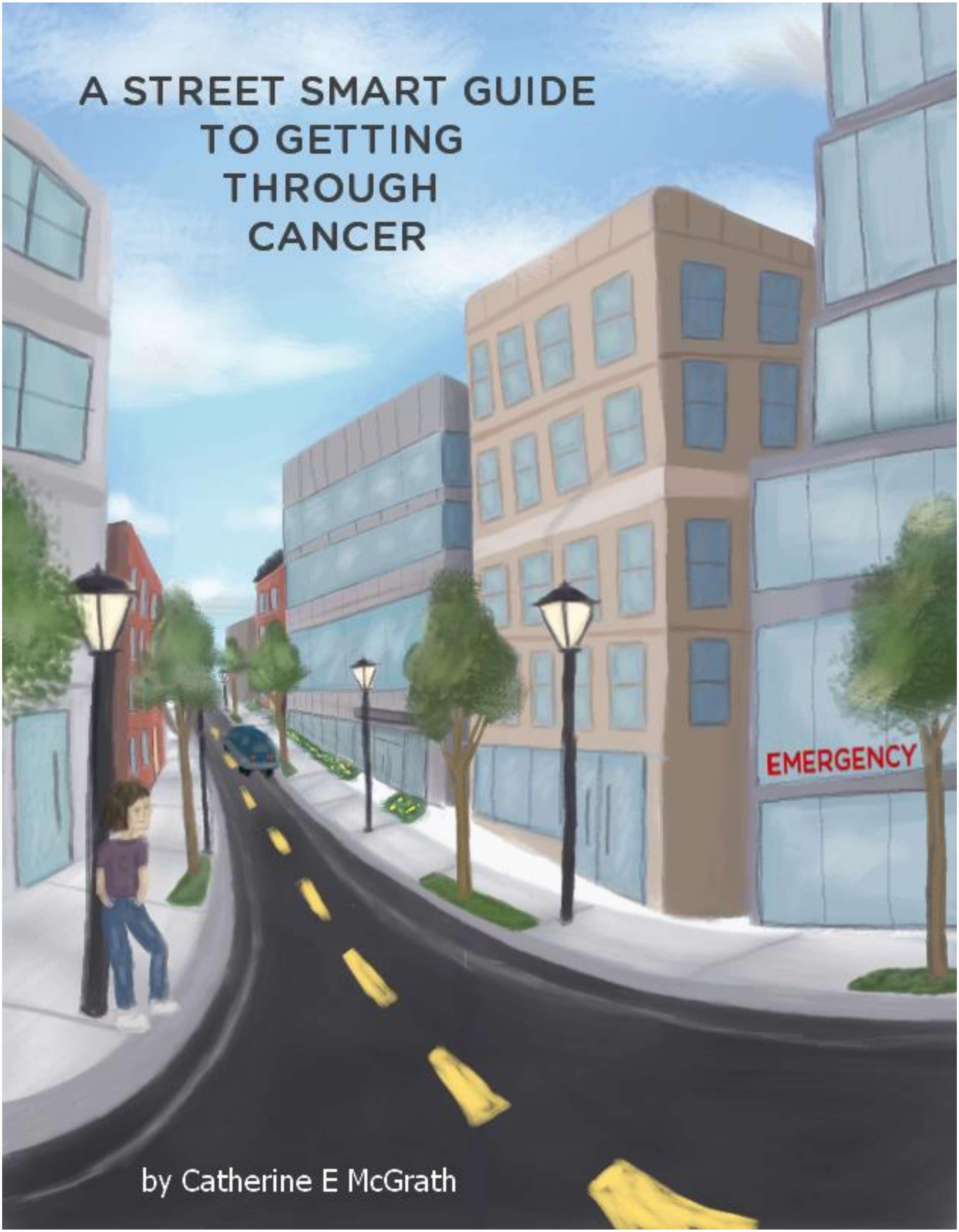
A STREET SMART GUIDE TO GETTING THROUGH CANCER



by Catherine E McGrath

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Chapter 1: Street Smarts

I have always loved the term ‘street smarts’. It means you’ve learned it on the streets, you actually lived it and therefore come away with a much deeper understanding than if you just read it. It is like the analogy of the male OB-GYN telling you what to expect during labor. It just doesn’t fly with me. Give me a mother of four and then I’ll really know what to expect.

