

beauty
pearls
for
chemo
girls

Marybeth Maida and Debbie Kiederer

Foreword by Betsey Johnson



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For Bruce, my husband, my love, my dearest friend:
When I was anything but beautiful, you never made me feel
anything but beautiful.

Your girl always,
Marybeth

For my cousin Karen Longo Leschke and my college roommate,
Susan Hauser Alexander, whom I will admire always for their
courage and perseverance as they battled their cancers—
may this book hold your memory forever.

And for my husband, Bobby Cucullo, who continues to be
my inspiration and the wind beneath my wings . . .

With great love,
Debbie

FOREWORD

Fashion Week is always high pressure; it's even more high pressure with a breast cancer diagnosis in the mix. I'm amazed I was able to do my cartwheels down the runway without anyone ever knowing I was in the middle of a crisis.

It was December of 1999 when I found out I had cancer. I did not share this news with anyone but my daughter, Lulu. Fearing what people would say, and just being too busy with Fashion Week coming up, I went for my lumpectomy and six weeks of radiation without whispering a word to anyone.

For thirty-five days at 7:00 A.M., I left my apartment way, way downtown and headed for my treatment way, way uptown. While this was happening, I was so busy concentrating on all I had to get done to get my collection ready that I didn't even think too much about how scary it all was. Luckily and amazingly, early detection worked its miracle. The lump I had was very small and was cleanly removed,

and after I completed radiation, my prognosis was excellent.

It was all still unbelievable and overwhelming and frightening. When my doctors gave me the report that I was cancer free, the relief was incredible. I had faced one of the worst things that can happen to a woman, but I had also been spared something even more difficult: I did not have to go through chemo.

Many women aren't as blessed as I was. I've had some dear friends face the hair loss and the energy drain that chemotherapy creates; I find their spirit incredible. They understand the battle they must fight. But rather than let this get the better of them or try to pretend it's not happening at all, they embrace the life they have and do what they can to look like their usual selves while concentrating on getting better.

It's so obvious to me that the way a woman looks while she's going through chemo is going to affect the way she feels. I've seen it with my friends. One was just so amazing. She said, "Ok, I'm going to get through this, and make the best of it along the way," so she got the wig, the stencils, and the soft comfortable clothes, and with everything she went through, she really did look great.

I think a woman's true beauty is in her spirit, and there is no need to lie or camouflage what is happening to you. I believe the best thing any woman facing cancer and chemo can do is figure out what will make your spirit happy and do what you can to have that happen. Whatever colors appeal to you, whatever fabrics make you comfortable

in your own skin, whatever type of wig or scarf or makeup lets you feel good about yourself—you owe that to yourself during this tough time.

Now, if you're someone with an in-depth knowledge of skin care or makeup or nutrition, you may already know some of the things Marybeth and Debbie will tell you inside this book. Most readers will appreciate how these two ladies have uncovered great information for their sisters in need, trying to help them feel better both inside and out while facing a very tough time. These authors have spoken to experts in so many areas where you may find yourself with a question or problem. They haven't limited themselves to appearance but also learned about things you can do with food and breathing and massage techniques to ease the side effects of chemo and make you feel relaxed and comfortable.

I love that they have created a space where a woman can find answers if something about her face or her body is suffering under a course of treatment she cannot refuse to endure: something that explains what's happening, and how to deal with it until it's over.

Women deserve to look in the mirror and feel uplifted and positive, and I think the best way to make that happen when you've got to have chemo is to commit to giving yourself all the comfort and kindness you can manage. Treat yourself to whatever you want, whatever works for you. Whether it's having a massage, taking a nap, talking to your friends, or participating in a group, make that your top priority and trust that everything else will fall into place.

I believe that if you stick with your nearest and dearest and concentrate your energy where you need it most, you will come out of this as I did, turning cartwheels and giving thanks for all the love and support people will show you. Let that wonderful energy in, and let it be part of your glow.

