

The Hearts of a Girl: The Journey Through Congenital Heart Disease and Heart Transplant

Jessica Carmel



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No one expected this journey. Jessica Carmel was born with a severe congenital heart condition. At four days old, her parents learned she would need heart surgery. They had no idea that her future held multiple surgeries and even more unexpected challenges. Fast-forward sixteen years. As Jessica sat in her cardiologist's office for a routine checkup, he told her and her mom that there was nothing more he could do for her. Jessica needed a heart transplant. Three weeks later, Jessica underwent heart transplant surgery. Her recovery was long, but good. Feeling healthier than ever, she went on to graduate high school and college. Soon after her college graduation, however, she began to feel "off." She visited the emergency room for what she thought was severe stomach pain, but it turned out her heart was the real issue. She was admitted to the hospital to relieve fluid, and a couple of days into her stay, a transplant nephrologist informed her she was going to need a kidney transplant. Nearly ten years had passed since Jessica had received her heart transplant, and now she was in desperate need for a kidney. Her only hope to survive was her hero and sister, Amy. Amy came through—right away, she agreed to offer up one of her kidneys. Now, it wasn't enough that Jessica's mom was going to see one daughter off to the operating room, as she had done with Jessica many times before. She would be seeing both her daughters heading into surgery. In The Hearts of a Girl, Jessica shares that story and the story of her many years of struggle to survive and thrive after a long history of challenging surgeries. It's a story that informs and inspires.



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