This is my account of some of the pitfalls you should look for and, hopefully, some ways to get around them. There are some insights into ways to avoid easy mistakes. Most importantly, there is a reassurance that your new ‘normal’ is like nothing you’ve ever seen before, but it is in fact, sometimes normal.

Cancer, the **“Big C”,** is without a doubt the scariest word ever spoken. Cancer is still hard for me to say, write, or talk about. With it comes a whole ominous effect. It is for some people scarier than the word death. Cancer seems so unnatural. No one has mastered the entire cancer scenario, the whole process, from diagnosis to treatment to recovery. I think the minute you are entered in the cancer world club, a club that you want no part of, you should be given a special pass. This pass will excuse your behavior and the behavior of others, as well. It is clear that no one knows how to act around you. Everyone over the age of six is going to treat you differently, say ridiculous things, and walk, not on eggshells, but more like on quicksand when they are around you.

So, the first chapter is the News, Discovery, and the Club. The first good news is you really don’t have to be in the club. You don’t have to talk about your diagnosis to everyone and their Mother who once knew someone with cancer or decided to make you a chicken dinner. It’s overwhelming enough in the initial shock of things to have to talk about the unknown and probably the most frightening news of your life. Hell, you need to close up the circle. You have not won the lottery, just the opposite. People come out of the woodwork to connect with you. So here are a few conversation closers to politely deter the barrage of well-wishers, curiosity seekers and even sincere friends and family.

“Thank you for asking but we are completely overwhelmed ourselves and can’t even talk about it yet.”

“We have so many decisions facing us and our efforts are to keep things as normal as possible – that is our main focus.”

“I/We really don’t have any good news right now but when I/we do, I/we would love to talk.”

“Thanks for your offer to help. As soon as we figure out what we actually need you will be at the top of the list of who to call.”

As far as I'm concerned, if someone is consistently calling you that you do not consider close and before cancer didn't speak with you on a regular basis – you decide. Use your Caller ID wisely on your phone. You can close or open as many doors as you need. A simple 'stopper' until you can get to a better place is advisable.

I personally closed as many doors as I could. I felt absolutely suffocated and resorted to what I called 'Cancer Island.' It is probably not healthy, but the less the better was my case. I "off'ed" people right and left, sometimes for good, sometimes for a week or two. It is not that I expected everyone to say or do the right thing. Hell, I honestly couldn't tell you what that would have been anyway.

But there were huge boundaries put up and the moat around my survivor island was dug. If you did not follow the plan, if you brought someone unannounced to visit or to an event, if you did not drop my kids off at the exact time needed for the next pick-up or babysitter, or if you "over helped", you were suspended until further notice. The island got pretty small with close family members and a couple of friends I had since grammar school. They were allowed to take the ferry over to my island but were then shuttled off when needed.

It all sounds harsh but the weight of so many personalities and needs can literally suck the life right out of you. You need to carry yourself and any extra baggage needs to be checked. The guilt is so wild. You, who were so important to so many people, in so many lives, to just pull out is unthinkable. But here is your pass – I am giving you one from experience. Cut down the extras. For once in your life think only about what you need to get through this. Simplify – Figure out whom you need to be with and then set a game plan with perimeters.

Chapter 2: The Horrible Stories

This I could never understand. Why, when you are in such a panic, would so many people tell you horrible cancer stories? There is really no excuse. I just would stop them mid-sentence and ask, "Does this have a good or great ending? If not, then I really cannot hear this yet."

