

I just realized this week it was my anniversary.
This anniversary isn't for a wedding or anything fun.
I won't be getting gifts or jewelry presented to me in a little velvet box.
Today was a day I would rather forget than remember.
2 years to the exact day that changed me and my life forever.
It was the anniversary of getting that call that made me reevaluate my whole life.
Sometimes even asking why it was me that was chosen to get that call you have Stage 3 breast cancer.
Yes, my Dr. told me over the phone and that was a bit cold. But looking back I already knew it was cancer before the call.
After being referred to a breast surgeon after my mammogram the Dr. performed an ultrasound to get a better view of the area in question. I saw the formation of lumps and the uneven borders and being an Esthetician said, " if I saw that on a clients face I would tell them to see a Dr. immediately". Then I looked at her with a smile and said" I know it's cancer I can see it."



Funny how life gives us hints sometimes.
It's like our mind is getting us ready for something we might not be ready to handle.

A few weeks before I found I was sick remember watching a commercial. One I must have watched a million times before.

It was for a Cancer treatment center. It showed a woman getting told she had cancer, but for some reason seeing it really hit me hard that day.

I remember thinking wow, there is no way I could handle having cancer.

I could never go through all those terrible treatments. I would just crawl in a hole and die.

Well fast forward to a few weeks later and that woman in the commercial was now me. I didn't crawl in a hole, yes my whole life changed in a minute but eventually I put on my big girl pants and tried making sense of it all.

I never thought so many people would be so scared to talk about it but slowly found out yes the word CANCER is still taboo.

I wasn't mad at anyone for not knowing what to say or how to approach me after diagnosis.

I always try putting myself in a similar position when in question about something.

I had no answer this time. But through all this I learned a few things. Some very helpful things.

I learned how to help a loved one through their fight and even made a list to help others. I also learned through my own experiences some hurtful things.

Unfortunately for some there is no end to any of this and those are the true warrior 's.

They battle this disease knowing they will not get better and there's no cure. Their health will continue to decline but they continue to fight. They hide the pain of knowing their cancer will eventually take over their bodies. They are the true warriors.

The fighters that have been diagnosed with Stage IV Metastatic Cancer.

One of my closest friends from High School battled with Stage IV colon cancer for about six years and in August lost her fight. I watched it take over her body from start to finish.

I saw what it was like to be on the other end of cancer too. Loving her and watching her suffer was one of the hardest things to do. In the last few months she was in her in a nursing home at only forty eight years old. I would try visiting 3 to 4 times a week at first, but as her disease progressed so did my sadness and my visits became less frequent. I would cry when pulled in the parking lot and when I left. I know she could feel my grief and remember her saying some days ' Les, Please don't come today, I think you need some rest I'll be okay' She was always worried about my health too, knowing my long road with cancer.

I thought she sounded strong and we had more time. So I took a little break from visiting to rest my mind and body, again she told me to just feel better she was worried for my health.

Well she passed before I could come back. Her last text to me was 'I love you and we'll get together soon'

In the end she knew I loved her and all along the way she was protecting me from heartache.

I stayed with her through her battle except those last few weeks I couldn't do it. I felt guilty but now I know I did everything in my power to help and showed her I loved her and that is all we need from someone.

Sometimes people love you but don't know how to handle watching someone struggle with cancer. If they don't see it it's not real. That is probably the most hurtful thing a loved one can do, just walk away. They might not visit. call or text because it's easier for them not to see you in this condition. They will make time to do other things and go to parties, luncheons really doesn't matter what it is or who it's with but it all comes before you and when you are going through treatments just needing a little support, that is probably the most hurtful.

In a heartbeat you have or would of been there for them and done anything they needed but it's your turn to need them and they are too busy.

To those selfish people I hope Cancer never darkens their door.

I could say more but no reason to shame anyone. If they can live with themselves and that choice, then maybe you don't really need them in your live anyway.

Here is a list to make it easier.

How to really help when a loved one gets diagnosed.

1. Don't ignore the elephant in the room Even if it's just saying, How are you doing or feeling when you run into them, just let them know you care and are thinking of them.
2. Instead of saying I'm here if you need me. Think of things you could do and just do them. Dropping off a meal or ordering a pizza. Ask if you can take them to a Dr. appointment.
3. If they have children do something with the kids on your day off.
4. Remember the kids aren't getting the normal attention and time with their sick parent, this is the worst time of their life thinking they might lose a parent.
5. Cancer isn't contagious don't treat them different.
6. Going through treatments make you extremely tired and sometimes even talking on the phone is a chore. Just send an inspirational text message or photo on a regular basis to show you care that can make their whole day. Send a card
7. Drop something off at their door chocolates, cake or cookies.Chemo patients crave sweets.
8. Come over do some light cleaning for them.
9. If you don't have a lot of money but want to do something nice. Ask to stop over just talk.They are isolated now and it gets lonely. Just giving a short visit could make their whole week. (call first sometime's chemo makes you sick or tired)
10. If it's your friend, get a few people to hang out at their house on a weekend night to watch movies or do something fun. Show them you can take a night off from going out and give them your time.Time is the best gift to give anyone going through treatment. So be there and make good memories to try and offset all the bad.

I hope these tips can help even one person get the support they need during treatment. The most important thing to remember is that cancer is an equal opportunity disease and can strike anyone. But just remember if you walk away from someone who needs you today will they be there for you if the tables get turned ?

We can make this world a better place one person at a time through courage, love and hope.