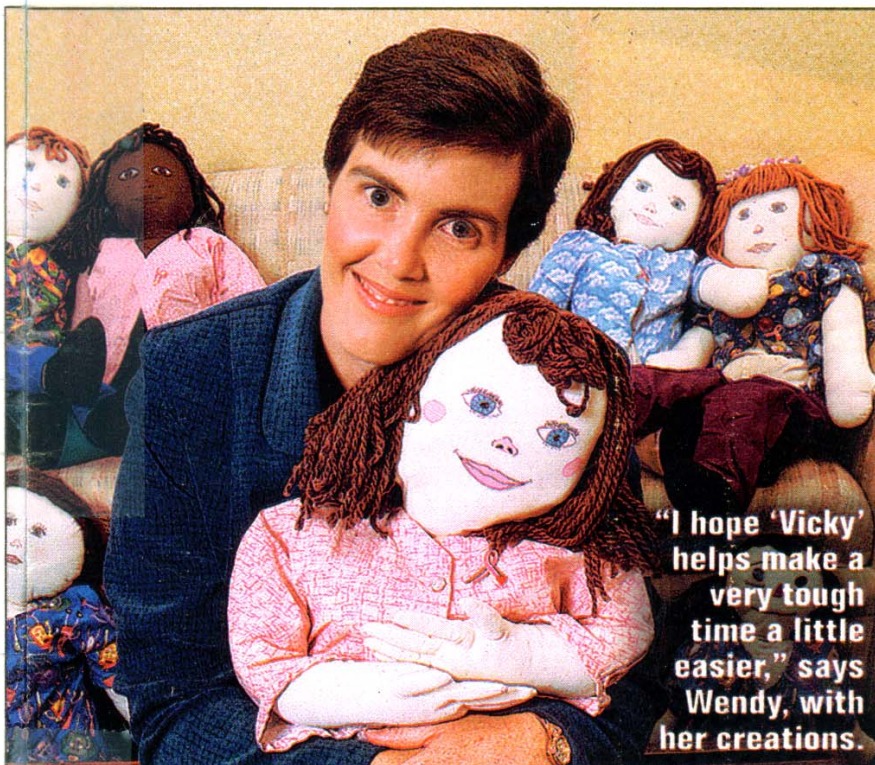


## Helpful idea

She'd learned she had cancer and needed a mastectomy. And now, faced with the stress of trying to make decisions about reconstructive surgery, Wendy felt overwhelmed. So overwhelmed that she came up with an idea that would make things easier for other women . . .



"I hope 'Vicky' helps make a very tough time a little easier," says Wendy, with her creations.

## Wendy's inspiration

Wendy Winslow, 33, stood in front of the mirror and cried. They're going to remove my breast, she thought.

Oh, Wendy knew it wasn't the most important thing—after all, the doctor assured her that the surgery would remove all of the cancer. But Wendy would still be losing a piece of herself . . .

Weeks earlier, the Manchester, New Hampshire, lab technician, whose department specializes in breast cancer, discovered signs of it in her own body. Soon, she learned that she needed a mastectomy.

"I can recommend a reconstructive surgeon," said Vicky Vlight, Wendy's friend and nurse. But when the surgeon explained the procedures, the

words just seemed to swim around Wendy's mind. Pedicle TRAM? Latissimus what? Thankfully, Vicky was able to help Wendy select a procedure.

But while recovering, Wendy thought about how many other women must be as confused as she was. What if I made a doll to illustrate the procedures? she thought. Inspired, she sewed a rag doll with pieces that could be shifted and tucked for breast reconstruction. She called her doll "Vicky Victorious" in honor of her friend. And when plastic surgeon Dr. Robert Feins saw it . . .

**In honor of her friend, she called it "Vicky"**

"I bet a lot of women could benefit from this," he said.

So Wendy sewed more—and the dolls worked magic! *I had two patients who were terrified to choose surgeries—but after they saw your doll, they felt able to do it*, wrote one doctor.

"Being able to see what was going to happen made the process so much more bearable," said a patient.

Today, Wendy is selling her dolls through the Internet (she can be e-mailed at [wendysview@yahoo.com](mailto:wendysview@yahoo.com)). "At first, I felt like I'd lost everything," says Wendy, who's now cancer-free. "But now I've been able to help others—and that makes me happy."

—Jamie Kiffel