

# POWER TO THE PAUSE

THE BREAST CANCER  
AWARENESS ISSUE

ISSUE 02

**LIFE/LIVING:**

**Facing Mortality  
and Putting  
the Pieces  
Back Together**



# Dear XO Jacqui Community,

As we put together our second journal, there's a blend of excitement and deep reflection in our hearts. We believe in the power of evolution and adaptation, and listening to the voices that make XO Jacqui a thriving community – yours. Thanks to your feedback, this month we are launching three new boosts and a natural sweetener – all made with organic whole food ingredients in a certified gluten free kitchen.

While new products are a reason to celebrate, this month also marks a time of profound importance – Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This month has personal significance for our team. Johanna, our brand designer, was diagnosed with breast cancer at 33 and continues to face medical challenges eight years later. Working with her reminds us daily of the importance of taking into account the needs of women facing breast cancer at any age.

Learn more about our commitment to women facing cancer [on our website](#). We are grateful for your feedback and support, and for reaffirming our commitment to creating meaningful products with a positive impact.



**Alexis and Jacqui**  
XO Jacqui Co-Founders

## Keep Your Cool Yogurt Smoothie



We love yogurt smoothies for their rich creamy texture and this one is a nutrition powerhouse that tastes like a decadent treat. It's perfect anytime you're feeling overheated (hello, hot flash!) or overstimulated and want to calm your body down. The cooling whole-food nutrients of the **XO Jacqui Cool Boost** paired with fruit and the **XO Jacqui Berry Pomegranate Protein Powder** support your body's natural reset button.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 scoop **XO Jacqui Berry Pomegranate Protein Powder**
- 1 Teaspoon **XO Jacqui Cool Boost**
- 1/4 cup frozen strawberries
- 1/4 cup frozen raspberries
- 1/2 banana
- 1/2 cup plant based milk
- 1/2 cup yogurt (our favorite is cashew yogurt)
- Handful of ice
- Optional: 1 tbsp almond butter & 1 tsp chia seeds (this adds more protein)

### HOW TO:

Blend all ingredients in a high speed blender. Enjoy in a tall glass to keep your cool!

# Life / Living

I died about 8 years ago. Not my physical body, but the person I had been up until that point did. Left us after a year-long battle with cancer. There was no funeral because there was no body. It was actually very alive and well, under the circumstances at least. In place of old-me came new-me. She was the same, but different. She looked the same (minus the lack of hair on her head), her voice was the same, as was her name. But this Johanna knew something the old one didn't. That it was her duty to be the best person she could possibly be, and live life to the absolute fullest. Because she knew she was one of the lucky ones who had made it. She knew she needed to live for herself, but also for those who didn't get to. Survivorship is liberating, but also comes with responsibility.

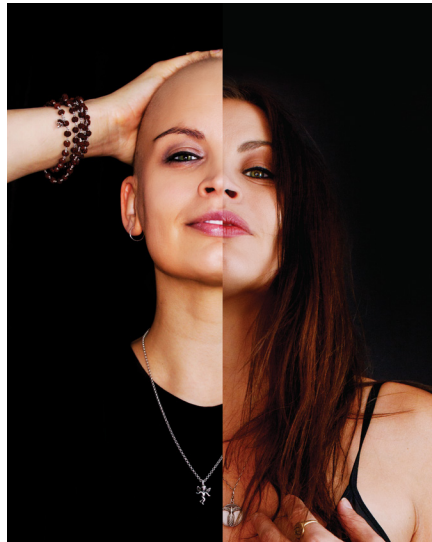
I was born and raised in Sweden. It's one of the happiest, healthiest, wealthiest countries in the world. Lucky me. "You've got those good Nordic genes," people often tell me. And, yeah, I do. I'm tall and, although not very traditionally "Swedish-looking," have some attributes that may be considered attractive. I also inherited a mutation on a tumor suppressor gene called BRCA1 from my mother. This significantly increases the risk of developing breast and ovarian cancer. The normal risk for female breast cancer development in the general population is 12.5%. Mine is up to 80% higher than that. Unlucky Me.

It was 2015. I was basking in the glow of brand-new motherhood with a 9-month-old baby girl. Everything was going incredibly well. She was great. Life was great. I was even sleeping great. That summer I had a moment, in bed, while holding her as she was sleeping next to me. I was overcome with this intense feeling that if I died right then and there my life would be complete. I was happy and content and all the things. Not even two months later, I got my diagnosis – aggressive, triple-negative breast cancer. And I realized that actually I really didn't want to die right then and there. Fuck that. I was so not done with this life.

This article, written by XO Jacqui's brand designer, Johanna Björk, was originally published in *The Noodler*, an independent platform uniquely curated through the lens of women thinkers, researchers, strategists, and creatives with an eye for contextualizing the present and forecasting the future. It exists in opposition to the hyper-paced, thumb-scrolling, attention-shrinking fare that infiltrates our feeds and in-boxes. This is slow content – based on cultural research and observational insights – meant to be contemplated, discussed, savored and shared. >>

I did my treatment in my hometown in Sweden. Mostly because my mom was going through *her* treatment there, having recently been diagnosed for the second time (7 years after the first). We had cancer together. Lucky us. Mother-daughter bald-head matchies. I think most would agree that your daughter would be the last person in the world you'd want as your cancer buddy. But there we were. Unlucky us.

