

Even Cancer Survivors Forget Life is Precious

We all know by now that cancer survivors don't always show their true emotions, and I'm no better than any other. But its Cancer-versary time again and to say I've been down of late would be an understatement. But something I heard the other day gave me the sudden jolt I needed to kick myself in the butt!

Any cancer survivor will tell you that Cancer-versaries are tough. Whether it's that time of year when you were first diagnosed, or the time when your recurrence came back, or a time goal for being in remission, it has a huge impact on your well-being and self esteem. I can remember every second of the day I was first diagnosed and, around anniversary time, I can play it over and over again in my head in minute detail, even when I don't want to. The fears, the sadness, all come back as though I'm right there again.

Sometimes you feel that there is absolutely nothing you can do to pull yourself out of the quagmire. For me, just having a day to myself, when I clear my calendar, don't read my email, or do any of my volunteer stuff, can help. It's my day and its rejuvenation. But sometimes even that doesn't work. I don't listen to the news, I don't watch my favorite TV programs, I don't get energized by dancing, I just stew in my own self-pity.

Wasn't it in that great film "When Harry Met Sally" when Meg Ryan says to Billy Crystal, "you spend so much time thinking about death, you're gonna ruin your whole life in the process". For cancer survivors that's often what we get caught up in. But funnily enough, just when you're starting to think there is no hope left, someone will do something, or you'll hear something, and it comes - that thunderbolt from the sky.

I came home from chemo in Albuquerque recently and just turned on the news for a change. They were reporting on the death of British Actress Natasha Richardson. A freak accident. A young women, my age, taken away from her children in the prime of her life. And it hit me. No one knows what tomorrow will bring. Rather than dying from cancer, I could step out in front of a trolley bus tomorrow and be gone. The headline would read: "Splat! Cancer Campaigner Smushed on Central!"

There is absolutely no certainty in life for anyone. And whilst cancer makes that acutely obvious, even the most determined of us can forget. I suddenly thought "You stupid women. I'm here! I have two beautiful children! I have

a loving husband! Do I really want to spend my healthy days crying, nagging and yelling at them? Being Cancer-tankerous! No! I want embrace life". I want to love and support my family with all my heart and instead I've been wasting my days wallowing.

Sometimes we all need a kick in the butt, but I think cancer survivors do so especially, because we dwell on mortality so much. So whilst my thunderbolt came from something tragic, and so extremely sad, her death had tremendous meaning to me. It showed me that life is worth living every day. As Paul Newman said, "Every day I'm still breathing is a good one".

So, one and all of us, celebrate life. Its precious and we should never forget it, even in our darkest days. Find your thunderbolt. It's out there somewhere. And if you don't, just call me and I'll come kick your butt!

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