

Meet CJ Grace

BECOMING HER MAGAZINE

Former BBC journalist and public speaker CJ Grace is the author of the humorous self-help book, *Adulterer's Wife: How to Thrive Whether You Stay or Not*, an international bestseller. When Arianna Huffington received a copy, she invited CJ to be a HuffPost contributor. CJ's latest book is *My Wild Ride: How to Thrive After Breast Cancer and Infidelity*, a candid comic memoir and uplifting cancer survival guide. CJ dealt with the double whammy of discovering her husband's infidelity and shortly after being diagnosed with breast cancer by refusing to be a victim and keeping her wicked sense of humor. She is a 2-time breast cancer survivor, carrying a mutated BRCA gene that increases her risk of the disease. CJ was a BBC broadcaster and voice-over artist in the UK and later worked as a journalist advisor for China Radio International in Beijing. Now divorced, US-based and a live TV host on the Thriving Women Network, CJ's mission is to help people use adversity as a catalyst for personal growth.



Your journey from a charmed life as a BBC journalist to facing both breast cancer and infidelity in a short span is incredibly powerful. Could you share a pivotal moment during this challenging period that helped you find the strength to not only survive but thrive, and how your love for writing plays a role in your healing process?

When I found out about my husband's mistress, he offered me a part-time wife position—literally—telling me he'd be perfectly happy splitting his time between her and me. I considered that proposal for several months, but then I was diagnosed with breast cancer—for the second time. While I was undergoing chemo in California, my husband was at a resort in Europe with his girlfriend and it became crystal clear that a part-time partner would never work. I knew that rather than getting stuck in the victim role, I had to put myself first to restore my physical and emotional health. Drawing on my BBC journalist background and my love of absurd, Monty-Python style humor, I began writing about my experiences, first as emails to friends and later in the form of two comic self-help books, *"Adulterer's Wife: How to Thrive Whether You Stay or Not,"* and *"My Wild Ride: How to Thrive After Breast Cancer and Infidelity."* My aim was to show women how to use adversity as a catalyst for positive change.



Q. You mentioned that you do not regret having gone through the experiences of cancer and the breakup of your marriage, as they have enriched your life in unexpected ways. Could you elaborate on some of the most profound life lessons you've gained from these trials, and how have they transformed your perspective on happiness, relationships, and self-fulfillment?

Regret is not about the past, it's about the present and I'm much happier than I ever was during my marriage. If things had gone differently for me, I would not be where I am right now, so I have no regrets. While I was married, I did not realize that I had sublimated my entire personality into serving the needs of a demanding husband, a family business and our two children. I'm blown away by the love, joy and creativity I've experienced since leaving that marriage. I have learned to become complete in myself, with or without a partner. That means I can have balanced relationships rather than being desperately needy, which is usually a recipe for disaster! Infidelity coupled with getting breast cancer showed me that life is short and if I didn't try to live the life I wanted now, when would I do it?

Q. Your books, "Adulterer's Wife" and "My Wild Ride," offer candid and empowering insights into your journey. How do you hope your writing resonates with readers who may be facing similar challenges, and what message or guidance would you like to impart to those navigating the complexities of illness and relationships?

My books combine humor and cartoons with real-life stories and extensive research. I wrote "*Adulterer's Wife*" as an antidote to all the bitter, vengeance-driven material I saw online from those whose partners had cheated on them. Rather than wasting my energy planning revenge, I wanted to use it to move forward and make my life better than it was before. So, the book's mantra is, "The best revenge is to get past the need for it," and I describe practical tools I used to achieve that.

Infidelity often follows or is followed by breast cancer, and many women have to face the disease without a supportive partner. I found no book that covered both subjects, so I decided to write "*My Wild Ride: How to Thrive After Breast Cancer and Infidelity*," to give cancer patients, their loved ones and caregivers a warts-and-all survival guide, looking at some things that are rarely talked about. Comedy makes difficult subjects palatable and entertaining to read—even the book's final chapter about death and dying. My mantra for "*My Wild Ride*" was "Information is power."

Do you have any advice for another woman who is currently going through her journey with cancer?

I have gone bra-free after reading compelling research demonstrating that the link between bras and breast cancer is stronger than that between smoking and lung cancer. Surprisingly, Google searches bring up only the sole study that showed no link, but it had no control group of women who did not wear bras.

However, I'm not a doctor, so I would never want to tell someone what to do about their cancer—there's no one-size-fits-all answer. That didn't stop well-meaning but often annoying people besieging me with unsolicited advice. That was why "Friendly Advice" is the first cartoon in "My Wild Ride". I learned to take people's treatment suggestions with a grain of salt and go with my gut about what felt right for me. Did I make the right decisions? All I can say is, to quote Monty Python, "I'm not dead yet!"

"I have no regrets. Infidelity coupled with getting breast cancer showed me that life is short and if I didn't try to live the life I wanted now, when would I do it? Rather than getting stuck in the victim role, I had to put myself first to restore my physical and emotional health."



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