It is like being a weatherman; I actually have one who lives on my street. Everywhere he goes people feel compelled to tell him a weather-related story. It could be about a past storm, a loss of a boat, a flooded basement, or a wrong forecast. Out of respect, I learned to avoid the subject of weather with him because I know there is a lot more to him than just the weather. Just as the weatherman is so sick of hearing weather stories, you will want to hear anything except cancer-related stories. So, close the conversation politely and ask them something; about golf, their children, their home renovations, anything other than your cancer.

Everyone wants to help. As explained to me at a survivor's support group, some people like to justify their qualifications by telling you about their
experience with cancer.

Chapter 3: The Key - *It's only temporary*

I am not going to wait until the final Chapter to give you the best news of all, "It's only temporary". However, let's first look at cancer for a minute. You are healthy and something as small as a pea suddenly creates total havoc on your life. It's just so strange that to get well you must first get sick.
Some people have surgery with a ten-week recovery period. Some have chemotherapy with months of side effects. Others have radiation for another month. Some have a combination of the three, and some endure all three. All of these treatments alter your once healthy body and form
limitations, all requiring recovery, strength and fortitude.

The key to all of this is to keep in mind that this harsh treatment is only temporary. It is a temporary challenge. It will end and you will take back your life. So, when you are in the thick of it and bad news turns into worse news, remind yourself that it can only get better. It is a temporary position. Time usually flies by in life – but not in this case. It almost stands still at times or feels like Las Vegas where no clocks exist at all. Think ahead to what you want to be doing in a year or two. Think about how different you will feel at that time. Then set a goal, a purpose, something you never thought imaginable, like a dream you had shelved or put in a corner of your mind. It can be a trip to the Grand Canyon, learning photography, or just planting a vegetable garden.

Chapter 4: The Best of the Best

When you are diagnosed with cancer, your first decisions will include where you should get your care and who will be the physician in charge. You do have a choice. Forget for a moment that this is happening to you. For some strange reason, so many of the women I have met have made decisions based on the convenience of others. This is wrong, wrong, wrong. So, for a moment pretend the patient is someone you love dearly and want to protect: your spouse, lover, children, or grandchild. What decision would you make for their care?

Women make approximately 80% of all healthcare decisions. So, think… You would find the "Best of the Best". You would travel to the ends of the earth for the finest facility and the best physicians. You would sell your home for the care and comfort of your loved one.

You need to do the same for yourself. Research the best of the best in your area. Get two or even three different opinions from the best. It is important to feel comfortable with the physician you choose. You need to have confidence in the game plan that is proposed. Follow your woman's intuition. You need to believe in your heart you are willing to do whatever it takes. You want to make sure you have the right team for you. If you usually go for medical help at a suburban facility, you may now need to go to the city. Here's the difference. The top cancer facilities, generally located in a city, see the worst-case scenarios. So, they will have most likely seen similar cases to yours and yours might even seem commonplace, minor in comparison. The smaller facilities in the suburbs might not see as many cases or those similar in nature to yours. Remember always that no matter how much loss of control you feel, you are still the ultimate decision maker and your own best advocate.

The street smart way to find the best doctor for you is to use your connections and ask for a personal recommendation from anyone connected to the oncology world. A nurse or a doctor you know, or who is related to you, or a friend. Nurses often have great insight on who is the best, why, and who is the new up and coming in their field. Also, seek advice from a survivor who had a similar diagnosis and has gone through treatment who can vouch for their doctor's credentials, who knows them in a patient/doctor relationship, can provide their opinion on their doctor's personality, and knows the hospital's pros and cons.

Chapter 5: Trade-Offs

At a large hospital, you are one of many. You will never feel like "Norm from Cheers", where everyone knows your name. Instead your blue identification card is your new social security number. Memorize it, because of the thousands of patients they are seeing they can only go by that ID card number, not by your name.

