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FEATURED MASSKICKER
CLAIRE SNYMAN

“ Take small steps each day and be gentle and kind to yourself and loved ones.

Claire Snyman is a Canadian mAss Kicker from Australia and South Africa. She is a brain tumour thriver who has published the book, Two Steps Forward, Embracing Life with a Brain Tumor. Claire is a marketing and business development consultant for Synapse Consulting with years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry. She is a loving wife and mother who loves to explore new ways of achieving balance in life. She is a member of the North Shore Writers Association (NSWA) to fuel her passion for writing. We were very honored to spend some time with her and learn about her journey with her brain tumour.

mK: Thanks for doing this Claire. First question... how did you find out about your diagnosis?

CS: I woke up one morning to find the room spinning around me. The light fixture above was spinning wildly as though I was on a merry go round. I thought it must be a virus or something. I was also very tired but thought it was a combination of my job being super busy and having a four-year old son! Then I got my first migraine ever - I had never been someone who suffered from headaches. This prompted me to go to my GP to get checked over. She sent me to the ER to get checked for meningitis. A CT scan showed the presence of my [colloid cyst](#) as well as [viral meningitis](#) on lumbar puncture.

mK: Wow! What were your symptoms?

CS: [Vertigo](#), imbalance, migraine, nausea, foggy feeling.

mK: What organizations are you involved with?

CS: I volunteer at the BC (British Columbia) Chapter of the [BrainWAVE programme](#) of the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada.. BrainWAVE is a support program for families with a child with a brain tumour. BrainWAVE offers families the opportunity to connect with other families in a similar situation and to obtain much-needed support, information and education.

mK: So, what motivates you?

CS: I think things have changed since my diagnosis and surgery about what motivates me. I am still motivated by my career and achieving but it is on a different level than before. I am more motivated by knowing that we are only here for the blink of an eye. So **I want to make what I do more meaningful**, whether it is family-related, work-related or personal. I want to be able to live more on purpose now.

mK: Right, survivors often have new perspectives that drives them. Who is your personal hero or are your heroes?

CS: Great question. A whole range of people inspire me from the everyday people doing inspirational things such as the man I met recently who has a malignant brain tumor who inspires me to [Nelson Mandela](#) who fought relentlessly for his cause to my neurosurgeon [Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa](#) whom I admire for his own personal journey and dedication to his profession, his patients and fight against brain tumors and brain cancer.



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mk: Yup, we can find inspiration in a lot of things if we look hard enough. Let's get to know you better... What makes you laugh, cry, and angry?

CS: The rollercoaster of emotions! Laugh - being around my son and husband and friends and having a good chuckle together. Cry - I am a softie at heart. I will cry at an advert, get tears at something beautiful like a stunning sunrise, or really cry when I feel hurt by someone or feel someone else is being hurt or going through a tough time. Anger. Yes, I feel that emotion more so than I used to since my surgery, I think that fatigue has a lot to do with that to be honest. Maybe the better word is frustration rather than true anger. When things aren't going the way they are supposed to, when people are not treated fairly.

mk: What would you say is the most interesting thing you've ever done?

CS: Hmm, **I would say moving countries or continents twice in the past 10 years has been a very interesting thing for my husband and I.** From South Africa to Australia and Australia to Canada. Different countries, cultures, landscapes, sports - as an adult, you have to start all over again. It is quite refreshing actually!

mk: What is the toughest challenge a survivor faces?

CS: **Finding a new normal.** This may not be the case for everyone. For me, after my surgery, I needed to find the right balance for my brain and body during recovery. It was a new me that I discovered, which was ultimately a better balance but it was its own journey.

mk: What is your guilty pleasure?

CS: Watching [Jane Austen](#) movies and any other movies in that genre. Drinking tea, all kinds. Eating toast!

mk: You feel guilty for drinking tea and eating toast? That's pretty tame! Just kidding... If you could live the life of any person (alive or dead - yourself excluded) who would it be + why?

CS: [Deepak Chopra](#) - finding the balance in life.

mk: What are is next on your agenda?

CS: To write another book. I have just published [Two Steps Forward - Embracing life with a brain tumor](#). I also want to explore how to take the Two Steps concept further, how to connect with people who are brain tumor survivors - how to pay it forward and give back.

mk: Any advice for people or loved ones that get daunting diagnoses?

CS: Take small steps each day and be gentle and kind to yourself and loved ones. Get a second opinion (if you are able to) if you feel that the opinion does not sit right with you. Ask as many questions as you want to. Be you own advocate - this is your own body and life.

mk: Tell us something about yourself that people probably didn't know... anything.

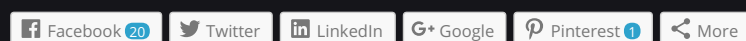
CS: I love being in hospitals, not as a patient but as a professional, and ultimately should have been a surgeon. My original qualification is as a clinical dietitian and I used to work in Neonatal ICU and pediatric surgery. **I also grew up trout fishing from a young age and my boyfriend (now husband) had to learn to fish when we started to date.**

mk: Any parting words for all the mAss Kickers?

CS: Know that you can move forward with small steps. Breathe in the small things and find something each day to be grateful for. Keep your head up. Also, look for a support group whether it is in person or online. It is the people who walk in the same steps as us that can truly relate to what is going on and offer advice and support. Our loved ones are often our bricks and pillars of strength for us, I know mine where. But a good support group offers another level of support which I think is key in this journey.

Claire Snyman: trout fisherman, dietician turned marketing professional, author, tea and toast connoisseur, Jane Austen groupie, Deepak Chopra fan, brain tumour survivor, and passionate brain tumour advocate. Check out her [book's website](#) to learn how to get her book. Keep up the great work Claire! Thank you for spending time with us! Good luck with you current book! We will definitely keep an eye out for your next book!

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