

LIDIA MORALES



Lidia Morales knows better than anyone the importance of getting a second opinion.

Plagued by heart palpitations, prickly pains in her chest and shortness of breath for months on end, Lidia delayed seeing her doctor until after a high school friend died suddenly from a heart attack. That was her wake-up call.

"I immediately thought that if this could happen to someone I knew who was so young, then what about me?" she says.

It would take visits to *three* doctors before Lidia received an accurate diagnosis. She had a rare condition that was causing her coronary artery to collapse. Bypass surgery was her only option for survival. For Lidia, doctors may as well have told her that her life was over.

"In an instant I saw my whole life flash before my eyes," she says. "I kept thinking of my three young children growing up without a mother. I cried the entire way home from the doctor's office. I just didn't realize it could be something so serious."

When her surgery was successful, Lidia undertook the recovery process with a new perspective.

"Surviving the surgery and then going through cardiac rehab was life-changing for me," Lidia says. "I really learned not to take things for granted when I had such a hard time doing the smallest things like walking, brushing my teeth or opening a window."

Once her strength was back, Lidia had to overcome the mental hurdles that often come with being a heart disease survivor.

"I used to be an avid exerciser, but after this surgery I worried about my heart rate getting too high," she says. "I would go to my doctor for every little thing because I was scared."

Five years later, Lidia is more accepting of what happened to her. After years of focusing on what she might do wrong, Lidia now focuses on what is right about her life after heart disease.

"I'm eating better than ever and exercising again," she says. "I've made changes to my lifestyle that will benefit my entire family."

Lidia is also more open to telling her story in the hopes of helping other women.

"I show people my surgery scar and tell them it's my 'beauty' mark because this experience helped teach me so many things about my life," she says. "It sounds crazy but if I could go back and change what happened to me I wouldn't do it."

ELIZABETH MORENO



Perhaps the greatest lesson of all for Lidia and other women like her is the importance of listening to your instincts and seeking another opinion if things don't feel right.

"I could have easily died if I hadn't pushed for another opinion and more tests," she says. "I always tell people that no one knows you better than you!"

ELIZABETH MORENO

