



Creating joy one character at a time

## The Power of The Superhero Project

*By Alison Rieman*

Art therapy is a therapeutic technique used to encourage healing through creative expression. Beneficial for a wide variety of individuals, including patients battling serious or chronic medical issues, creating art relieves stress and relaxes the mind and body. The Superhero Project combines art therapy with an amazing power we all have: visualization. This practice, based on the mind-body connection, can change a person's emotional state and promote positive physical effects in the body by providing positive pictures, creative imagery, and self-suggestions.

The Superhero Project interviews patients (like I was) to create their unique superhero alter egos. These interviews are lively! We reflect on our personal strengths and interests while brainstorming our character designs. We are inspired to customize every feature of our hero: what they look like, what they are wearing, what powers they possess and what qualities they contribute to the world. I requested my hero, Ali Strong, to be very muscular - her outer strength should match her strength within. I also requested that she wear a cape, simply because I think capes are cool. The entire process was fun and light-hearted. Our individual design ideas are then sent to real artists who bring our heroes to life.

Envisioning the "superhero" version of themselves can help children become empowered and impacts healing. During an illness in which I was vulnerable and forced to be dependent on others, it was a powerful feeling to imagine myself as a hero, being of service to others and making a difference. Going inward and channeling my inner superhero helped me feel stronger mentally. Visualizing myself as physically strong helped me endure the physical pain I experienced during the hardest days of my cancer treatments. While my real body was consumed by pain, my inner hero remained unstoppable.

The final posters are priceless to each of their creators and to their families. I cherish mine because it is a reflection of the battles I won. It is a visual representation of the strength I carry inside. My poster is a reminder that Ali Strong lives within me and I can call on her through any hardships we may face moving forward. I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to create my special superhero, thanks to The Superhero Project.



**Alison Rieman** is a 22-year-old two-time AML (acute myeloid leukemia) survivor. She is currently working as a full time nanny while recovering from a stem cell transplant. Alison has a passion for health and wellness, and enjoys sharing both her mental and physical transformations through her cancer journey to help others. Her story has been featured on many platforms and she continues to inspire others on social media. Alison's mission is to empower as many individuals as possible to live not only a healthy lifestyle, but a happy one as well!

Follow Alison on Instagram [@alirieman](#).  
*Ali Strong designed by Danny Ducker*