

The Blessings of Cancer

Life with Cancer

November 21st, 2010 Tri-Cities Herald

In this season of being grateful, I'd like to give thanks for having cancer. No I haven't been drinking! Trust me, the great Lance Armstrong said it in his book, *Its Not About the Bike*. Cancer survivors are the lucky ones, and not just because dying of cancer sucks. There's more to it than that.



Let's look at treatment for a second. Treatment, of whatever type, pulls you aside from your life: the hectic bustling around, the things you do on automatic pilot (you think you enjoy them but actually they've turned into chores); the obligations you feel you have to meet (but only because they're obligations in your own mind, they're not really); and the petty stuff (folding napkins into beautiful swans, because that's really worth the time!)

All that stops. All you concentrate on is the treatment; cycle to cycle, getting better. All the clutter in your life disappears and you just focus on what is really important. You, your family and your friends.

You can do what you really want to and when, because that's the Great Cancer Excuse - not having to do the so-called obligations.

So there are two enormous blessings straight away: truly seeing what's important in your life, and no more dinners over at hubby's boss' house. Oops! Sorry honey and said boss, didn't really mean that one. Moving on.

For us ladies, there are also the perks of chemotherapy. You must be out of your mind I can hear you saying, but bare with me. Think about it. Loosing all you're hair is a humiliating process, but let's look at the positive. That morning shower and blow dry, which used to take 45 minutes, now takes 10. It's 'Shine and Go.'

And think of the money you're saving on conditioners, mousse and hairspray alone. You're even being green by cutting down on electricity for the hairdryer, curling tongs, straightner, whatever it is we do for so long each morning.

And not to leave out you guys, imagine not having to shave for 6 whole months! And your wife or partner gets to take out the trash. No 'Honey Do' list. It's just 'Honey don't do anything and rest.'

So now you've finished treatment and are thankfully in remission. Lance's argument was that being made aware of your own immortality is actually a good thing. Since most of us blindly stumble through life without even thinking about what we want to achieve, or what type of person we want to be, cancer forces us to do that and hopefully makes us a better person for it.

My argument goes a little further. What cancer survivors actually practice is mindfulness. They don't just analyze their life, they analyze everything and give it meaning. They look out the window at the view and see the mountains. No, they look out the window and SEE THE MOUNTAINS! There's a difference, and not just the caps lock I accidentally found on my computer.

Cancer forces us to appreciate what we're doing as we do it. Just look at your children. Rather than seeing them as scruffy ragamuffins who just smeared mud all over themselves, look at them as your children. Wasn't that beautiful? Did it put tears in your eyes and a smile on your face? That's the blessing.

So on this Thanksgiving Day, think of the blessings that cancer can give. As cancer survivors we do have to endure an awful lot of pain. Every day is uncertain for us. We dread the day when the fight is lost but look forward to the day when we've won another battle. For those of us still fighting, we fight to stay with our families and we fight to honor those comrades who couldn't. We fight to comfort those like us and we fight to give those in the future a better chance. Because of cancer, my life has meaning. Now that's something to be thankful for.

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