By choosing the "Best of the Best", you might not have that warm and fuzzy feeling you may be used to at a smaller hospital. So, there are trade-offs. I remember once I went for a follow-up visit to a top surgeon who I thought knew my particular case and me well. She walked in and said, "Please refresh my memory". I almost blew a gasket. Had I not waited for three hours, I would have walked right out of her office. But being wiser, I now realize that this is one of the trade-offs.

This surgeon is working ten to twelve-hour days and is operating on me and others like myself, as well as perhaps members of the Kennedy family, relatives of movie stars, and other celebrities of the world. Their docket is full, and they are involved with grants, fundraisers, conventions, and special consultations, besides the all-important patient surgeries.

It is like meeting with a Chief Executive Officer of a company instead of upper management. Their time is of the essence. It is a business and the bigger the company, the more layers there are. You are not going to get the same service or food at a local diner versus a five-star restaurant. The diner might offer a friendly atmosphere with comfort foods like homemade mashed potatoes. The five-star resort is going to offer twice stuffed potatoes and filet, but at a cost. They may also turn the table fast for the next customer.

So do not take it personal if they do not know your name or remember anything about you. Go with the best of the best and realize that the CEO is ten times busier putting out blazing fires, but he is an expert in his field.

You can always get your treatment designed and then switch to a warmer and more comfortable place if need be. There is always some well-known doctor who simply becomes tired of a long commute or sick of the politics in his hospital and transfers to a smaller facility with his huge credentials. Some small hospitals are recruiting well-known doctors to handle new cutting-edge research programs. They are just not as obvious as the Top 50 in Newsweek. Your oncologist runs the show and his registered nurse (RN) is an important behind-the-scenes person, so choose wisely.

Weigh the Pros and Cons of the “Best facility”

Pros
Best equipment
Best surgeons
More experience
More options with drug trials
Better technology

Cons
Commute
Much longer waits
Expensive parking
Large number of patients
You are a number, not a name
Shorter time with doctors
Not as warm and comforting
Longer time on call-backs

If you are anything over a Stage 0 or have a history of cancer, I would suggest you go into the city and use the facilities that people from all over the world want to be treated at. You are just as important as any celebrity or royalty, so act like it and take advantage of it.

Chapter 6: Where’s Gideon?

Just before I was diagnosed with cancer, I was watching a television show called Gideon’s Crossing. Andre Braugher played Ben Gideon, the handsome oncologist. During a show when he delivered the bad news to his patient, he became very emotionally involved. I said to my husband that if anything ever happened to me, I wanted to have Gideon as my doctor.

This is not reality. The show was a made-for TV, scripted series. The doctor said everything right and was so caring and always offering hope. The reality is that your oncology team is in the business of saving lives and getting rid of the cancer in their patients or at least keeping it in check. You will not see them at Christmas or any other holiday. Let's look at it from their perspective. They meet you for the first time and they know nothing about you. You are in a total state of shock or panic. They never knew you before the cancer so it is difficult for them to judge how much information you want, can handle and actually need. They have an enormous amount of regulations that they must follow, and they talk in statistics, unable to come out and say for sure that you will be 100% fine, guaranteed.

However, these experts will give you everything they have to offer to hopefully bring about the best possible results. Wow, what a tough job. It is said that an oncologist has to deliver the bad news of cancer over 20,000 times in his/her career. They are even trying to teach interns the best way to deliver the news. So, it is getting somewhat scripted, like Gideon's Crossing. They are trying to learn how to give the devastating news in the best way possible for the patient. So, there is progress coming in that area.

The Nurse Practitioner (NP) is so very important. Here is the closest to a Gideon that you will get. You need to establish a good rapport with her at all costs. She/he is your oncologist's right-hand person. She/he can infiltrate the physician's schedule and get back to you with the answer you need on just about anything. She/he is your "cuts in line".

