

## THE BLOODLINE WITH LLS

A PODCAST FOR PATIENTS AND CAREGIVERS

### ***Episode: 'Survivor, Author, Athlete & Overcomer: Bishoy's Story'***

#### **Description:**

Listen in as Alicia and Lizette from The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society speak with Bishoy Tadros. Bishoy was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) at three years old. As an Egyptian immigrant with many things for his family to consider such as, where the best treatment would be and how to go about relocating, Bishoy describes his journey as a cancer survivor. He explains the challenges he faced both individually and as a family, his turning point which occurred in 2017 at Mile 40 of an IronMan, and what his diagnosis has taught him about overcoming life's obstacles.

#### **Transcript:**

**Alicia:** Welcome to *The Bloodline with LLS*. I'm Alicia.

**Lizette:** And I'm Lizette. Thanks so much for joining us on this episode.

**Alicia:** Today we will be speaking with Bishoy Tadros. Bishoy was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, known as ALL, at the age of three. For those who don't know, ALL is a cancer of the bone marrow and blood. As an Egyptian immigrant with many things for his family to consider as it relates to treatment and relocating, we'll chat with Bishoy about his journey as a cancer survivor, author, and, of course, overcomer. Welcome, Bishoy.

**Bishoy Tadros:** Hey there, thank you for having me.

**Alicia:** No problem. We've read many articles about you, and you're such an inspiration for those either who can relate or those who are kind of on the sidelines. So, we thank you for joining us and sharing your story with us today.

**Bishoy Tadros:** No, thank you, guys. It's really a privilege to be here.

**Alicia:** So, jumping right in, we want to get an idea as to when you were diagnosed. It was such a young age. What signs or symptoms were taking place? I know you were probably too young to remember, but from what you've been told by your parents or what you may remember, how were you diagnosed?

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yes, so I was diagnosed at the young age of three years old and I had started to show signs of a high fever, infection. My father actually had a medical background, so he knew something was up, and he had taken me to a few rounds of doctors, and at that point it took a little while for anything to become clear. And he was getting a little frustrated, actually, at the fact that he knew something just didn't seem right.

So it was in one evening where he decided to take a look at my spleen in particular, and he noticed it was a little enlarged and that's where his medical background kind of kicked in and realized that this was a little bit more dire than other doctors may have been alluding to.

So, he called up a close friend of his who was a pretty prominent pediatrician and said, "You know, we need to make sure that we look into this right away." They did and upon doing so, that's when the diagnosis came about.

So it was a little bit of taking the precautionary steps at first when realizing something was wrong, but also a matter of my father's background, his intuition and then kind of making the association at that point that this was not just a, a high fever. This was not just a, you know, a childlike virus or infection. It was a little bit more than that.

**Alicia:** Was your dad within the oncology field or was he a primary doctor?

**Bishoy Tadros:** No, he was actually a urologist. And he had gone through med school. He had opened up his practice, and the year before I was born, he actually decided to take a different path; and he was ordained a priest. So, he left medicine to serve, and I'm Coptic Orthodox, which is the biggest Christian minority in Egypt; and within the dogma of the Orthodox Church, priests do get married. So, it's a little bit different, but he always held onto his medical background. He loves medicine. He always studies up, keeps up to speed, and it's definitely helped him throughout the course of his transition.

**Alicia:** That's awesome, and it's so great to have that person in your immediate family who has that knowledge because so many times we hear a family or a patient say, "We were just thrown into this new world. We had no idea." They have to learn this entirely new world so quickly, so it probably helped to have your dad be able to explain things that many people have to research on their own.

**Bishoy Tadros:** Absolutely, and that was just a theme that even to this day has stuck with me around the fact that, you know, he gets it. He knows the lingo. He

understands what the doctors are saying. He speaks their language. Where here I am, I'm a grown 30, almost 33-year-old adult; and, you know, even if I get the most minor of needs to go see a doctor, I almost have to call my dad after and be like, "What does that mean?" And so, I still utilize him to this day, whether it's leukemia related or not.

**Lizette:** And do your parents talk to you about how they were feeling and their decision-making process since you were a child?

