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finding harmony

breast cancer survivor *sheryl crow*
fine-tunes her perspective on life and health

new life,

after
beating breast
cancer, musician
sheryl crow has
a new perspective
and a vital message
about early
detection

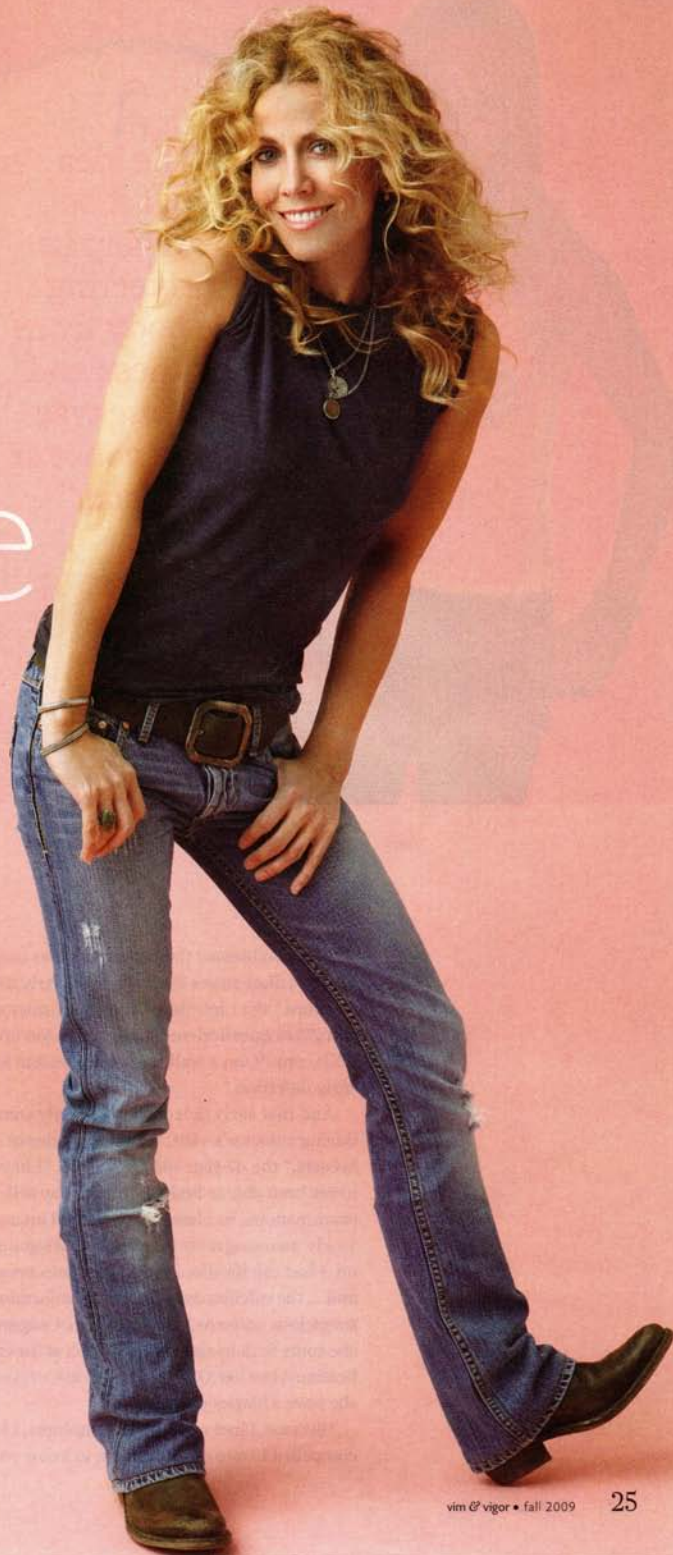
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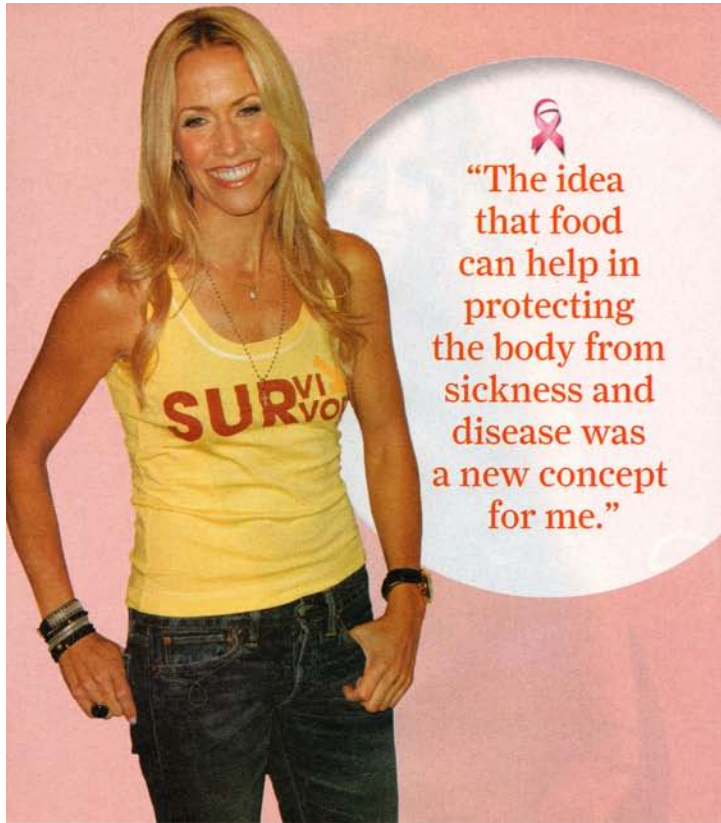
AND TO THINK 2006 WAS GOING TO BE SO SPECIAL.