Be pro-active. When meeting with a CEO of a company you need to have a game plan. You want to cut to the chase. List the important questions and et precise answers. For example:

Patient: I have back pain.
Doctor: When did it start? (obvious)
Patient: About 2 weeks ago
Doctor: Did you do anything? Fall? Lift something heavy?
Patient: No
Doctor: When is it worse? When is it better? (obvious)

List the obvious questions he will most likely ask and have quick informative timeline answers, no stories like "It was Tuesday. I think it was raining. Yes, my sister came to visit with her grandson. He is 3…"

Chapter 7: Hindsight is 20/20

Almost everyone who has a diagnosis of cancer seeks out someone they can speak to who has firsthand knowledge. They want to ask questions. Looking back now, the answers I received were so obvious but in that panic state of mind you want to be reassured. Everyone is different and you need to live with your own decisions. Sometimes you might be blinded by fear and not be as rational as you normally would be. So, take your time. Step back for a moment. You have a week or two or three to get a second or third opinion. Make sure that you feel you have made a gallant effort to find the best doctor, hospital, surgeon, and course of treatment.

Do not succumb to the pressure of panic and start treatment right away. Make sure that your insurance is in order and that your spouse, children, parents and siblings, are ready to start with you. Make sure you are in a good place and have a reasonable plan in your mind that things are going to be taken care of so you can mend and give this your all. Breathe…

Chapter 8: Too Much Info Too Soon

Do not over-research. Do not do an in-depth search of the internet for treatment methods. Too much information and getting off track is not helpful. I remember researching a whole course of treatment only to find out that the five-year studies already had proven it ineffective and that new technology had been developed. But to get that information I had to read the worst statistics and had information overload that really was not even applicable.

Many sites have a lot of statistics. Some are not updated regularly, while others are. Some books are five years old. There is one thing for sure in the cancer world and that is that every year the world changes for the better. There are new drugs being developed and clinically tested, better tests found, and more accurate technology surfacing all the time. Just do what you are comfortable with and stick by your decision, realizing it is made with what is available today. Do your homework but do not scare yourself. If you don't like the statistics, move on to something else. Pick which side of the statistics you want to be on – the 80% that survive and that's that.

Again, do not read tons of cancer stories, books or blogs. If you want to read something helpful, try *Anatomy of an Illness* by Norman Cousins. It has nothing to do directly with cancer, but it is a great book on strategies to overcome illness.

Chapter 9: Circle of Friends (Personal infrastructure)

One exercise that I learned at a survivor's support group was to make a circle with you in the center. Put the names of those closest to you in the inner circle. Then work outward to a second circle. Then highlight the people who will be helpful and who will probably not be helpful. Keep the people who are not helpful at bay.

Prioritize who needs you in their life, regardless of how you feel and what you are going through. These can be your children, spouse, sisters, best friend, or parents. These are the only people you need to focus on. Give them your time when you are feeling your best. Make a huge effort to attend some events that are important to them, like certain milestones such as weddings, graduations and showers. This is where it counts. All others can wait until you are well again, and they should understand. If they don't understand right away, they will later when you have the energy to explain. You have years to deal with that.

Your circle of friends may change over time and you can update the circle when you need to.

Chapter 10: How to Help People Help You - (Favorites Form)

Let's face it. You are so much to so many people. It is your turn to accept help. I had such a hard time with this. I actually hated it. I hated feeling needy.

However, the other side is that most of the people who want to help are sincere, yet they have no clue how to help. So set some guidelines. I designed a favorites form, so that friends and family could provide thoughtful, yet inexpensive gifts or favors. Someone once told me it is harder to watch someone go through cancer treatment and recovery than to actually go through it. The jury is still out on that one.

What do you need? Take cancer out of the picture and think like you are going to Florida or Europe for three months. You have a guest at your house with limitations. What is needed?