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yes, so I didn't ask many questions. But it was last year when I was writing my book, *Break Barriers*, that I needed to dig up information. And so, it was also a very therapeutic process for me where I had to sit them down and ask them those questions and learn a little bit about what their experience was like and some of the decision-making that went into it.

And so, for my dad, it was a little bit more clear-cut and dry. He understood that in 1990 the medical resources available to us in Egypt were just not going to cut it in terms of affording me the best opportunity for survival. So, he knew at that point that if he wanted to give me a shot, it wasn't going to be in Egypt, and they needed to consider immigration. And so, for him, it was a pretty black and white decision.

My mother, who was in her young 20s, and I think the diagnosis came right around her 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, if I remember correctly, she had grown up there her entire life; and everything she knew was in Egypt. And she had probably never imagined celebrating a holiday without her parents and her sister and all of her friends around.

And so, she was a little bit more blindsided by the, if you want to give your son a chance, you probably need to understand that this is our only option.

**Lizette:** Right, wow. And then you moved, correct?

**Bishoy Tadros:** Correct. And so fairly quickly they leveraged their network, and they did have a couple of people who they knew who immigrated previously and lived in California, not too far away from the City of Hope. And so after doing the research, we moved to California where I did do a year of treatment at City of Hope. And after that first year, we relocated once more to Long Island in New York where I completed my treatment in the North Shore system, which is now Northwell on the North Shore of Long Island.

**Lizette:** Right, yes, fellow Long Islander, born and raised.

**Alicia:** What were some side effects of the treatment that you were receiving for ALL?

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yeah, so, for me, you know, there were a few things that I remember and that I'd discuss with regards to treatment. There's one thing that will stand out and will remain with me for the rest of my life, and it was the pain of those spinal taps. You know, and I talk about it as a 4-year-old child who was just so confused as to what he did to deserve that kind of pain.

And I'll never forget the dark moments of getting those injections at such a young age because, to date, the most painful experience I had ever gone through.

And so there was definitely a psychological side effect to why do I deserve this, and what did I do to end up here, and how come no one else of my peers knows about that doctor in that room and what goes down in there?

So that's one aspect of it that I think doesn't come up right away when you ask these questions but one that I definitely like to hit home on because I think it's just so important, especially for anyone who has a child undergoing treatment to realize that the psychological side effects are just as important to recognize as the physical side effects.

The physical side effects that stand out while undergoing treatment really was the fact that I just felt a lot slower than a lot of my peers; and I recognized it because, again, I was just a kid. I wanted to play like everybody else. I wanted to be active. I wanted to play sports, and I was noticeably slower than my peers, and it was extremely frustrating for me because I had ambitions to be an athlete. I had ambitions to play basketball, and I didn't understand why no matter what I did, not matter how bad I wanted it, I just couldn't keep up with some of the other kids. And so that was another aspect of it.

**Alicia:** Bishoy, I think you touch on such important information. Like you said a lot of times when you hear side effects, people automatically think about maybe chemo brain or they think about let's say the losing of the hair if that's a side effect from treatment and so I think it's really important to mention the psychosocial effects, and that's something that, I see that more and more people are acknowledging. I know that it wasn't something that was at the forefront in the past, but the social and emotional impacts of cancer is, like you said, just as important as physical effects because it can show up many years after treatment. It can impact an individual, the family. There's just so many psychosocial effects of cancer, so you bring up a really great point.

**Lizette:** And its things that people don't see, you know. When you're trying to deal with it internally, and, and people see, you know, the external. So, they can see the physical side effects, but you're at an age where you're developing; and then you have to deal with all of these issues.

**Bishoy Tadros:** And it's funny because, you know, you brought up, you know, like the losing of hair; and I lost my hair. But when you asked me about the side effects, it's so far in the back of my mind that that actually happened because more so than losing my hair, what I do remember as a side effect was just knowing that I was different. And so, you know, it doesn't come to mind right away that I lost my hair as a side effect but more, so I just felt isolated as a side effect.

