

THE LONDON UNDERGROUND



Faced with earth-shattering news, Yael Cohen had many options when she discovered her beloved mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer; despair, fear, and hopelessness are all natural reactions that come to mind. Instead, Yael decided to take action and change the face of fighting Cancer in Generation Y. She decided to stop waiting for tragedy to find us, and begin a pre-emptive strike against this pervasive illness. She decided, Let's Fuck Cancer.

At 25 years of age, this Vancouver-based South African has founded an inspiring and transformative movement aimed at the generation that has a chance to take a pro-active stand against Cancer. F Cancer began as a simple means of expressing Yael's feelings towards her mother's condition. It grew organically as she made T-shirts for her mother and herself, reading "Fuck Cancer". The trend began to spread as the simple garment resonated with so many people that saw the shirts. Uncomfortable with the lack of transparency in so many other charities, Yael took the opportunity to start something new and different.

F Cancer operates around the concept that early detection is the best cure that we currently have. An astounding 90% of cancers are curable if caught during stage one, yet over half of the 12 million people diagnosed with cancer in 2008 did not survive. According to Yael, our "immediate search is a cure for apathy, rather than a cure for cancer," as we must strive to "overcome our complacency in favour of much needed action!" It's no secret that we all believe we know way

more than our parents. But with our constant access to information and ever-increasing technological developments, our generation may *actually* be the first to know more and learn faster than our parents. F Cancer works to harness the responsibility that comes with this rapid information flow and access to education, while using marketing and humour to tap into the powerful 17-35 year old demographic.

Yael explains that Fuck Cancer's use of unorthodox language in their campaign "has allowed [them] to break through an audience that's becoming increasingly indifferent to the noise of media that surrounds them on a daily basis". By taking such private, concealed words of 'profanity' and making them public, the F Cancer movement is successfully shocking people out of complacency. "Our movement opens a door and our language keeps it open for further education," says Yael. She has also incorporated the importance of humor in her organization, as she truly believes that "if you've lost your sense of humor, you've lost it all". Humor and

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laughter are the first steps towards making us feel comfortable with discussing un-

comfortable subject matters, which then translates into action. From her own family's experience, Yael attests to the fact that "there's parts of cancer that are weird and horrible and awkward and sometimes all you can do is laugh". She encourages the public to embrace their authentic emotions, and believes that "society has taught [cancer patients] to be solemn and wear head scarves to

hide what [they] are going through... but that's bullshit. We want to inspire an authentic response of emotions and encourage the real process." Fuck Cancer is striving to make a tangible, immediate difference

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in the lives of many, and as the youth begin to see our call to action, more and more people are jumping on board with this generational movement. The conversation has been opened to us, and already many celebrities have joined the movement to support Yael's initiative. Through a series of online videos, the likes of Entourage's Adrien Grenier, One Tree Hill's Sophia Bush, Perez Hilton, and Dan Levy, have all participated by describing their unpleasant childhood experiences of 'the sex talk', and relating it to the importance of turning the tables and having 'the cancer talk'. Fuck Cancer emphasizes the importance of early detection through knowing your family history and common risk factors, learning the earliest warning signs, and maintaining an open discussion about your health and concerns. Yael passionately believes that "we are going to flip the switch on how we think about cancer, from something we wait to get, praying there's a cure, to something we are actively look for and finding when it's most curable... 90% of cancers are curable in stage one... *That's our fucking cure*".

By: Gillian Berner

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