—Betsey Johnson
New York, NY

Prologue



Our Panel of Experts

Anastasia of Beverly Hills—Anastasia Soare is recognized as a top beauty maven with a large and loyal celebrity clientele including Madonna, Jennifer Lopez, Oprah Winfrey, Penelope Cruz, and Sharon Stone.

Leah Berkowitz—New York-based fashion stylist Leah Berkowitz has dressed some of the most celebrated women in the world. Her work has appeared in most major fashion magazines including *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, *Lucky*, *Latina*, and *Io Donna*, as well as national advertising campaigns for companies including Cover Girl, Target, Verizon, and Oil of Olay.

Eivind Bjerke—With a reputation as the go-to stylist for “power heads” in Washington, DC, including Sandra Day O’Connor, Nancy Pelosi, and Hillary Clinton, Eivind is renowned for his exceptional style, premium service, and innovative solutions to any hair-related problem.

Oscar Blandi—One of the most respected and requested celebrity hair stylists working today, Oscar has created personalized looks for many of Hollywood's A-list actresses; his work and products are mainstays of top fashion and beauty bibles and his mission is to make gorgeous, salon-worthy hair attainable to all.

Amy Bragagnini, M.S., R.D.—Amy is a registered dietitian with a master's degree in nutrition and dietetics. She works at the Lacks Cancer Center, a state-of-the-art, environmentally advanced healing facility in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offering comprehensive inpatient and outpatient services and an integrative mind/body/spirit approach to treatment.

Michele Burke—Michele is the six-time nominated, two-time Academy Award-winning makeup artist sought out by filmmakers worldwide as one of the most versatile talents working in movies today.

Dr. Sandy Canzone—Dr. Canzone is a veteran doctor of Oriental medicine and a practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine who designed the St. Vincent Regional Cancer Centers, Full Spectrum Wellness Awakening to Life series for oncology patients in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She also practices homeopathy with extensive training in the Eastern understanding of nutrition.

Thomas A. Caputo, M.D.—Dr. Caputo is chief of Gynecological Oncology and Obstetrics and Gynecology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

Cheryl Chapman, R.N., L.M.T.—a pioneer in massage for cancer and mastectomy, Cheryl became a registered nurse in 1965 and was certified in massage in 1988. She studied Chinese medicine and massage in New York and China and in 1999 became Holistic Nurse Certified (HNC). Approved as a continuing education provider by the National Certified Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork since 1992, Cheryl began teaching continuing education classes at national conferences, conventions, and massage schools throughout the United States. She also consults with massage schools, organizations, and spas. She is the author of *The Happy Breast Book*, a woman's guide to keeping her breasts healthy and happy.

Christine DeAngelo—Counting Kathlin Argiro, Polo Ralph Lauren, Chado Ralph Rucci, Pilar Rossi, and Jones Apparel Group among her clients, FIT graduate Christine DeAngelo is head designer for Flip Dresses, described as the “must-have trend setters” by *Women's Wear Daily*, *CosmoGirl!*, and *Seventeen* magazine.

Francine DeMarco—Graduated from FIT with a specialization in foundation garments, Francine is a fashion designer and stylist who has created designs for national ready-to-wear companies including Danskin, Disney, Warner Brothers, Limited Express, and Everlast. A former vice president of design for Tahiti Apparel, Francine is also cover stylist and beauty editor at *Prime Woman* magazine.

Louis Philippe DeMontpensier—Discovered by Halston and trained by Yves Saint Laurent, Louis Philippe was the

makeup artist Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis depended on to keep her looking her best as she waged her own cancer battle.

Krista Dibsie—Krista is a licensed aesthetician, skin analyst, and entrepreneur. As the owner/developer of Skin Science, she has taken the concept of skin care to a new level, providing clients the opportunity to improve their skin's structure and function with an innovative line of products and services designed to perpetuate a beautiful, healthy complexion.

Rick DiCecca—This premier makeup artist has built a reputation for creating inspiring new looks each year based on the seasonal Estée Lauder color palettes. Regularly working with some of the world's most famous faces, Rick's innovative ideas and skilled artistry have established him as leader in the beauty and fashion business.