**Alicia:** Right.

**Lizette:** Did you know any other children?

**Bishoy Tadros:** No, who were undergoing treatment? No, and part of that, I think, was, a part was my parents were doing their best to lead me to live as normal of a life as possible, to kind of make me feel like perhaps I wasn't different. But it, it was, it was unavoidable. I think, you know, they definitely did the best job that anyone can do under those kinds of circumstances. But I didn't know anyone else at the time. Or if I did, you know, it wasn't enough to kind of make me feel like I was in it with someone, because I was so young.

**Lizette:** Right.

**Alicia:** And I just want to again highlight that for our listeners because there's so many people that may experience that same feeling of isolation but don't really know what to do with that feeling. And so, I think it's important for our listeners to hear that you had that experience and that they're not alone in that experience.

And at LLS we do offer a number of resources that address the mental health aspect of cancer as well as emotions that might be experienced; and that's found at [www.LLS.org/booklets](http://www.LLS.org/booklets) for our fact sheets and booklets on that as well as other episodes within this podcast. So, again, Bishoy, thank you for bringing up that point.

**Bishoy Tadros:** No problem.

**Lizette:** And, also, I know that back when you were diagnosed, ALL didn't have as high of a remission or cure rate as it does now. And we do hear a lot of ALL patients that say, particularly children, because children with ALL fair better than adults

diagnosed with ALL. But we hear them say, “Oh, they told me that I have the one that has a high cure rate, so they told me I had the good leukemia.” How do you feel about that?

**Bishoy Tadros:** It was a little bit more my dad who may have found a little bit more peace in a statement like that at the time or who probably knew what he was up against with regards to ALL versus a different diagnosis.

You know, to be honest, for me much of my childhood, the word cancer, the word leukemia didn’t mean too much because I was just like a young child trying to figure out how to solve a puzzle; and that only puzzle was just figuring out how to be like everybody else.

So, like I knew the word cancer and the word leukemia had a lot to do with it, but I didn’t really grasp what it meant. So for me, you know, one diagnosis versus the other at the time for a child really didn’t, there was no differentiation.

**Lizette:** And I know in your situation, you were able to be put into remission; but then a little bit later you did have more difficulties.

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yes, so I came into remission when I was about eight or nine, and it was a sigh of relief for my parents. For me, again, they made me feel like things were normal and that, I guess, if you had asked me what I realized at that point, there was less doctor visits. So that was cool.

But I still didn’t know too much about how life was going to change; and so I went about my life normally for a couple of years. And then about a couple of months before my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, I started vomiting very frequently and I was dealing with some very violent headaches.

And so I remember telling my dad about it, and he would tell me, he’s like, “Okay, you know, stay on top of this, and let me know if you still feel these symptoms next week and the week after and the week after.” And so after a week or two, he decided to take me for my first visit to go see my pediatrician. At that point, not much was made of it. There was a virus going around. They knew I was in remission, so, and I was healthy for the previous couple of years, so they didn’t put much emphasis on it.

A couple weeks went by, another doctor, similar story. It was about a month after that where my dad had about just enough; and when we went to go see the next doctor, my dad basically insisted on sending me for a CAT scan and said we’re not going to let it continue to ride on without at least checking.

And the reason for that, and again this is my dad's intuition playing back into everything was, he recognized, it was about ten years since I had my radiation treatment in Egypt. And for him that ten-year mark was fairly significant around potential side effects for radiation therapy. And so that's why he was so insistent on the third doctor in saying, "You know, we really won't be able to accept any other option than a CAT scan at this point."

So, I was sent for my CAT scan, and upon having the CAT scan and then an MRI, they did find a golf ball-sized mass in my brain. And because of my background, it was diagnosed a brain tumor. And, you know, here I was approaching my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. I knew something was wrong, but nobody really shared any information with me. So, I actually didn't know going into surgery what I was going into surgery for. I just knew that I was going for brain surgery, and I had such an amazing network around me, basically people telling me that I would make it out okay.

And it was on my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday I had brain surgery, and they ended up finding a mass that was benign. It was called a venous hemangioma, and so it was actually to the shock of all the surgeons who had diagnosed it a cancerous mass. So, I was lucky and upon-

**Alicia:** Wow!

**Bishoy Tadros:** -recovery from surgery, I was given a full, clean bill of health after that.

**Alicia:** Bishoy, to have received a cancer diagnosis at the age of three, then enter remission and years later be back in the hospital for an extended period of time for surgery with thoughts of a possible relapse. Thankfully having it result in a benign mass. Having gone through a second scare if you will, how did you change prior and post that second experience?

