NEWS RELEASE

Douglas Armstrong is a cancer survivor

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It started as an ordinary day for American Airlines flight attendant Douglas Armstrong. Then his left side began to tremble. Suddenly, he felt weak and was unable to speak. While the episode only lasted 20 seconds, Douglas knew, thanks to years of flight attendant training, that he had suffered a stroke or a seizure. It turned out to be a mild focal seizure, and, his partner, Darin, quickly rushed to his side, coached him through it and helped him out to the car.

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As someone who had never been sick, Douglas knew in his gut that something was wrong. An afternoon of countless tests and doctors followed. When the doctors entered his room, closed the curtain and held up the film that revealed a dark area, about the size of a golf ball, on Douglas' brain, he saw it. Cancer. "There it is," Douglas remembers saying. "Now, how do we get rid of it?"

Douglas' decision to face his cancer diagnosis directly — and with a positive attitude — is one of the reasons he believes he's still here today. "I never said, 'Why me?' Because, why not me?" he says. "Cancer doesn't discriminate. And wasting time wondering why I had cancer wasn't going to change the fact that I still had to face it."

For Douglas, conquering his cancer would take not one, but two, craniotomies to remove the tumor. His surgeon Dr. Porceilli played a pivotal role in helping Douglas understand his diagnosis and giving him the best option for removing his tumor entirely. Both craniotomies lasted 10-and-a-half hours and carried with them potentially life-changing side effects.

Recovery from the surgery was difficult. Douglas says that after the second surgery, his perspective changed. "I woke up in the recovery room and life just looked different than before: the sunrise, the birds, even the air smelled better than it had before. I was just so thankful to be alive, and I still am."

As a cancer survivor, one of the ways Douglas continues to stay involved in the cancer community is by attending a support group every month at the hospital where he was treated. “I was hesitant to join a support group at first, but sharing my story with others and giving other patients hope, helps me too,” he says. He hopes that by continuing to share his story, he can help encourage other patients to keep fighting, stay positive, laugh a lot and never give up hope.

Today, Douglas is three-years cancer-free. He is back to flying the skies for American, something he was told he might not be able to do again when he was first diagnosed. “I’m thankful for the support my coworkers and my supervisor were able to provide through everything,” Douglas says. “I’m proud to work for a company that supports cancer research because personally, I have known so many people affected by cancer, some of whom I work with.”