Dr. Lloyd Gayle—Chief of Plastic Surgery at New York–Presbyterian Hospitals, Doctor Gayle is also associate professor of clinical surgery and director of plastic surgery resident education at Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

Deann Geary—As founder of Tiffany Wigs, Deann has spent more than forty years working to provide custom-fitted wigs to chemotherapy patients worldwide and has developed a national reputation as one of the best wig salons for individuals afflicted with hair loss.

Harvey Gedeon—Estée Lauder Companies’ executive vice president, global research and development, Harvey Gedeon is a world leader in the conceptualization and technical achievement of innovative beauty products.

Amy Gibson—Afflicted with alopecia at 13 years old and suffering complete hair loss by the time she was 30, soap opera and television star Amy Gibson developed her own wig line, featuring unique designs, material, and hair that combine style, comfort, and security. Amy’s intention behind everything she does centers on “helping women feel and look complete from the inside out—from feeling like a victim to being victorious.”

Dr. Noah Gilson—Dr. Gilson is a neurologist, professor of neurology, media liaison, and guest lecturer who is dedicated to the practice of neurosciences and the education of both medical students and the community at large regarding the complex nature of neurological topics.

Betsey Johnson—Award-winning fashion designer and breast cancer survivor is known around the world for her feminine and whimsical designs. Betsey opened her first boutique in 1969, and today oversees a retail empire that includes forty-five boutiques in the United States, Canada, and Britain, generating about \$50 million in annual revenues.

Sheikh Abdur Rahman Kahn—Sheikh Rahman is a graduate of Islamic University Madinah and on the faculty of Shari’ah

specializing in Islamic inheritance. He was principal of the Guyana Islamic Institute for eight years; Imaan at Windsor Forest West Masjid, Guyana; Imaan and head of Islamic Studies at the Muslim Community Center of Greater Rockford, Illinois; and is currently resident scholar and Khateeb at the Islamic Foundation in Chicago.

Dr. Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy—Dr. Kobeisy is a nationally recognized Muslim scholar, counselor, and religious leader. He is the director and resident scholar at the Islamic Learning Foundation who serves on the faculties at Le Moyne College (Syracuse, New York), Hartford Seminary (Hartford, Connecticut), and Syracuse University. He has also taught at the State University of New York at Oswego and Albany. Dr. Kobeisy served as the director and Imam of Islamic Centers in New York State for more than twenty years and is currently the Islamic chaplain at Syracuse University and offers training of Imams for U.S. mosques.

Theresa Loupuchin—Theresa is a licensed cosmetologist, trained in advanced skin care and makeup at the International School of Esthetics in Paris, and is the national spokesperson for the Look Good Feel Better® Foundation. An original volunteer who helped roll out the program in 1989, Theresa has been providing corporate and individual training in image consulting, one-on-one appearance assessment, and color consultation for over twenty years.

Gayle MacDonald, M.S., L.M.T.—A national and international health educator, writer, and body worker, Gayle has

supervised massage students at the oncology unit at Oregon Health and Science University since 1994. She is the author of *Medicine Hands, Massage Therapy for People with Cancer* and *Massage for the Hospital Patient and Medically Frail Client*.

Reverend Dr. Patricia S. Medley—A breast cancer survivor, Dr. Medley is pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Freehold, New Jersey, has served as chairperson of Bioethics of the CentraState Medical Center and of the Freehold Area CROP Walk for Hunger, president of the Interfaith Freehold Clergy Association, and is an advocate for survivors of domestic violence, the homeless, and those who struggle with addictions, as well as an advocate and educator in the area of sexual abuse and prevention of sexual abuse of children and parishioners.

Robert Lee Morris—The legendary, award-winning jewelry designer is globally recognized as a pioneer in the world of fine jewelry and fashion who has created a body of work that illuminates the body and nourishes the soul in an effortless fusion of the spiritual and the sensual.