**Bishoy Tadros:** So that was a huge turning point for me, really looking back on my life. And the name of my book is *Break Barriers* because it was after that surgery that I had conjured this mantra of whatever you put in front of me at this point, like enough's enough. Like I've dealt with a lot in my childhood, and I spent the first 13 years of my life trying to fit in. Now I found myself in a hospital room having a huge surgery, and looking at myself in the mirror, I didn't like what I saw. And I had just, at that point after surgery, made the decision that nothing you put in front of me, I wasn't going to figure out a way, to overcome at that point.

**Alicia:** That's so awesome, and that's so important for people to hear. I mean that inspires me. We might not necessarily be patients, but everybody can relate to the fact that you hit a time of your life that's not your brightest; but it's how you come through it that makes all the difference. So, I'm sure a lot of people are inspired by your story and even how you tell your story is motivating as well.

**Lizette:** And that you have, put your life in perspective at such a young age; and that's so long to really put things in perspective. But it clicked with you right there and then.

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yes, I credit, again my parents for really instilling a feeling that the world wouldn't have handed me this kind of hand if I wasn't built to deal with it. And so whether or not I believed it at the time that I had the strength to overcome the different things that were thrown my way, whether it was the treatment, whether it was, again, I really drilled down on the psychological impact of that treatment, just being an immigrant child, not fitting in any which way possible on top of that, dealing with a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

I think all of that truly instilled strength that at the time I couldn't really measure, I almost was skeptical of, and it wasn't until much later in life that I kind of look back on that whole experience as being more so a weapon of strength than a dire diagnosis.

I look at it now as I have an upper hand on a lot of people that haven't gone through that kind of experience because after being in those kind of trenches, you're very well suited to take on a lot of what life throws at you.

**Alicia:** Right. We were talking with another young adult in another episode, and she was saying she moved to California, this was like the time of her life. She was young. I believe she was like 23, and she was saying the thought going to California was I'm going to start my life in a new place, kind of just rewrite my story, right?

And then she got this diagnosis, and it was then, we named that episode "Life on Pause," and because she basically said that she used that time to really look back on what was happening to her. And this is not the plan that she had for herself, but this was a plan where she said, "Well, if this is going to be my story. What's the best way to get through it?" And I think that's such a helpful attitude to have when you're approaching something like this.



And in your book, you actually mention key themes and it's patients, perspective, and purpose. And I think it's awesome that you have readers relate to the underdog and relate to that person who needs to uncover their potential.

Have you seen a lot of people reach out to you that might be in the same situation that you were in?

**Bishoy Tadros:** I have had a lot of people reach out to me, especially over the last year or two years since I started kind of sharing my story publicly.

I had held onto that story for a very long time and the impact that it had and again, that turning point moment when I had decided that anything you put in front of me, I was going to figure out a way to navigate. Because, you know, I may have said that to myself; but I didn't know that I was actually going to hold true to it, and I was going to really let it carry me.

But the fact of the matter was, and I talk about it, is that it did carry me. And that in my, you know, more difficult adult moments post-diagnosis, post-treatment, post-remission, I really had to dial back to that child who figured out what he was capable of. And so, I can't understate, again, how I look back at that experience as being my secret weapon. And so that's kind of how I look at it now.

**Alicia:** That's awesome. You mentioned when you decided to share your story. Well now you shared your story for the very first time in 2017, right, when you decided to run the New York City Marathon. Before I ask you why you decided to share your story, I first want to ask you what in the world motivated you to run a marathon? Ambitious and admirable, but what motivated you to join the NYC Marathon?

