition, Mountains of Hope, and is produced by the WVU Cancer Institute's Cancer Prevention and Control. Welcome to part three of this truly unique series. Today we're recording with Andi Hasley, breast cancer survivor, and manager of the West Virginia Cancer Coalition, and her family. We have interviewed Andi's husband, Jamie, daughter, Audrey, and son, Grant. And today, you'll be hearing the interview with Andi's children.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (00:39):

So welcome back, everybody. So I have Audrey and Grant with me. These are Andi Hasley's two children. And they're going to answer some questions about their mom's diagnosis, which we're pretty excited to have them. So I'm going to start off with Audrey and have her tell us a little bit about herself.

Audrey Hasley (00:58):

My name's Audrey Hasley. I am 15 and I'm a sophomore at Morgantown High School. I play mellophone in the marching band and I'm also in the chamber choir. I love music, writing, reading, and hiking, and being outdoors.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (01:14):

So tell me a little bit about your mom's diagnosis from your point of view.

Audrey Hasley (01:21):

She told us that she had to go get her mammogram, and it wasn't a thing because my mom's healthy. She takes care of herself. It wasn't a concern. And then she told us that they found something after her mammogram. And I am a very anxious person, just all the things, I'm an over-thinker. But that didn't stress me out when she told me they found something because she's healthy. The thought of her having cancer never crossed my mind. It was never a thing that it could happen or would happen. So she told us she found something and I didn't think anything of it. And then she got a phone call, and I was ... I don't remember what I was doing. I was just sitting in the room. And she got a phone call and walked away. And I assumed it was the results from her second scan. And then she ran outside after her phone call, and my dad was outside talking to a neighbor. And that's when I kind of put it together in my head that something was off because she wouldn't have run out like that if there hadn't been anything wrong. So I was already crying before she even told us anything because I put it together in my head that there was

something off. And then she asked us to come out, and I remember hearing her say to my dad, she kind of whispered it, but I could still hear her from the room, she just said, "I have to tell the kids." And then she called us out, and I was crying already. She was crying. And she told us that she had cancer, and it just kind of hit us all at once, I guess. I don't know. I cried for a long time and asked a lot of questions. But I don't know, I remember that moment very vividly. But I don't remember all that was said because it was just an all at once kind of thing. I just remember crying for a long time.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (03:15):

And that's pretty common. A lot of people say it's overwhelming and they don't remember, and I think that's okay. But I'm going to have Grant tell us a little bit about himself.

Grant Halsey (03:28):

Hi, I'm Grant Hasley. I'm a fifth-grader in Ridgedale Elementary. I enjoy playing sports and being outdoors.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (03:36):

Very cool. We're glad you're here with us today, guys. So, Grant, you want to tell us a little bit about Mom's diagnosis and how you found out?

Grant Halsey (03:44):

So she told us that they found a part in her body that they needed to check out, so she went and checked that out. And I heard her get the phone call and I heard her go outside. And she usually goes outside after she's was on a phone call or something. And I was just, "Oh, she's fine." And then I hear her call us down and then I'm confused. I thought it was dinner or something, or she was asking us. And then she tells us that she had cancer, and she was already crying. And I was more different. I'm not a big crier. I'm more worried on the inside. And so I wasn't as worried because I knew she was going to be fine and they found it early, so I was more of like don't think of the bad things.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (04:47):

Yeah. Well, that's a good way to be too. Audrey, what was it like when your mom came home from appointments for you?

Audrey Hasley (04:53):

She didn't always tell us she had an appointment. She told me later on, actually more recently, that she put things in the calendar that were just fake random events, and they were actually appointments because she knew how worried I was about it, and she didn't want me to be that worried about it. So she didn't always tell us she had an appointment, but when she did, or I knew she had one, I don't know, I tried not to think about it too much because she didn't really say much to us when she would come home. It was just kind of I knew it happened. Actually, let me rephrase that. She didn't tell us when there was bad news at appointments. She only told us

when there was good news. But I would sometimes later ask my dad what actually happened at the appointment and he would kind of fill me in on the bad things or what was worrying her, which she just didn't want us, especially me, to worry about. But honestly, appointments never were much of a thing because she just kind of came home and it was pretty quiet when she would come home. We didn't really talk about it or anything. She didn't tell us much about them. But if it was good news, it was always the small celebrations, the little things, which mattered a lot during that process.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (06:10):

Absolutely, yeah, yeah. So did you talk to anybody about how you felt or what you were feeling, what you were thinking, or questions you had?