1. Plants watered on Tuesday and Friday
2. Landscaping – lawn mowed weekly
3. Gardening – weeding periodically
4. Dog or cat fed and walked
5. Bird seed re-filled when needed
6. Taxes done
7. Insurance forms organized
8. Rides
9. Grocery lists – to buy at the Supermarket or online (like Peapod). It should include an old receipt of list of the preferred brands, sizes, etc. There should be a list for heavy weeks and one for light weeks.
10. Favorite foods (baked chicken-no garlic, chocolate chip ice cream, bagels)
11. Favorite TV shows recorded (Oprah, King of Queens)
12. Favorite actors (Gene Hackman) - record or go to the movie theater to see
13. Favorite magazines (Time, Home & Garden)
14. Favorite stores (local farm stand for fruit, Stop & Shop)
15. Walkway shoveled and sanded
16. Seasonal decorations bought or put out (where they are located in the attic and when do you put them out)
17. Cards – all occasion (birthday, wedding, graduation)
18. Stamps
19. Dry cleaning – pick-up times
20. Laundry schedule (and detergent types)

Then delegate, delegate, delegate. Ask yourself whom would you do this for and then write their name down. They will most likely love to do it for you.

Chapter 11: “Cottage Rules”

Recently I rented a cottage and on the wall in the kitchen, there was a list of pertinent information, including:

- Trash days
- Best pizza delivery with phone number
- Best Chinese food in the area
- How to work the television and remote(s)
- Information about the washer and dryer or other appliances
- Location of various items, like cleaning supplies, fuse boxes

I was thinking that a similar list would be helpful to anyone coming to visit or even for anyone house sitting while you are on the mend.

I also have come up with another list, a list of things I disliked.

- People talking about me like I was not there
- People, doctors, nurses, talking to my husband about me while I was in the room, like I was not in charge
- People saying “What a Trooper!”
- People saying that I look like I need a rest
- Waiting too long for results
- Waiting too long for an appointment
- Unsolicited advice
- Unsolicited advice via e-mail with links that are not appropriate
- People asking me about cancer in front of my children
- Every conversation with certain people leading to questions about cancer
- People talking about me on the telephone where I can hear, or my children can hear.

What I did like:

- People treating me the way they did before cancer, saying and asking about the same things they did before the cancer subject came into play
- Sincere offers to do specific tedious errands, but only when they were doing the errand anyway, so they were not making a special trip for me
- Funny movies, coolattas and recorded shows

Chapter 12: Humor

Humor helps heal. Rent some funny movies like “What about Bob?” Watch whatever makes you laugh. All old series are now available on the many stations available. You can record them or order an old series on DVD from Amazon if you still have a DVD player. I liked having a whole series lined up and looked forward to going home to see the next episode. Some I enjoyed were Madmen, Bloodline, Sopranos, Breaking Bad and the Wire.

I like to record a whole season and look forward to going home to see the next episode. Try to lighten up and go to the movies, if you can. If you can sit for three hours at a doctor's office, you can sit for two hours watching a movie.

Chapter 13: Knowledge is Power

The amount of paperwork you will see will make the IRS Long Form seem like kindergarten math. Buy a file box at Staples or other office supply store with some hanging file folders. Keep a folder for all of your test results, including the original diagnosis results. Go to the Medical Records Department at your hospital, sign the release to yourself form, and have them mail you a complete set of all your records and tests. Put these in your file box.

File all insurance "Explanation of Benefits" in a folder. Keep track and file insurance referral numbers with names and dates. Keep track of the doctors (and any other important person) you see and get a business card, with the date(s) seen and why. It is important to keep everything up to date.

The more you know about your treatment and the tests, the better. You all need to be on the same page. Have a master information page with the hospital telephone number, your hospital identification card number, and the name and number of your oncologist and registered nurse.

Chapter 14: 3 Days Up – The Mind Set

One special nurse told me the best piece of advice I have ever been given. She said that your body will do what your mind tells it to do. So, make a plan in your mind for every phase of your treatment. If they say you will be up in seven days, make it six in your mind. NEVER stay in bed longer than three days ever, without at least getting up, having a shower, getting dressed or having something to eat.

So now I know that if the truth were told - this is the biggest mind game you will ever be playing in your life. It is like golf, checkers and chess all rolled into one. You need to believe you can do it. Make up your mind to do it and then make the move.