**Bishoy Tadros:** Well, it's funny, because fast forward now, and I just completed my third marathon not too long ago.

**Lizette:** Oh, congratulations! I get tired just watching people run.

**Alicia:** I went up the stairs this morning, and I almost passed out.

**Bishoy Tadros:** No, no, you're right. And, honestly, every time after I run a marathon, I do ask myself did I really need to do that to myself? But I'll tell you, the New York City Marathon was a buildup for me of a couple of things that I had done before that. And so, in my mid-20s, I started 'reuncovering' my desire to be an athlete. I always wanted to be an athlete my entire life, but I'll always go back to my childhood and wanting to play basketball, wanting to keep up with those other kids.

And for some reason I was just so, well, the chemo was the reason I was slower than the other kids; but I was relentless, and I refused to give up. And I talk about my experience with sports in high school and how I understood that I was going to fall down a million times, and I'd have to keep getting back up.

And in my mid-20s, I started again having the urge to prove to myself that I, I can do these things. So I talk about how I gradually went from, you know, taking spin classes to eventually signing up for my first half-marathon, not thinking that I could do it, then finding myself doing a dozen more half-marathons.

And the New York City Marathon was always in the back of my mind because it's just such a big race here in New York, and the energy is just absolutely incredible. And I have FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), so that definitely played a role. But I had dipped into the triathlon circuit for a little bit before I ran New York City. And I had an amazing group of individuals who continued to push me to uncover new bounds.

And after doing a couple small triathlons, one of them encouraged me to join them to do a half Iron Man, which is a 70-mile race. So, it's a 1.2-mile swim, a 56-mile bike ride, and a 13-mile run. And so, this was June of 2017, and that was the scariest thing I had ever signed up for; and, to the point where I basically shut down for four months. I cut out my social life. I wasn't going out. I was pretty short with my family. My mom was asking a lot of questions at the time, and I didn't even know why I signed up for it. I just knew that I had to do this race.

I found myself training, you know, twice a day. My diet was, you know, severely restricted. And I cut out all forms of alcohol. And I had no idea if I was actually going to be able to do this race.

And I got to race day. It was a 93 degree day in Maryland in June.

**Lizette:** Wow!

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yeah, and, I, I'll save a lot of the details; but I had a breakdown during the race around mile 40. And I call it my mile 40 moment where I looked down, there was salt all over my skin. I was completely dehydrated. There wasn't a single participant around me. I felt like I didn't belong out there because throughout the months of training, people kept asking me why I was doing this. I didn't have an answer for them. And now I found myself asking myself, "You know, Bishoy, like how did you end up here? Why are you doing this?"

And it was in that moment that of all the times that I drew back to that young child, it was in that moment that I really summoned the energy of the child who was just getting rejected and told that he didn't belong in certain situations. And in channeling that child, I figured out a way to get to the finish line and finish those last 30 miles. And, you know, not only did I maybe channel like the moments where emotion kicked in, but I also channeled the lessons, the lessons of celebrating small wins. So, I would celebrate every mile basically. And the understanding that things happen for a reason and kind of really convincing myself that I was out in the quote/unquote "wilderness" of Maryland for a reason.

And, lastly, and ultimately, what really drove the decision to run the New York City Marathon was purpose and the idea of you find your true ability when putting yourself in the most uncomfortable of moments. And that was probably as uncomfortable as I've gotten in my healthy adult life. And when I crossed that finish line, I realized this wasn't just about running this race and kind of going home with that medal. It was a little bit bigger than that.

I now had a responsibility to share my mantra that I developed 14 years later that basically any obstacle you put in front of you, you can uncover it. Barriers are meant to be broken. And that's what really triggered me to move forward and sign up for the New York City Marathon, which was just a couple of months later.

**Alicia:** Wow. And so when did you tell your story? Was it that same day?

**Bishoy Tadros:** No, so a couple weeks later I started to do my research about the marathon. And I realized that in order to run the marathon, I had to raise money for charity because I didn't get in through the lottery. And so at that point it would make sense for me to really raise money for a leukemia-related cause; and since I, I didn't have an organization that I really worked with too closely, I, I looked into The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. And I learned about their Team In Training program, and it just made the most sense.

You know, so I, I went home; and I wrote down my story, and I titled it, "The Comeback is Always Greater than the Setback," because that was a line that just kind of always resounded with me around the theme of overcoming obstacles and having odds against you and consistently figuring out ways to navigate against odds.