Dr. Howard Murad—Widely acknowledged as one of the country's foremost authorities on skin care, board-certified dermatologist Dr. Murad has devoted his life to the science of internal and external skin care.

John Nies—Drafted into the NFL by the Buffalo Bills in 1990, John founded the Power Center in Red Bank, New Jersey,

in 2002, developing an approach to fitness that's rooted in ancient Eastern wisdom but incorporates the benefits of modern fitness advances. He is the author of *Chi-Force, Living the Seven Disciplines*, an insightful approach to helping people find inner peace and balance while fulfilling their full potential, and sits on the advisory board of the Beauty Foundation for Women's Cancer Care.

The Oncology Nurses at Princeton Medical Group—Six oncology nurses with over seventy-five years combined experience in treating chemotherapy patients.

Oribe—The only hairstylist to have an exhibit featured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, Oribe is considered one of the most innovative hair stylists of our time, with a client list that includes Jennifer Lopez, Sophia Loren, Penelope Cruz, Cate Blanchett, and Renée Zellweger. He has styled over 1,000 magazine covers and thousands of editorial fashion and beauty stories for *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Bazaar*, *GQ*, *Allure*, *Cosmo*, and *Glamour*, and has worked with the world's most renowned fashion photographers including Richard Avedon, Steven Meisel, Irving Penn, Annie Liebowitz, Mario Testino, and Francesco Scavullo.

Father Daniel Peirano—A former officer in the Peruvian army, Father Peirano spent twelve years in the American military and climbed to the rank of Captain before heeding the call to his spiritual vocation and joining the Congregation of Jesus in Mary Seminary in Bogotá, Colombia. He was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in the diocese

of Trenton, New Jersey, in May 2004 and serves as a parish priest at Saint Mary of the Seas parish, Long Branch, New Jersey, Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey.

Rabbi Jonathan Roos—Rabbi Roos leads the Monmouth Reform Temple in Tinton Falls, New Jersey, and is a member of the Rabbinic Cabinet of United Jewish Federation, past officer of the Capital District Board of Rabbis, and a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Dr. Samuel Schneider—Dr. Schneider is a Princeton-based psychotherapist with a special practice dedicated to helping oncology patients deal with the psychological and emotional issues surrounding their diagnosis and treatment.

Kurt Spellmeyer—Kurt Spellmeyer has practiced Zen meditation for thirty-two years and since 1994 has been director of the Cold Mountain Sangha at Rutgers University in New Jersey, where he is also an English professor. He has trained with Takabayashi Genki and Kangan Glenn Webb, founders of the Seattle Zen Center. In 1985, Spellmeyer completed his training under Webb Roshi and was authorized to teach. He received the dharma name Kankan Sensei (Ch. Guan Han, “Sees the Cold”), at a private ceremony with Webb in 1991.

Dr. Peter Staats—An internationally known physician, author, researcher, and lecturer on the subject of developing and implementing minimally invasive procedures for chronic pain, Dr. Staats is a fellow of the World Institute of Pain and the North American Neuromodulation Society and serves

on the board of directors of the American Academy of Pain Medicine and the National Pain Foundation. His work has been highlighted on *Good Morning America*, *CBS Evening News*, and CNN.

Dr. Brian Torpey—A board-certified, fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Torpey specializes in the treatment of conditions of the shoulder, knee, hip, sports medicine, shoulder and knee reconstruction, and orthopedic surgery.

Dr. Joann Weinrib—Chiropractor, nutritionist, and founder of New York City's Body Central, Dr. Weinrib has created an innovative, integrative center for healing in downtown Manhattan and the Hamptons, New York.

Dr. Patricia Wexler—A board-certified dermatologist specializing in dermatology and dermatologic surgery including state-of-the-art cosmetic surgical procedures, Dr. Wexler is one of the most sought after dermatologists in America and is recognized everywhere as an expert in the field of dermatology and dermatologic surgery.

Dr. Leonard Wright—Director of the Wege Institute for Mind, