

My name is Sabine Christel, I am 49 years old and it is unclear whether I will live to 50. I am a single mother of two children. In the summer of 2020, I was diagnosed with Stage IVb ovarian cancer, cancer in its final and terminal stage.

And this is my story.

I live with my two children in Bückeburg. My daughter is 19 years old, my son 13.

Until June 2020, I was enthusiastic about many cultural events, because I started my own online culture magazine in 2017. Since it was a free online magazine, I hardly made any money with it, on the one hand, because I had to cover my expenses and only a few advertising partners could be found. Nevertheless, I put all my heart and soul into the magazine and worked on articles all night long because I enjoyed it. At the same time, it took an incredible amount of strength, work and, above all, time, a commodity which, as I have now learned firsthand, is priceless.

At the beginning of 2020, I started feeling unwell healthwise. After a thyroid operation in April I became incredibly "chubby", whereupon my internist put me in the MRI twice and it is only thanks to an attentive radiologist that a reason was found at all.

My more and more noticeable pudgy stature could be explained with a so-called ascites – simply put: I had water in the stomach area, which suggests a cancer in the abdomen. During this time I have been to a total of four different gynecologists, none of whom have been able to recognize that I already had cancer. And not just any type of cancer, but a gynecological one.

Even today I ask myself what the use of preventive examinations is when doctors only smile at you, fail to recognize symptoms and not take complaints seriously?

One day, I was still at an event to write an article, the next day I was suddenly in the hospital. At first everything was just a suspicion, but suddenly everything happened very rapidly: An examination, the next day an operation, and then the result:

Cancer.

It's hard to describe how you feel in that moment. When you feel healthy and have plans for the future and then you are suddenly diagnosed with a serious illness. Not knowing how much time you have left tears the ground away from under your feet and you are simply unable to wrap your head around it all.

My daughter told me that today, a year after the diagnosis, she still has moments when she wakes up in the morning and hopes it was all just a bad dream before reality hits her. And it's exactly the same for me.

If doctors had taken my complaints seriously, carried out examinations or simply measured the tumor marker, I could have gained time.

I wrote a column about cancer a long time ago. In fact, every second person suffers from it. And everyone has the necessary cells inside one's body, the question is only when and why they degenerate. The important thing is to detect cancer early enough before it spreads. Ovarian cancer is particularly treacherous in that it spreads immediately and forms tumors there. You can spot cancer early if you look for it. And takes patients with symptoms seriously. Unfortunately, that was not the case with me.

After the first short operation I was allowed to go home to gain strength. Immediately afterwards the second, very complex operation with a huge abdominal incision was due. It was obvious that an aggressive chemotherapy was needed.

When I was released from the hospital, I struggled with a violent vomiting that had already started in the hospital and that could not be stopped at home either. I was admitted to another clinic, where a CT scanner clarified: The access between the stomach and intestines was (and is) blocked by a cancerous ulcer and my stomach swelled to three liters as a result. The stomach could no longer empty itself.

A tube was placed in my stomach in the hospital that was supposed to suck everything out, but that also means that I haven't been able to eat anything since then. I can only consume a little liquid, but it is not absorbed by my body.

At the same time, I was told at the hospital that I had no chance, I should go home and sort out my affairs. Suddenly my children and I were surrounded by employees of the hospice service, who were clearly acting in good faith but only added to my demotivation in a dreadful way. I hadn't even started therapy yet, but my death warrant seemed to be out. Everything collapsed around me at the same time.

I cried all night, not knowing how to say goodbye. What if I didn't want to do that? What if I couldn't?

My daughter was there when the hospital brought me the news. I wrote a long letter to my son telling him how much he means to me and that I am sorry that I can no longer be there for him. My son acted cool and didn't show anything in front of me, but my daughter later told me that he had been crying in her arms all night. I cannot put into words what that does to me as a mother.

So I mustered all of my remaining strength and started chemotherapy.

Whenever I was about to give up, I looked into my children's eyes and knew again why I had to keep fighting. I am a mother. And as a mother, it's my job to be there for my children, there is no other option.

You start to see life with different eyes. What is really important is family, a healthy diet, and time.

Because in the end it doesn't matter if it's cancer or something else: All of our lives are limited and it can be over tomorrow and what do you have if you only worry about stress

and thoughts? Time is priceless and once you waste it, you never get it back. I wish I had seen that earlier.