So I titled it that, and in writing my story, I really was cognizant of I don't want to just tell a chronological story. You know, I don't want to just spew out facts. I don't think that's going to be impactful. And, really, you know, if I'm sharing my story for the first

time, I want it to resonate. And so what I focused in on was that mile 40 moment and how I got through it. And I talked about the mental aspect of what I learned battling cancer as a child and the break barriers mantra.

And unbeknownst to me, I actually didn't think anyone was going to donate to my fundraising. I actually didn't want to share it after it was written down on that piece of paper, so I sat on it. And I was vulnerable because I said to myself, "You know, if I put this out there, this is all I have. Like this is my story. This is everything on paper. This is everything that I believe in, and this is everything that's carried me for the last several years. So, if it doesn't get validated and people don't donate, then, you know, I might lose the roadmap that I've been using for the last 15 years."

So, after sitting on it, I decided to show it to a mentor who I worked with at the time and someone that I really confided in. Then he looked at it, and he laughed at me because the goal I had was the minimum fundraising of \$3,000. And he said, "Bishoy, you need to, you need to raise your goal." And he goes, "I want you to make it \$100,000, and he gave me my first donation, and it was \$1,000." And I was blown away. But because I had so much at stake on that piece of paper, that one person's validation essentially lit a flame; and at that point, I was fired up and said to myself, "All right, Bishoy, like if you're going to do this, you're going to do this big."

And so, I took that donation, and I started sharing the story within my, you know, immediate community right away, eventually expanded it to social. Before I knew it, the story kind of took a life of its own. And two months later, I was getting a call from different press sources saying, "Hey, like we got a hold of your story. You know, tell us more. You know, how can we help you, etc.?" And long story short, for the 2017 marathon, I was the top fundraiser, and we raised over \$50,000 as a result of that.

And so, you know, it kind of took me by storm because it went from a piece of paper that I almost didn't believe into this story that it became.

**Alicia:** Wow, and is that, still your mentor?

**Bishoy Tadros:** I do still keep in touch with him.

**Alicia:** Well thank you to that guy as well. What's his name?

**Bishoy Tadros:** His name is Tim. I won't disclose his last name, but his name is Tim.

**Alicia:** Yeah, no last name, but, Tim, thank you for motivating Bishoy and encouraging him to share that piece of paper with the world.

**Lizette:** Definitely.

**Alicia:** So, before 2017, because I find this interesting, you said that you were researching to find a leukemia-related organization in which you then found LLS. So, I'm assuming that prior to that, you had never heard of LLS?

**Bishoy Tadros:** Prior to that, I knew about LLS, but I did not really have any association if you will. So, I just knew, I mean, LLS is, obviously, one of the most recognized organizations out there. But I hadn't done any work with them, and there was no affiliation, so it just kind of came natural.

**Lizette:** I think, you know, some people could have just fell at that point where you were inspired. And I think, and this goes for everyone, all of us. What do you think pulls you up because just so many people could just fall down after all of this?

**Bishoy Tadros:** At the time, and, for anyone battling treatment right now, it's really hard to accept, especially in the most difficult of moments, that you're actually being given a resource that is more than anything disguised. You are going through an experience that the average person can't speak to, can't relate to. And as a result of that, I've been able to maintain perspective around the fact that, whether it be in the professional aspect of my life, the athletic aspect of my life, the social aspect of my life, I have a tool that no one else or that a lot of other people don't have, I should say, to navigate the worst of storms.

So it's all about shifting your mindset, and I think that's just such a critical aspect of any sort of diagnosis. You know, if I were to, knock on wood, be diagnosed with a disease like that in my adult life, going through what I've gone through, I think I'm just so much more equipped to take it on at this point because I have discovered a mindset that can kind of transform the diagnosis from being the sad story that it is made out to be to perhaps being the differentiator for how you succeed in the bigger picture of your life.

I always tell people that when I wrote *Break Barriers*, I wrote it with one main objective. And the objective was that people are to understand that barriers are never put in front of you to define you but more so to dare you. And so in particular I talk about battling leukemia and cancer to make it a little bit broader, is that most cancer patients, and you guys touched on this earlier, you don't want to be known as the person who had cancer or the person who fought cancer, or the person who's undergoing treatment because that's not who you are as a person.