Chapter 15: Shell of a Woman

I was a strong outgoing and powerful woman in my own mind. By the end of radiation, I was to myself, a shell of a woman, unrecognizable to myself. I felt like a burden, my beautiful mind was forgetful, full of anxiety and fear. My personality was the worst of myself.

I was angry and frustrated. I wondered how hard it was on my husband to watch the transition from the woman he married to a needy vulnerable bitter person. I remember crying so hard after watching the movie “A Beautiful Mind”, not for Russell Crowe but for his wife and how her life turned so miserable with this burden. I was hysterical. I said to my husband, “I just want to go back the way I was.” And, jokingly, he said, “Don’t you think we should raise the bar just a bit?” I cracked up.

So, the point of this chapter is that it doesn’t matter who you become or how far down you can fall. You always can get up and, you might not find yourself the same person, but you can re-create yourself. I am now so strong that there is no shell big enough to hold this woman.

Chapter 16: You Look Marvelous

I have no idea what I looked like before cancer, but I must have been pretty scary looking. Everywhere I go, everyone I see starts off with, “You look great.” So, I’ve come to the conclusion that either I was extremely homely before or that they were expecting someone unrecognizable to appear before them now. Then I was thinking that it is like one of those compliments that they want to finish with “you have a great figure for a mother of three children.” You look great for what you have been through.

There is nothing you can really do about this type of annoyance. These people mean well. So, you need to learn to take the compliments as if there was no “for what you’ve been through” looming in the background. I found that often I would provide a quick response focusing on something specific like, “Thanks, everyone is saying that” …and then flip it back to them with “I love your shirt or sweater or whatever. Where did you get it?”

What I have learned is that when they are saying you look great all the time is because most admire your strength. They are seeing you as strong and vibrant. What they should say is it’s great to see you – because it is.

Chapter 17: Cards, Letters, Calls & E-mails

Now all the channels of communication come at you and you need to choose what is best for you. You need to find what is most comfortable. Cards are usually appreciated, but they should be simple cards, like the blank ones or those with only a few words. Most people are not especially fond of sympathy-type cards or cards with injured cute, fuzzy animals. They enjoy cards with beautiful scenery and a short note, plain and simple, with no justification of why they are writing or how they heard. Letters are usually not comforting because it is just more room for the writer to make a mistake. It is nice to get a simple “thinking of you” or an offer to be contacted if anything is needed, with information on how to get in touch with them. These simple messages are welcome.

Telephone calls were not at all comfortable. It is usually uneasy for both sides of the conversation and there are many silences and pauses that can be even painful. If someone does call, they should understand that the phone will probably go unanswered and to leave only a brief message. You can still dial out if you want to talk to someone.

In e-mail messages, people sometimes say stupid things, nothing they would say to your face. They tend to get empowered by the computer, so they keep rambling. Short “just checking in” e-mail messages can be nice and can make you feel connected to others in a small way. They can be sent with a specific offer like, “On Tuesday I am going BJ’s. Do you need anything?” or “Are you up for a movie? Your favorite actor/actress is in…” or “I have two tickets to Aida for Thursday night. Are you up for it? No pressure”.

Chapter 18: The Journals - The 2 AM Fear Factors

Every night at about 2 AM I woke up in a fit of panic. It was like clockwork, every night. I believe that the fear of death and the possibility of my own mortality were just so overwhelming. I would wake up and toss and turn. I finally decided to use the time to write in a journal. So, I started a “2 AM Journal”.

I began writing every night when I woke up and wrote the darkest feelings that I was experiencing at the time. Sometimes it went on and on like a letter. I once wrote to a doctor of mine who I thought had a very poor bedside manner at the time. Sometimes I would only be able to scribble down one or two sentences, like reminding myself not to forget to tell a certain person something in case something happened to me. The journal appears so off-the wall to me now as I look back. It is difficult and uncomfortable for me to actually read through it now. However, I know that is was an extremely important and effective way for me to release my anger, frustrations, and fears. This type of “tell the worst” type of journal should be one that is not shared. No one should ever be allowed to read it under any circumstances. It was a huge avenue for venting, but I know that anyone who would read it and who had not lived it might get hurt and upset by its entries.

