

## **Jess Gockley: Celebrate Every Accomplishment**

Just a little rewind, I was diagnosed with a carcinoid tumor in my left upper lobe in February 2012 and had a left upper lobectomy March 9, 2012. We can all relate to how it feels when you are told your diagnosis and what surgery entails (scared to death). What made this even more horrifying for me when I heard my diagnosis is that running and a multitude of other physical activities are a big part of my life and when you're told you could lose part or all of your lung it's VERY devastating. My first thought was...I'm never going to be able to run again. So, being the driven person I am, I picked my attitude out of the gutter and faced surgery like it was my biggest race ever.

## Jess Gockley: Celebrate Every Accomplishment

Published on The Carcinoid Cancer Foundation (<http://www.carcinoid.org>)

---



What does a runner do to prepare for a race? Train, train and train some more... so that is what I did for my surgery. I knew I was in the best shape of my life going into surgery and this helped me psychologically and gave me the confidence I needed as well as trusting God to get me through. Words of advice after surgery...start moving as quickly as possible! I know the last thing you feel like doing is moving after surgery, but believe me it helped me recover so much faster! I had surgery first thing in the morning and I was walking the hallway late that evening. I use the song *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger* by Kelly Clarkson as my motto.

So, where am I today? In March, I had my 1 year check up and all my tests were clear (praise God). Looking back now, my quick recovery is nothing short of a miracle. I couldn't have done in without

---

## Jess Gockley: Celebrate Every Accomplishment

Published on The Carcinoid Cancer Foundation (<http://www.carcinoid.org>)

---

trusting God and letting all my friends and family help me during my recovery time. I'm the type of person and I know some of you are just like me, I like to do everything myself and I don't like asking for help.

Words of advice...let your friends and family help, that is how they want to show they care for you! Since my surgery in March of 2012 I have completed many races and have won awards too! So for all you runners or active people, don't get your hopes up! As the saying goes "no pain, no gain." (literally) With a little perseverance and a couple hiccups here and there, you will be able to do most, all or even more than what you could before! If you find that you aren't able to do something that you did before, find another hobby. You might find out that you are better at your new hobby than you were at what you did before. I have learned that God has thrown me these speed bumps to help me slow down for awhile and realize my purpose in life and others around me.

Goal: One of the driving factors that led me to my goal was when a doctor I worked with told me that he thought a 10mi race was probably about as far as I would be able to go after my surgery. I knew I had to prove him wrong.

Most people have been calling me crazy or insane for the last six months or so because I decided to enter a 100mi trail run to prove that just because I had cancer and major surgery, it didn't mean my life was over and I couldn't continue to do the things I love. An accomplishment like this would be icing on the cake for me. (I know the thoughts going through everyone's head at this point, are you crazy or why would you want to do that and you actually paid to do this race?) I started training for this race in January and have done a few races as training. In March, I ran the Hat 50K trail run in Havre De Grace, Maryland. I was 5th female in my age group, 12th female overall and 61st overall out of 366 with a time of 5:20min. In April, I ran Bull Run 50mi trail run in Clifton, VA. I was 3rd in my age group, 5th female overall and 45th overall out of 295 with a time of 8:40min. Running those two races gave me the confidence I needed for the [Massanutten 100mi trail race](#) that was held May 18-19th.

One year and two months after my surgery I toed the line at 4am in the morning on May 18th to start my adventure at the MMT 100mi trail race in Massanutten, VA. (actual mileage of the race is 103.7miles, but who's counting?) The temperature was in the 60's and very muggy. The first four miles was a gravelly road section that just kept going up and up till we turned right onto a trail that led us to Short Mountain, which is known for its rockiness and a climb that seems to go on forever. You would think that Short Mountain would imply a short climb. Once you're at the top the rockiness continues for pretty much the rest of the race. There are a few gravelly road sections thrown in here and there. However, the majority of the race consists of steep rocky trails that you can only hike up unless your superhuman and are followed by screaming down hills that consist of more rocks that you try not to stub your toe on or trip over.

This race, I believe, was 90% mental and 10% physical. I completed the race on May 19th, 2013 in a time of 33hrs and 10min. It was such an awesome experience. During the race I experienced a lot of the feelings we as carcinoid survivors deal with everyday. I had times when I felt great and I had times where I felt horrible. My stomach was upset for awhile and I got sick a few times and during that time I hated my life, but through my inner strength and a "come to Jesus moment," I persevered and got through that one tough time in particular.

**Jess Gockley: Celebrate Every Accomplishment**

Published on The Carcinoid Cancer Foundation (<http://www.carcinoid.org>)



## **Jess Gockley: Celebrate Every Accomplishment**

Published on The Carcinoid Cancer Foundation (<http://www.carcinoid.org>)

---

There were times I was in so much pain I wanted to quit, but as soon as I would see my friends and husband at each aid station, I knew I had to keep going. I knew I had a goal from the start, that I was going to finish this race no matter what to prove to myself and everyone else (especially my fellow lungnoid friends) that just because I had a carcinoid tumor and major surgery, didn't mean my life was over and I'd never be able to enjoy running again. It was certainly an emotional roller coaster especially at the finish! Keep on trucking everyone, you too will persevere and get through whatever you are dealing with in your life at this moment! A famous trail runner quote "every foot forward is forward progress." Don't be afraid to take that extra step.

What I want everyone to take away from my story is to take the time to celebrate every accomplishment you have along your road to recovery. It doesn't matter if it's being able to get out of bed or the chair without assistance, walking from the couch to the fridge without getting out of breath, getting full range of motion and strength back in your arm after surgery, walking around your neighborhood or running your first 5k. It's important for all of us after surgery to celebrate the small things so that when the hurdles come...we can jump over them too without too much pain and disappointment. Keep in mind that every roadblock you may encounter, may be an opportunity to open a new door elsewhere.

Like true zebras, each one of us is unique. Also, us lungnoids stick together in our herd and we alert each other of the blessings, medical breakthroughs and dangers we encounter on a daily basis. As a zebra would say "keep barking." In closing, I want to leave you with a quote someone passed along to me by FDR, "It's amazing what your body can handle, if only your mind would get out of the way."

**Source URL:** <http://www.carcinoid.org/content/jess-gockley-celebrate-every-accomplishment>