The hospital where I did my mastectomy and chemotherapy is the same one where I was born. Dark thoughts of coming full circle to my place of birth just to die were unavoidable. Now, we all know that we will one day die. But it feels distant and abstract. Realizing that day might come very soon changes you *a lot*. Having to face your mortality is hard. But actually also incredibly liberating. At least it was for me. It made me realize that anything after this moment is a gift. Life is a gift. And I'm going to live it to the damn fullest. I started saying no to things I didn't want to do (which I had *never* done before). But I also started saying yes to all that I did want to do, even if those things seemed crazy or the timing was bad or whatever. It made a world of difference, and I do feel like I am better in every way now. I could've definitely done without all the surgeries and chemo treatments. Those were not my days of wine and roses. But they gave



**Then/Now I, II & III:** This series of collages juxtaposes images I took in 2015, right after I lost my hair to chemo, with photos taken in 2021 for a collaboration with sex-positive female-run porn site Erika Lust, to help promote the first explicit film in history intended to raise awareness about sex and breast cancer. It's celebrating those two different versions of myself and creating a dialogue between then-me and now-me – about perseverance, beauty, healing, and (hair) growth.

way to them. And I recognize, honor, and give thanks for that. From all the darkness of that very difficult experience came something bright and beautiful and radiant. A brand new me, with a new lease on life and very few fucks left to give.

I knew at some point I had to make art that talked about my experience as a young cancer survivor, but I also knew I wanted to do so using a lens of beauty and positivity. Because I strongly believe those two concepts are the most powerful conduits of transformation. I often use my own body as the subject matter, in a way that is both exhibitionistic and vulnerable.

There's beauty and light to be found in everything. Instead of submitting to darkness, I choose to see things through a positive lens – often incorporating shiny, bright, iridescent aspects into my work. Like a disco ball, but one where the shiny, dazzling exterior serves as a protective layer for something darker and more profound – akin to the hot, dense ball of iron that forms the earth's core.

All my work plays with the vernacular of pinup/centerfold photography, taking motifs that would traditionally be considered sexual but become subversive because of the scars on my body. There's a sense of glamour and beauty to it, but that starts falling apart when you see the whole picture. I want to be seen, yet hide behind glitter and shine. I aim to make myself an example of what it is to be both of many things. I am not this or that, I am this and that. The Madonna and the Whore. The Survivor and the Thriver. The Warrior and the Worrier. The Goddess and the Mortal. One does not exclude the other, they blend together into the beautiful mess that is my human form, which is fleeting and impermanent.

I'm certain I will go through many more cycles of death and rebirth throughout my life, as many of us do. Change is often our only constant. And death is the inevitable end-result. What truly matters to me, though, is what I do with the life and the living that I get to do before I get there.

**XO / Johanna Björk**

Visit **The Noddler** to see more of Johanna's artwork + read other inspiring content by leading women thinkers, researchers, strategists, and creatives. >>



**MEET:**

**Alexis  
Davis**

**XO Jacqui  
Co-Founder**

**It's back-to-school season and for many parents, that means sending a child (who is now a young adult) off to college for the first time. It's like sitting in the end seats of the Pirate Ship ride at the county fair — the highest highs and the lowest lows. While every parent handles it differently, there's no arguing that it can be emotionally, mentally and physically draining.**

Co-founder of XO Jacqui, Alexis Davis, just moved her oldest son into his college dorm, so we've been talking a lot about what this experience can be like and how she is taking care of herself as she runs two businesses, plays competitive tennis and takes care of her two kids still at home (plus her husband, a dog and two cats)!

**How are you feeling about your oldest child leaving for college?** I am proud most of all! He is ready. He has worked hard. He has followed all the suggestions his teachers, mentors (and parents!) made to get him to this moment. I had no idea how I would feel or how to prepare. I am trusting the universe that it is all the "right way".

**Is there anything specific that you're doing to take care of yourself mentally, emotionally, and physically during this time?** Yes! I always wake up and drink a full glass of water and then a coffee. I have my XO Jacqui shake + boost every morning for breakfast to keep my hormones (and my

emotions) as balanced as possible. I move my body each day, either playing tennis, working out at the gym or walking. I also make sure to talk about my feelings around this big change with everyone, especially all three of my kids, and I listen to them share what they're thinking and feeling too.

**How are you juggling getting him ready with the stress of running two businesses and being mom + wife + daughter + friend + athlete?** Just like with everything in my life, I rely on my best judgement, my support group and allow myself to ask for help when needed.

**Is there anything you wish you'd known about this time before heading into it?** Honestly NO! This transition is kicking my butt so much that I am glad I didn't know more. But that is the way I work best. I would rather not know too much beforehand. I am thankful that I live a healthy and loving life so when things rock my boat I can stay afloat.

**What would be your top tip for parents getting a kid ready for college now that you've done it once?** Give yourself time right before, during and after the move-in process to just be. I took a few days to spend time with my other 2 kids, my husband and by myself to cry and be in all the emotions. I have faith that my son is in the perfect place for him and that I have done everything I can as his mom to give him the skills to thrive, so I just need to keep breathing and moving forward.

**Anything else you want to share?** In any transition, our support system/resources and health are so important. I suggest that everyone have these nailed down beforehand if possible. Having healthy, supportive people and routines to turn to helps us ride those ups and downs with more strength and grace.



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