

Patrick's Tumor

Sometimes life can throw things at you unexpectedly. When something huge happens to you, you are confused and scared. You have to be ready for life, but life doesn't have to be ready for you, even if you're a ten year old in Virginia Beach.

It was a freezing day on February 28. I was at my neighbor's house after she picked me up from school. She told me that my brother, Patrick, was at the hospital because he had fallen at school. I wasn't sure if this was related to the other times he had fallen, so I was a little nervous. He also had these serious migraines which caused him to vomit, but then again that was probably because of him being a teenager- or so we thought. I stayed at their house for a few hours. I decided to call my mom to see what was going on. She said he had been rushed into an MRI because when he was tested to walk in a straight line, he looked drunk. I heard her say that when he fell at school, he was pushed down the hall in a wheelchair. He hates wheelchairs. After another hour at my neighbor's, I asked if I could let myself into my house. After I got permission, I walked home. I got inside and called my dad. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I tried to prepare myself.

I heard him say, "Patrick has a ..."

"What would you call it? A brain tumor?" I heard him ask the doctor.

He got back to me and said, "Patrick has a brain tumor and two cysts. Cysts are sacks full of fluid."

I was silent with cold fear flowing through my body. He asked if I was okay then hung up. I was glad he did because I didn't want to cry in front of him. I cried for a while with a sharp pain in my chest. I tried calling my brother's friend Ryan, but he wouldn't answer. I tried about five times, and when he did answer I told him what happened. He sounded expressionless, so I hung up. I got a call from my grandparents saying that they were coming down in about five hours, which would be around midnight. The news was spreading fast. Both neighbors came over, and we ordered a pizza. We played a few games and watched T.V. My parents weren't coming home, so my closest neighbor stayed with me until my grandparents came. I was asleep, unaware of how tiring trauma can be. That was one of the worst Friday's of my life.

I got to visit my brother a lot when he was in the hospital. He had a small, monitored, private room. There were loud beeping monitors that created a non-stop beep when they fell off him. He was on floor 3, the PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit). While we were there, it was like a family explosion. All my aunts and uncles had come, and we invaded waiting room B. There were so many of us that there weren't enough hard wooden seats. The children had to sit on the dirty cold floor. My friends came to visit, along with Patrick's, and we endured the horrible hospital smells, and still worse, the smell of the hospital food. We would go to a park a few streets away to remove the boredom from ourselves and to remove the stench from our noses. Anyways, I would pretty much only eat grilled cheeses, and only drink Diet Cherry Dr. Pepper.

Patrick and I would play card games, adding our own twists. I hung out at my friend's house a lot, and I would always say that the tumor was malignant (cancerous) and she was always insisting that it was benign (non-cancerous). When my mom came to pick me up one time, she said it was malignant.

Sometimes my friend would drive me home, and her mom would say, "Call us whenever. Call us at two in the morning. I don't care."

Then my friend Zoie would say, "YES! CALL AT TWO IN THE MORNING!"

I think that Patrick was pretty nervous on March 3, 2009, the day of his surgery. I know I was. It was pretty interesting how his surgery was on my parent's anniversary. It was almost on the same day as my Kemps Landing test, but they moved it because of the snow day. Patrick was in surgery for about nine hours. I had no idea what was happening, and I was extremely nervous.

A few days after the surgery, Patrick wasn't paralyzed, so we were all happy. He was moved to floor 7, the rehab floor. It was amazing! The rehab floor was so cool. When you walked in, there was a dark hallway with floor lights and other colored lights. There were aliens painted on the wall, and there were some clear boxes built in the wall with space Lego's in them. His room was pretty cool, with a T.V., Playstation 2, and video games. We played card games a lot, but we had to think flexibly because they got boring after a while. There was a bathroom right there, so we didn't have to leave the room. Also, you can have as many people as you want in the room unlike the PICU, where the max amount of people was two. There was a huge window in the room, with a really nice view of the water and ships. Patrick liked it because of the air craft carriers. I listened to him ask questions about them. Next to the window was a window seat, where my dad or uncle would sleep at night to be with him in case. Patrick had a nice bed too. It could move up and down, but it was made with some material, rubber I think, which he really hated. The bed creaked a lot and got annoying. I remember eating in the little cafeteria-like area, just without food being served. People sent us all kinds of delicious foods, mainly cookies and lasagna, and other treats. My brother's fifth grade teacher Mr. Connery came in and gave him some gifts. They were Yankee's things, which is Patrick's favorite team. It was funny, because Mr. Connery loves the Red Sox. A lot of teachers visited, along with my friends and Patrick's friends. Rehab was the best part of the hospital stay along with being awed and amazed by everything that happened.

On the weekends I would ask if I could visit, but they wouldn't let me because he had physical therapy. He seemed to enjoy it, and it sounded fun by the way he explained everything to me. Patrick was persistent and worked hard according to his coaches. He stayed in rehab for about two or three weeks while he recovered, and walked out of the hospital on March 18, 2009. He had a long pink scar and a fishhook scar that he was proud of.

His education was good. He had work brought in by different teachers when he missed something, and he passed eighth grade. He had a private home tutor for a week, I think.

The day he came home was a happy day for me. I was so happy and excited for him to come home. When I got out of school, I stood at my safety patrol post, which was

outside. Instinctively, I looked for my neighbor, but stopped myself remembering that my mom was picking me up. I talked to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, one of the P.E. teachers, when my mom and Patrick walked up. Everybody was so happy to see him. He went inside to see Mr. Connery and my teacher, Mr. Gibbs. Being the guys they are, they loved the scar and wanted to see it. After visiting his old principal and teachers, we walked home, about a five minute walk. When we got home my mom told me the letters had come from Kemps Landing and Plaza saying if I was accepted or not. When my mom handed me the letters, everyone was sitting on the couch with expressionless faces. I took the letters and was actually a little mad when I saw that the envelopes were open. I realized that they already looked. So then I was a little mad. Not getting into Kemps wouldn't help my attitude much either. I took out the Kemps letter first, and was relieved that I had made it in. The reason I talk about getting into Kemps so much is because I REALLY didn't want to go to Plaza. I don't know why, but I didn't. Anyways, I opened the Plaza letter, and perfect, I didn't make it in. I was so excited.

It's been less than a year since surgery, and so far it's been great. Patrick got back into baseball after about a month. He was better at playing guitar, and things became easier. Life was much more fun too. He goes in for a checkup MRI every three months, and then talks to a lot of doctors. Nothing bad has happened. We are so blessed. My family and everyone else are so grateful. So many people were praying, and even after my family left, we could still feel their love and happiness surrounding us.

So many habits of mind were used and expressed in this event. A few include persisting when Patrick never gave up, responding with wonderment and awe when I was amazed by almost everything that happened, and thinking flexibly when we were bored and created new twists to games or needed new games. I didn't realize there were so many habits of mind in the world until I thought about it. Life is a roller coaster of habits of mind, so I have to ride it.