In 2005, singer and songwriter Sheryl Crow had come off creating a successful album, garnered Grammy nominations, traveled through France following her fiancé, Lance Armstrong, during his pursuit of a seventh Tour de France Championship and penned the opening track for the animated film *Cars*, all while planning her upcoming wedding.

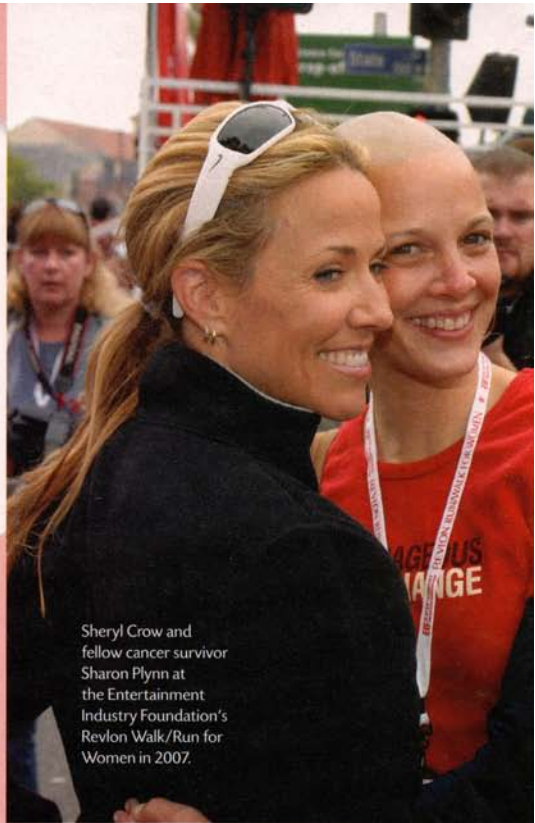
Then 2006 hit. In early February, Armstrong called off the engagement. Crow was diagnosed with breast cancer. And the hectic life of a touring musician was put on hold. For healing.

new tune






“The idea that food can help in protecting the body from sickness and disease was a new concept for me.”



Sheryl Crow and fellow cancer survivor Sharon Pynn at the Entertainment Industry Foundation's Revlon Walk/Run for Women in 2007.

“I was so blessed that my cancer was caught in the earliest stages by way of my yearly mammogram,” the nine-time Grammy winner said in a 2006 question-and-answer session on CNN.com. “I am a walking advertisement for early detection.”

And that early detection could only come during a doctor's visit. “I have very dense breasts,” the 47-year-old Crow said. “I have never been able to find anything in my self-examinations, so I have always relied on my yearly mammograms to tell me what's going on. I had calcifications turn up in both breasts and ... the calcifications looked to be forming ... suspicious patterns.” Her radiologist suggested she come back in six months to look at the calcifications, but her OB/GYN physician suggested she have a biopsy performed.

“Because I had no signs or symptoms, I feel compelled to encourage women to know your

family history and ... get yearly mammograms, particularly if you have dense breasts,” she said. Crow considers herself lucky that the cancer was caught early enough that she did not have to undergo chemotherapy. She had a lumpectomy and seven weeks of radiation treatment.

understanding her options

A lumpectomy is a surgical procedure in which the tumor and some surrounding healthy tissue are removed; it is the most common form of breast cancer surgery and treatment. Like Crow, most patients receive several rounds of radiation therapy to ensure that cancerous cells are destroyed. And as with many women, Crow used her diagnosis to get a better understanding of the disease and all the options.