The chemotherapy went fairly well, but in the months that followed, some serious mistakes happened that changed my life again. My oncologist hadn't done a sensible leakage control and for me it was like déjà vu: Once again my complaints were ignored.

So I moved on to a new oncologist, where based on my symptoms the tumor marker was immediately re-measured and a CT was ordered, which showed that a relapse had formed and the tumor marker had increased tenfold!

It is now clear that I can only fight for time with further treatments.

**But my biggest worry are my two children. There are only three of us and when I'm no longer there the two only have each other.**

That's why it's most important to me that the two of them can stay together to give each other support and comfort. Especially my son, who is only 13 years old, would not be able to cope with being separated from his sister as well.

My daughter is currently still in her final year of school and at 19, in the eyes of the family court, is not in a position to take care of a little boy on her own. So I thought about what I can do:

Unfortunately, my parents are too old, my brother in Spain let me down and stressed that even for € 500,000 he would not take care of my son - we are no longer in contact. Consulting with the school, we looked for a solution. And found one:

A boarding school.

If my son went to boarding school, he would be well taken care of and my daughter would have the peace of mind that she needs to continue her studies instead of having all of the responsibility resting on her shoulder.

But these are not the only advantages boarding school could offer:

In such a school he would have the opportunity to receive the special attention he needs because he has been diagnosed with dyslexia in connection with ADD. It has often happened that he was ridiculed and bullied by students and, sadly, even more so by teachers, because he needs more time to read and it is more difficult for him to write. A smaller class structure would also help him to concentrate.

Regular schools in this part of Germany are unfortunately not sufficiently equipped for children who need special support. A boarding school with funding opportunities would be wonderful and so helpful. And having friends around him, he would not have to witness how I languish and suffer.

I see the big eyes of my wonderful son, those eyes looking at me and begging me not to die. He doesn't want to lose me. And the thought of having to leave him is killing me. I lie awake at night and am frightened for his future!

In a boarding school he could ignore death and cancer for a while, he would be properly housed and he could stay with my daughter, his big sister and his rock. She has been caring for me for a year and holds my hand at every doctor's appointment, she has always been by my side. At the side of a mother who has been trapped for over a year in a body that has become completely alien to her.

We are a family and to keep it that way we need help. Unfortunately, this means financial help. I don't want to have to beg, but right now I would do anything for my children.

My greatest fear is that after my death my children will be torn apart, my son will be sent to an orphanage or be placed in a foster family, simply because it would be cheaper and ultimately easier for the youth welfare office. One employee told me himself that he couldn't afford boarding school for his children, and I'll say it like it is: I wish I weren't in a situation where I have no choice. I have already had experiences with the youth welfare office in the past, as a single parent you usually cannot avoid it and these experiences have not been pleasant.

If I could raise enough money, then I could afford one of the cheaper boarding schools on my own for the next four years. After that, it would be ensured that my son can stay with his sister and both can grow up decently. That would mean I would have one thing less to worry about in a dreadful way.

I can no longer take care of everything, I don't know how much time I have. But I am grateful for everything that I can still experience and put on its way.

That is why I am pleading with you today.

I have already found a boarding school that offers everything my son needs and has agreed to take him in. The school is also very helpful to us in terms of finances. They are doing their best to help us in this hopeless situation.

My two children mean everything to me and I cannot die now, worrying in my heart what will become of them and that I have to leave them behind completely helpless.

I want to live and be a mom. I want to see my son grow up and see him turn into the amazing adult I am certain he will become. I want to hold his hand when he cries and hold his head at night. I want to be there during his first lovesickness, when he finishes school and I want to see where life will take him.

He wants me to be proud of him, but I'm so proud of him just because of who he is. And I love him forever. I hope so much that he will always remember this.

And I love my big, wild, brave daughter who is the most courageous person I know. How she deals with my illness is incredible. She thinks she's shy, but she isn't. And I hope so much

that she will be able to enjoy her schooltime carefree for another year, as far as that is possible. From the beginning we were always two and finally three when my son joined us. There was never a father, but we have never missed him either.

I love you both forever!

And believe me, I am terrified of what is to come. I can't even imagine being without my children for a single day. And only the thought that I will hopefully see you again some distant day and that you will tell me about your beautiful and exciting life should make this step easier for me.

At the moment I'm hospitalized in Berlin at the Charité and I am fighting after a last serious operation to maybe get a few weeks or months out of life and I am paying for this struggle with unimaginable nerve pain.

And every time I talk to my children, I sense their fear of the uncertain. Because of this, I plead to you:

Please help my children.