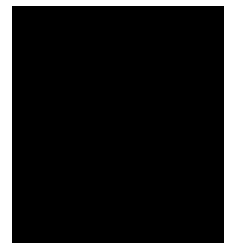


Gloria Boisvert – Heart Disease Survivor



When Gloria Boisvert started experiencing what she thought was heartburn, she knew she'd rather be safe than sorry. Her choice to pay attention to her symptoms and visit the doctor would save her life.

Weeks earlier, a close family friend, Daniel, had the same symptoms but chose to ignore them. It ended up being a heart attack for him—one that took his life. Although she didn't think her symptoms were serious, Gloria knew she needed to see her doctor.

"Daniel couldn't make the time to see his doctor before it was too late. I knew I had to listen to my body and make the time," she says.

As a young, fit female, Gloria didn't fit the profile of heart disease in her mind, so she laughed when her cardiologist decided to give her a stress test just in case. Four minutes into the test, her whole world turned inside out. She was immediately admitted to the hospital where she underwent an angiogram, followed by angioplasty and placement of a stent, but still required emergency coronary artery bypass surgery to restore blood flow to her heart muscle. Gloria underwent a painful recovery process.

"My chest bone was broken and I had full sensation on my scar, making my recovery very painful. I then underwent six weeks of cardio rehab, all while caring for my 6-year-old and 11-year-old kids," she says.

Gloria had a hard time grasping how she could have had a heart attack. An athlete all her life and former soldier, she thought herself healthier than most of her friends. A typical day for Gloria started at 5am and lasted until 10pm. Her job as a teacher, involvement in several school committees and soccer coaching kept her calendar full. It wasn't until after her heart episode that she learned about her surprising family history.

"It turned out that everyone on my mom's side had heart disease, high blood pressure and/or diabetes. Out of my mom's eight siblings, only two have survived. The rest all died between the ages of 37 – 65," she tells.

Following the surgery, Gloria adamantly chose to better herself by any means necessary. Her diet has been the biggest change in her life. This self-proclaimed "The Queen of Sandwiches" uses all low-sodium and low-carb products. Due to the severity of her heart disease, she now consumes little to no fat, which has cut her cholesterol in half. Ten pounds lighter, Gloria feels better than ever.

"I live to the extreme now. My diet is very strict. My exercise routine is like my religion," she proudly states.

Another source of pride is the scar on her chest. She sees it as her badge of honor and exposing it gives her the chance to talk openly about heart disease with other women.

The death of Daniel and her own heart history remind Gloria how precious life is. Making time for herself is finally a priority because she knows how quickly it could all one day disappear.

"I Go Red for every woman out there. No matter who you are or what lifestyle you lead, you need to be informed and make the changes you can, so you can be here tomorrow."