“I remember when I was first diagnosed and was deep into doing research on what it meant to have cancer and what I could expect from



more than a mammogram

Now that rocker Sheryl Crow is cancer-free, she plans to stay that way through yearly testing. But she doesn't just undergo a mammogram. She also opts for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan. During a traditional MRI, a patient lies on a table, which is placed inside a special tube. Internal images are then provided to a computer, and the computer assembles the images for a 3-D view inside a body.

According to a 2004 study published by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, more tumors were found among high-risk women who underwent an MRI than a mammogram alone.

free breast health kit

If you would like to receive a free Breast Health Kit, call Potomac's Health Connection at **703-221-2500**. You can also request one online by going to **potomachospital.com**.

get your digital mammogram

To make your appointment for a digital mammogram with the MammoPad, a soft cushion that helps with discomfort, call **703-670-1724** or **540-659-1800, ext. 1724**.

my treatment," she said on CNN.com. "I called a great friend who is one of the top guys at the Lance Armstrong Foundation and asked what he thought about seeking holistic treatment in conjunction with my radiation. His response was, 'If your doctor isn't open to that, then you have the wrong doc.' In fact, it was my surgical oncologist who recommended I check out the Tao of Wellness [in Santa Monica, Calif.], where I supported my treatment with acupuncture, as well as herbal teas. The idea is to fortify the immune system. I say, why not?"

To that end, Crow also focused on her diet for an immunity boost, and she met with nutritionist Rachel Beller. "I can safely say that Rachel has changed the way I look at my body and what I put in it," Crow said in an online testimonial for Beller. "She has educated me as to how to eat 'defensively.' The idea that food can help in protecting the body from sickness or disease was



a new concept for me. Her knowledge of what foods and spices are important in the different areas of promoting wellness has been an integral part of how I have changed the way I look at what I put into my body.”

Beller, who founded the Beller Nutritional Institute, is an advocate of using foods in their natural states as part of a “defensive” strategy. “Food and nutrients in their natural form are best adapted to the human digestive system,” Beller says on her website. “The body knows what to use and what to discard. In other words, it is always better to eat the tomato with the meal than to take an isolated lycopene supplement with the meal. Simplicity in design is tantamount to a reliable and useful dietary regimen.”

Crow revitalized her diet with organic foods, lots of fish and plenty of colorful vegetables, which contain antioxidants that may help fight cancer.

getting connected

As Crow has changed her outlook about food, she also has changed her view about life in general.

“I feel more connected to my life now that I’ve had—and beat—breast cancer,” she told *People*. >



a closer look at **risk**

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women, except for skin cancers, with a 12 percent chance of a woman developing it in her lifetime. But there are things a woman can do to lessen her risk.

“We know of factors that either increase or decrease breast cancer risk, some of which are reasonably modifiable and some of which aren’t,” says Michael Thun, M.D., vice president of Epidemiology and

Surveillance Research for the American Cancer Society.

For example, taking long-term hormone replacement therapy, being obese after menopause, excessive weight gain after adolescence and alcohol consumption all separately increase a woman’s risk of getting breast cancer, as does starting menstruation at an early age. “Basically, the more menstrual cycles a woman has, the more times the breast tissue proliferates and regresses,

and the more opportunity there is to promote a cancer,” Thun says.

Conversely, there are things that decrease a person’s risk of getting cancer, like maintaining a healthy body weight and engaging in physical activity. Also, breastfeeding may lower risk.

As for genetic predispositions to breast cancer, Thun says there are other, more prevalent environmental factors, like those listed above, that take precedence.

And on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in 2006, she said, "I've had so many people [say to] me, 'Gosh, you know, everything's really gone wrong for you this year,' and it took me going through that to realize that everything really went right for me. It brought me to this point where I am now, and I really feel like I have a lot of clarity."