And so, you know, when people ask me about that I say, “You know, I don’t want to be recognized as a leukemia survivor or a former leukemia patient. I want to be recognized as someone who took the hand of a leukemia diagnosis and, and took it as a challenge of sorts in my adult life to let people know that whatever life throws at them, whether it be a diagnosis, whether it be something else, they can overcome it.

**Alicia:** Absolutely. And I couldn’t agree with you more, Bishoy, in that barriers, sometimes barriers get a bad rep. We talk to patients and patients say, “Joining this cancer world is a club that I would never sign up to be a part of.” We’ve heard a number of patients say that. And, of course, that would be the case; but there’s so much to be learned from it, if your perspective is changed like what you were saying earlier.

We were speaking to a lady; and she was saying that LLS, if you look at it, was built out of anger. And then when you hear the word anger, you automatically think it’s probably a negative situation. And she was saying, “But if it wasn’t for anger, then these two parents whose son had passed away would not have had that fire under them to create such an organization like LLS that’s now impacting so many lives so many years later.

And to your point, barriers are placed in front of you; but it’s what you do with them that really dictates how it’s going to affect you and those around you.

**Bishoy Tadros:** Yes, absolutely.

**Alicia:** So how have your parents responded to your increasing popularity?

**Bishoy Tadros:** They’re definitely happy to see how I was able to translate their experience. And so, and I’ll tell you what, no matter what I do, I could be hosting the Oscars; and I don’t think I’ll ever be a celebrity in my mom’s eyes. She’s a tough critic.

And so I kind of gave up on that front; and then with my dad, you know, I think he never doubted that one way or another, something like this was going to come out, whether it was in the form of a book or something else or some sort of accomplishment. I think he always kind of knew that I had it in me to do something. He didn’t know when, he didn’t know how, he didn’t know if he was even going to see it. But I think he knew that I had it mustered within me to do something.

And, you know, even with the book, that was never really in, in my cards. I don’t have a literary background. As I was writing the book, I felt like I didn’t really have any

business writing a book; and I, I didn't know what I was doing. Actually, 13 months ago, I Googled how to write a book.

I Googled how many words you need to write to hit 100 pages because I didn't, I didn't know. I didn't know what I didn't know, and at one point, just had a very long Word document; and I didn't know what to do with it.

And so, yeah, I'm glad with the way that it came out; and I think that if you were to ask my dad, he would tell you he had kind of envisioned it was going to come out at some point, maybe not knowing how. And my mom, of course, is proud; but again, I don't think she'd ever recognize my celebrity status, whatever you want to call it at this point.

**Alicia:** That's awesome. For those who may also want to give back in a certain way and may say to themselves, "I want to also see what I can do. See what impact that I can make by joining a team, with LLS or any other organization. Was this a matter of your story paired with your circles and your friends and your family? How did you get the momentum to raise over \$50,000?"

**Bishoy Tadros:** It's definitely not easy. But I think a big part of it was when I wrote down the story. I really wanted to relate to the masses; and that theme moved forward with me when I wrote the book. The way that I wrote the book was I didn't want my book to be just for people dealing with a similar diagnosis. I didn't want my book to be even specifically within the cancer community. And, similarly, when I wrote the story when I was fundraising, I basically wanted anyone humanly possible that was going to read it to be able to figure out a way to relate to it in the sense that everyone has obstacles of sorts throughout their lifetimes. And the picture that I was trying to paint was that no matter what your obstacle may be, leukemia may have been mine, this is the formula to overcome those obstacles. And if I can do it, Bishoy, the 3-year-old immigrant child with the cards stacked up against him can do it, then you so and so can also do it.

**Alicia:** Well thank you so much, Bishoy, for joining us today and sharing your story. And for those who would like to read more about Bishoy, you can visit [bishoytadros.com](http://bishoytadros.com) and that is B-I-S-H-O-Y T-A-D-R-O-S.com. Thanks for listening.

**Bishoy Tadros:** Thanks guys.

**Lizette:** Thank you.