Audrey Hasley (06:19):

I talked to my dad about it. That was kind of the point in quarantine, which I'm sure most people my age had, where we had shut down. And a lot of us just kind of lost contact with each other. It was even I stopped talking to a lot of people that I really only talked to because I had classes with them. So I didn't have a ton of friends that I went to about it. But when she first got diagnosed, I told my classmates because my classmates knew her. She was my choir teacher at the time, so I told all the people that she taught, my friends that had her as a teacher, and then my closest friends that knew her from school. And I didn't necessarily talk to them about how I felt a lot of the time, with the exception of my closest ones, obviously. But all of them had the same reaction of, we're here if you need us, which was definitely comforting. But I talked to my dad about the most things and asked him the most questions. But I also talked to God about it a lot, which was really, really helpful.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (07:27):

And what did your friends think or say to you when you told them? You said a little bit.

Audrey Hasley (07:35):

I don't know. I called a couple of them to tell them, and it was just kind of a silent reaction more so, and then they'd say, "Are you okay? Or is she okay?" Because they all knew her too. And I didn't have an answer to that question at the time, so it was just kind of a, "I don't know." But then it moves to a, "If you need anything, I'm here," which those words, especially after that, mean more now than they used to because knowing that those people were there if I needed them was really important, even after we had lost contact for a couple months, or weren't really ever that close, just knowing that people were there was really helpful and important to me.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (08:18):

Sometimes I think people say that and we assume that they don't really mean it. But I think most times when people say that, they really do mean it. And if we had something that we asked them to do, they would definitely reach out and do that.

Audrey Hasley (08:32):

And there were a couple times that I did if I really needed to, or I actually had a couple people that would reach out to me every couple months and ask how progress was or how she was doing, which was also really important because it kind of reminded me that it hadn't been forgotten, or that they still cared and wanted to know. And those texts, they were kind of sad because it was something that I would sometimes try not to think about, that she had cancer, especially after her surgery when it was gone, which it still is gone, thankfully. But just even after they had done the surgery and she was clear, knowing that people still cared and still wanted to make sure we were all okay, that was really, really nice to hear, even after trying to shut it out I guess sometimes.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (09:19):

Yeah. All right, Grant, what about you? What was it like with appointments and things?

Grant Halsey (09:24):

So she usually told me if it was going to happen because she knew I wouldn't worry. I'm way different than her.

Audrey Hasley (09:33):

I didn't know that.

Grant Halsey (09:34):

But my dad came and picked me up and he said, "Hey, don't tell Audrey this, but she's having, your mom's having an appointment today." And I was like, "Okay." And so she didn't usually tell, again, like she said, she didn't tell us if something bad happens, but if something good happens, it was always a celebration. But mostly I'm more of a ran up and asked her how it was, and she'd always say it was good, but I knew if she just said, "It was fine," and then just walk away, and I was like, "It wasn't fine." But if I asked if it ... If she was like, "It was great," and actually said something, I knew it was actually good.

Audrey Hasley (10:21):

She didn't say when it was bad, but you could tell when it was bad. And those were when it was just kind of quiet because you could tell she just didn't want to talk about it.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (10:30):

You guys are pretty perceptive. So did you talk to anybody about how you felt and ask questions or anything?

Grant Halsey (10:43):

This I told some of my neighbor, me and him were pretty close, my best friends, and some other people. And they said, "First of all, are you okay? Are you fine? Do you need help or anything?"

And then I said, "I'm fine. I'm really not worried. We got lucky." And then they said, "If your mom needs anything, we bless her. We have her blessings."

Lauren Hixenbaugh (11:12):

That's pretty amazing. Did you guys think anything when mom would come home from appointments and maybe not feel so good? What was that like?

Grant Halsey (11:23):

I was pretty ... I was more of a, I like to know forward ahead usually. But if honestly knew, but she'd tell my dad, I could overhear her sometimes, but I mostly tried to ignore her because I knew if she didn't want to hear it from me for a reason.

Audrey Hasley (11:47):

We're professional eavesdroppers.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (11:51):

Do you guys think ... How did you help your mom during her journey?

Grant Halsey (11:57):

Well, after she had to take her medicine, she was more tired, more not herself. So me and her and my dad, we did a bunch of the stuff she did for us, but we did as a return on we do care.