That clarity involves rechanneling her energy. "I do feel there was a colossal shift in my life when I was diagnosed," she said on CNN.com. "My situation was interesting in that I was also going through a lot of personal upheaval and the [cancer] experience really dictated that I show up for myself in ways I had never done before. I am a person who typically tries to take care of everyone ... [It] is not a particularly healthy way to live because ... you wind up at the bottom of your list of those you take care of ... I am aware of the fact that sometimes 'no' is the answer, no matter how hard it is to say. And I guess the

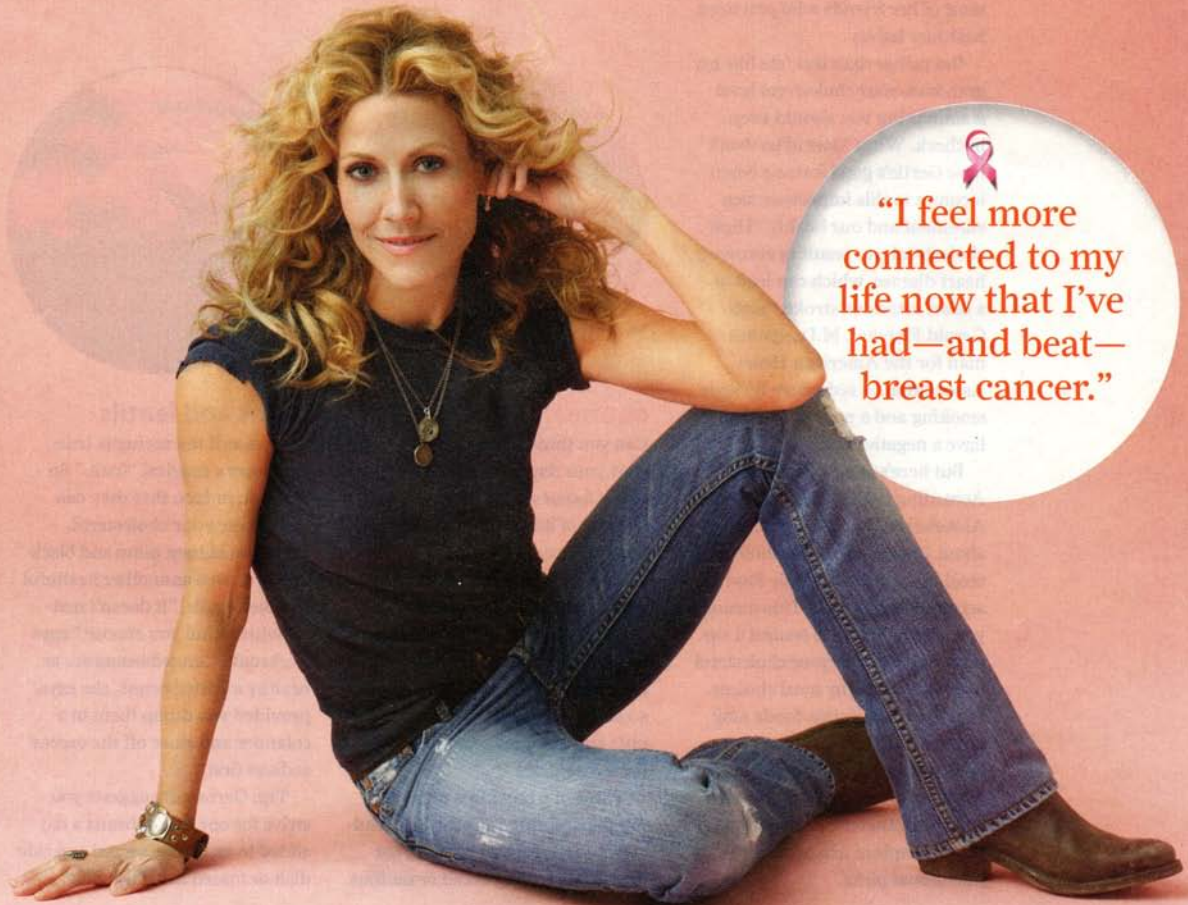
biggie for me is knowing that it will never be my goal to prove to anyone that I matter."

Crow told Australia's *Courier-Mail* newspaper that she wasn't sure "whether cancer made me a better person, but it definitely made me more of an awake person. When I was diagnosed, everything came to a screeching halt and I needed to take a good look at my life."

"Once I stepped out of radiation [therapy]," Crow told *People*, "I had to remember that the only person who could take care of me was me."

Rather than try to suppress her experience, Crow would like to "remember every moment of what was going on at that time, because we talk about defining moments, but I think nothing can define you. They're all *refining* moments. You're constantly refining yourself and refining your life."

And as the song goes: A change would do you good. **viv**



"I feel more connected to my life now that I've had—and beat—breast cancer."

ROBERT ASCROFT/CP

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