

# DIEM BROWN: Unscripted

BY AMANDA THOROGOOD

At 22, Diem Brown was carving out her place in the entertainment industry. Working for the Associated Press and also as a well-liked personality on MTV's popular series *The Challenge*, among others, Diem's charismatic career was on an upward trajectory. Then without warning, Brown with a reality she wasn't prepared for: She was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Having recently completed a round of treatments for a second bout of ovarian cancer, Brown, now 29, has confidently taken on the role of advocate: She is a voice for patients around the world who feel isolated

in their private battles with health issues. In addition to being vocal in front of the camera or in her popular blog for *People*, Brown took a page from her personal experiences and created MedGift, a charitable organization that connects patients with loved ones (and sometimes complete strangers) who want to provide assistance but don't know where to begin.

### What is the concept behind MedGift?

We celebrate the birth of a child with a baby registry. We celebrate the joining of two lives with a wedding registry. But when someone gets sick, the only celebration is when you're better. There's really no celebration when you're fighting to get better. I realized how isolating that is for the patient, and even for the people who want to help out. A registry takes the pride out of [the equation when] asking for help, and my goal was to make it as commonplace as it is for weddings or as it is for baby showers to ask for help when you're undergoing medical treatments.

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### And what has the response been?

The idea sparked back in 2006, and it's gone through a lot of different changes, but I think that what's so great about this is you get to decide how you want to ask for help. It's not just financial giving; you can create a calendar with requests like, "Can you

give me my shot?" "Can you please come over and watch a movie with me?" "Can you watch my dog?" I want people to go on MedGift and feel hope.

### Was writing your blog for People during your treatment therapeutic?

I was able to use the *People* blog as a really big, honest forum. I think the reason why it did so well is because I didn't hold back. It wasn't always glamorous, but the more you talk about something, the less scary it is.

### Another big change was your move from California to Manhattan. How has it been, living in NYC?

The energy here is exactly what I need. I needed it in treatment and now—I am a little bit of a hustler—and New York has that hustle mentality, where, if you want it, you can get it.

### Have you discovered any foodie gems in NYC?

Definitely some of the restaurants, like ABC Kitchen, where you can get really great organic food. Or Café Boulud.

### At your favorite restaurants, do you reach for the red or the white? 100 percent red. 100 percent Malbec.

### Besides NYC, what are some of your favorite travel destinations?

Búzios, Brazil, I think is one of the most gorgeous places in the entire world, hands down. And second to that, I think New Zealand is absolutely beautiful.

### Define luxury.

Working hard and then treating yourself for that hard work.

### In five years, Diem Brown is . . .

I will be on a panel like the TV show *The Doctors*, but giving a voice to