Audrey Hasley (12:18):

It was simple things like she had a day, her first medicine, it made her achy, or she felt sick a lot of days. And like Grant said, she didn't feel like herself, so it was little things like making sure that we were doing our own laundry, or that the kitchen was clean, and keeping the house tidy, so those were things that she didn't need to worry about when she had so many other things to worry about. So I don't know that we necessarily helped as much in an emotional aspect because she didn't tell us quite as much for the obvious reasons. But just the physical things like making sure she didn't have as many house chores to worry about or just those extra little things that could add to what was already going on in her brain, we tried to get those done just as a different type of support, I guess, offering what we could.

Grant Halsey (13:14):

Yeah.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (13:15):

So what do you guys think was most helpful for you guys during this experience?

Grant Halsey (13:19):

It would probably be, one, knowing that she was going to be okay, nothing bad was going to happen because we got very lucky. She got type zero. I'd FaceTime one of my friends and say, "I'm not really in a good mood. I don't really want to talk about anything bad. I just want to have some comfort or something."

Audrey Hasley (13:41):

I did that too. There were a couple times that I would just call a friend and not say anything was wrong, but just I needed that mental distraction, so I would just call somebody, or to just talk to somebody about whatever was going on, especially when school started. We could talk about school stuff, or I was virtual because my mom was getting treatment. But pretty much all my other friends were in person. So I could listen to them talk about what was happening at school, or I would call a friend from choir and we could talk about the choir stuff, just those mental distractions if something was wrong.

Audrey Hasley (14:17):

But more so for me, I prayed a lot more during that time. I turned to God a lot more because that was my biggest support system. And if something was wrong and I just needed to let something out, let the stresses of that, or the stresses of school or other things that were adding to what was already going on in my head, I could just give myself a minute and say a prayer. And I almost want to say that her cancer strengthened my faith because it was almost with a prayer I kind of felt that tension kind of lifted off of me, which I had never really felt before until then. But yeah, I would say those were my two biggest helpers, my friends for sure, and our dad. He was always very helpful with questions.

Grant Halsey (15:07):

Yeah, he was a big help.

Audrey Hasley (15:08):

And God. Those were my top three for sure.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (15:12):

Great. Those are great answers, guys. So what advice would you give to your best friends if their mom was going through this? What would you tell them?

Grant Halsey (15:23):

I would, first of all, ask if she was okay. And are you okay? And also say, "Don't think ... Think more of the positive thoughts, like what good could happen. And make sure you do all your chores and not bother her if she's in a bad mood. And again, think positive and not think of what bad could happen, if something could go wrong and it all go down." But mostly just think of the positive things that could happen.

Audrey Hasley (15:58):

I would ask questions because if you sit there and you think about the unknowns of what's happening, you're going to freak yourself out all the time, and that was a mistake that I made when it first started, is I had all these questions and unknowns running through my head. And I didn't say anything about them, and that just kind of builds up inside of you, not knowing what will happen or what could happen. So I would say the most important part, even if you think it's the most ridiculous thing you could possibly ask about a treatment or about the cancer or anything, I would say to just ask the question, because if anything else, it's going to give you a little bit of sense of relief and that you know what's going on, or you know what's going to happen. Even though it doesn't take away the cancer, it doesn't take away what is happening, but then you at least know. You have the sense of support in that you know what will be happening to get rid of it. You say you wish that there had been things that had been different, I wish it hadn't happened. I wish I didn't have to think about the possibility of it coming back now, or even me getting it, or anything like that. But obviously, I can't change that, so I don't know. I don't know that ... But then I think about the where it has kind of led us, how such a negative thing has brought us to such a positive place. So I don't know, I don't know that I would change it looking back on it. I obviously don't want her to have it. I don't want her to have to deal with this. But thinking about where it has led us as a family, I don't know. I don't know that I would change much about it.

Grant Halsey (17:46):

If she didn't have cancer, she never would have thought about getting this job. We probably wouldn't have moved to Morgantown. And it leads-

Audrey Hasley (17:57):

It led us to a lot of positive places.

Grant Halsey (17:59):

It leads so much. It just started, one negative thing, usually you've got to get past the negative and I'll go upward. That's how God gives you when something bad happens.

Audrey Hasley (18:12):

Everything happens for a reason and I think that this situation is a very, very good example of that because of where it has led us in life.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (18:24):

So that was kind of a good silver lining.

Audrey Hasley (18:26):

Yeah.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (18:27):

Couple other questions for Audrey. So Audrey is a teenage girl, and so you might ... And also, you're an older sibling. So I feel like this might've impacted you a little bit differently. Of course, it impacted you differently than Grant, but maybe a little bit more than what you would've thought. So was it hard? Did you feel any kind of responsibility? Or was there anything hard for you as being the older sibling?

Audrey Hasley (18:57):

I wouldn't say so as an older sibling because I had more reaction than he did. If anything, out of the two of us, Grant was the calm one. He was the one that kind of kept me sane if I was having a moment.

Grant Halsey (19:08):

I was more of the older one in this situation.

Audrey Hasley (19:10):

That is not true at all. But he was the less anxious one about the whole thing. But there was the idea of if I had a question, or he had a question, or we were just thinking about the same things, we could both tell that an appointment kind of went bad, we would talk to each other, which was important. But I enjoy even as a friend, or as a sibling, as a daughter, I prefer being the helper. I don't necessarily always like being the one that goes to people. I like being the one that people come to. And that was hard for me because this was something that she didn't tell me everything on, which I knew was going to happen obviously because some things with the treatment, she couldn't share or didn't want to share. So there were times that it almost felt helpless because I didn't know how to help her, or I didn't realize what I was doing was as helpful as it was, like the house chores and things. She actually was telling us the other day how helpful those were, and I never really thought about it at the time. It was just doing what I could. But I don't know, we kind of had our own support system as a family. We kind of all did our job and got through it.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (20:29):

And as a mom myself, helping with things around the house is your way of showing her that you appreciate her and you don't take her for granted. And I think that's really important for you guys to know too.

Grant Halsey (20:40):

You could see it in her face that she realized that oh-

Lauren Hixenbaugh (20:45):

She knew.

Grant Halsey (20:46):

She knew [inaudible 00:20:48] she was, but she mostly saw, like realized, they're not taking me for granted, we want to help her.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (20:57):

Yeah. Yeah. So is there anything else as a woman, as a young woman, or as a sibling, that you want to talk about that you wish would've gone maybe a little bit differently?

Audrey Hasley (21:13):

Not really. I wish she hadn't gotten it, like I said earlier, because nobody wants that possibility. Nobody wants to have the thought of my mom has cancer. That hits you like a train. And I certainly don't want to think about the possibility now that it is much more likely that I could get it. But like we said earlier, we think about the positive things it has led to, so the whole experience, I don't know that would change the last year of our life and how it has ... Or year and a half, I guess, that's crazy. But I don't know that I would change that as a whole, but it's the little things of: What if it comes back now? Or what if it's worse next time? What if the medicine doesn't work? There's a lot of what-ifs that you kind of have to try not to think about, even what if I get it in the future now because that is a larger possibility.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (22:06):

Yeah, absolutely. Anything else, guys, that you would tell other people, that if your friend's mom was going through, is there anything else you would tell them, or that you think would've helped you?

Grant Halsey (22:21):

If there's something that just in general comforts you, do that, and it'll work, like listening to music.

Audrey Hasley (22:30):

Distractions are good.

Grant Halsey (22:32):

Or going outside, just in general, or just sit on the couch and fiddle with your thumbs, but just don't think about it.

Audrey Hasley (22:42):

I wouldn't say don't think about it, I would just say continue doing what you enjoy because if you stop doing ... If you stop spending time doing what you like because something bad happened, you're going to end up in a spiral of it getting worse. And actually, this school year, I had a friend, I met her during health class. And she and I were talking, she and I found out we ride the bus home together. And she and I were talking, and I don't remember how it came up, but we realized that she and I have gone through something very similar in the past year or two because

her mom was also diagnosed with breast cancer right before COVID, so closer to January of 2020. And she's the first person my age that I have been able to talk about it, and she understood how I was feeling. And it wasn't our friends weren't there for us, but they didn't get it. And that was different.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (23:36):

Somebody went through what you were going through.

Audrey Hasley (23:38):

So talking to her about it, she got the feeling of that kind of underlying fear that you would get when she had an appointment, or when she got home from an appointment. Or we were fortunate in that my mom didn't have to do chemo, but her mom did have to do chemo. So that fear was larger for her because her mom was doing chemo during COVID, so she couldn't visit her in the hospital. And her situation was much more extreme than mine, but both of our moms were okay. And talking about the process of the fears while it's happening, and then the recovery process too, that's something I never had before. So if you're lucky enough to find somebody who does understand that, talk to them. But if not, your friends are equally as much there for you if they don't get it. And even though they don't understand, they will gladly listen. And if they don't, find a new friend because there are other people that will be out there to listen to you. But don't be afraid to ask questions to your parents, or even a doctor or a friend, anybody who you know will be there for you, even a teacher. I had teachers that reached out to me about it. That support system is important, and it's important not to keep it to yourself because if you do, you're going to end up, it will blow up eventually. Essentially, it builds up in your brain and you don't realize it until it explodes, I guess, in a metaphorical sense.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (25:07):

Those are great answers, guys.

Audrey Hasley (25:08):

Thank you.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (25:09):

People are going to listen to this and love that they get to hear your side of the story. And we really hope that families, caregivers, can share from you all's experiences and have better resources, and can ask the questions that they need to ask and feel supported, just like you guys felt supported. So I'm really appreciative of you taking the time and doing this with me.

Audrey Hasley (25:37):

I'm glad that it will help people, for sure.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (25:42):

Hi listeners. Was that not the most fabulous interview you've ever listened to? Listening to Audrey and Grant Hasley, Andi's Hasley's two children, talk about their experience with their mom. I have Andi on here with me today as we kind of wrap up the interviews with her family. And Andi, what do you think after hearing the interview with the kids?

Andi Hasley (26:04):

Just so proud of them that they're not just able to process a really difficult time in our family's lives, but that they're brave enough to share it with other people and to help other kids who maybe their parents are going through cancer or another kind of illness, process the things that are happening in their day to day lives. There are times as a parent where you question every choice you've made, but then every now and again, something happens and you think you must be doing something right. And this is one of those moments for me, so I'm really proud of those kids.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (26:41):

Definitely. They are great kids and they were great to interview. And I'm sure as you listen through, you can tell they made me tear up a few times as they were talking about their experience. So thanks for sharing them and your family and your story with us. We'll take a moment and kind of revisit some points for our listeners. If listeners remembered one tip out of our series, what would you hope it would be, Andi?

Andi Hasley (27:07):

I think listeners need to remember that cancer impacts the entire network of the survivor. It's not just them, it's their family, it's their friends, it's their place of employment. It's maybe people that they go to church with or people that are their next-door neighbors. It affects every person that they come into contact with in some way, especially during COVID, because their immune systems are compromised and they have to be extra careful. So as a cancer patient, you have to communicate as much as possible to the people that you come in contact with, or to the people that you need assistance from or resources from. And you just have to take things one day at a time. The next thing in front of you is the thing that you handle, and then you move on from there. But if we as cancer survivors don't communicate our needs and challenges, then the people that are in our network can't help us, and they can't support us with what is going to make our lives easier.

Lauren Hixenbaugh (28:14):

Absolutely. You're absolutely right. Communication is key to many aspects of life, but especially this one. Communicating what you need, you talked about that, your kids talked about that, your husband talked about that, is a big piece of the survivorship journey. So I think that's great advice for everyone listening. I'm so glad you all were able to take your time to do all of this with us. And we do have some really big news for our listeners that Andi and I are pretty excited about. Would you like to share?

Andi Hasley (28:43):

Sure. I am so happy to share that Lauren and I are going to be co-hosting Living Beyond Cancer. For me, this is super exciting because in my life before being a coalition manager, I was a music educator. And so joining in this podcast with Lauren combines all the things that I love most, recording and outreach, and especially honesty. So thanks to Lauren for this invite. I'm really humbled to be part of the Living Beyond Cancer team. And I'm really looking forward to the lives that we can touch together.

Lauren Hixenbaugh ([29:20](#)):

Absolutely. This has been a great experience. I'm really happy to have Andi and her unique perspective as we move forward interviewing other people on different topics, speaking of which, if you're interested in telling your story if you have suggestions for us, things you'd like us to cover, send us an email. You can also find out more about Living Beyond Cancer by visiting moh.wv.gov or wvucancer.org. You can join our Facebook support group on Facebook and just go in the search bar and type in Living Beyond Cancer, and you'll find us there. We have a really supportive community where people can share their experiences and their stories as well. So Living Beyond Cancer would like to thank our new cohost, Andi Hasley, and her family for joining us, as well as our listeners. We hope that you'll continue.