In retrospect, I wish I had kept two journals. The first one would be for the dark side and the 2 AM fear factors. The second journal would be for important things that I would want certain people to read someday. I would write down some memories and some feelings for my loved ones, along with my personal experiences with cancer.

The following is a poem I wrote that is something that would have gone in the second journal. It is called “Things My Children Should Know….”

Things My Children Should Know….

That they are loved, have always been loved and will always be loved.

That they can do anything they set their mind to. They are full of potential and the world is their oyster.

It is harder to be mean than nice…be nice to everyone.

Every person has something to offer…respect and find their strengths not their weaknesses.

If you don't like something, change it.

If you believe in something, keep believing. Don't get swayed by naysayers.

Lead don't follow.

Speak the truth and from the heart.

Make others feel special.

Stop searching for who you are and become who you want to be.

See the world. Experience other cultures. Go to Europe and the Caribbean and crosscountry.

Do what you love so it is not work, it is a passion.

Remember what is important to others, respect it and they will be there when it is important to you.

Love deeply, have fun, and most of all be happy.

~C.E. McGrath

Chapter 19: Will You Ever Be the Same?

Will you ever be the same? No. Never. But you definitely will be wiser and stronger. You will live differently but honestly. I do not cherish every moment. I still hate when my hair gets trashed in the rain. I do not stop and smell every rose, but I do appreciate a lot more things overall. These include good company with special people, good food, nice weather, enjoyable books and movies, and a good laugh. And now I make time for all of it.

At first, I was antisocial. Then I started easing slowly back into social situations. I had little patience for what others thought were their problems. I frankly still do, and I describe it like this. It is like a war veteran trying to talk to a draft dodger. It can be done but it needs finesse.

Chapter 20: Pay it Forward

Altruism

There is an old Hasidic story of a rabbi who had a conversation with the Lord about Heaven and hell. (Yalom, I.D., 1975, The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy, Basic Books).

“I will show you hell,” said the Lord, and led the rabbi into a room, in the middle of which was a very big round table. The people sitting at it were famished and desperate. In the middle of the table there was an enormous pot of stew, more than enough for everyone. The smell of the stew was delicious and made the rabbi’s mouth water. The people around the table were holding spoons with very long handles. Each person found that it was just possible to reach the pot to take a spoonful of the stew, but because the handle of the spoon was longer than anyone’s arm, no one could get the food into his mouth. The rabbi saw that their suffering was indeed terrible. “Now I will show you Heaven”, said the Lord, and they went into another room, exactly like the first. There was the same big round table and the same enormous pot of stew. The people, as before, were equipped with the same longhandled spoons, but here they were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking. At first the rabbi could not understand. “It is simple, but it requires a certain skill,” said the Lord. “You see, they have learned to feed each other.”

Chapter 21: Great Quotes

A woman is like a tea bag - you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water. (Eleanor Roosevelt)

Well-behaved women seldom make history (Laurel Thatcher Ulrich)

Be the change you wish to see in the world (Gandhi)

Make the change you wish to see in the world (Anonymous)

If you are going through hell…keep on going (Winston Churchill)

Timing is everything. (English Proverb)

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. (George Bernard Shaw)

CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. To access any of these resources below, call **888-793-9355** or visit **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org**.

Cancer Support Helpline®—Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (**888-793-9355**), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am-8 pm ET and Saturday 9 am-5 pm ET.

Open to Options®—Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling **888-793-9355** or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer®—Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer**.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs—With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.**

Cancer Experience Registry®—Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey **www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org**.

MyLifeLine—CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at **www.MyLifeLine.org**.

Grassroots Network—Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate**.

This booklet is available to download and print for yourself at ***Orders.CancerSupportCommunity.org.***

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.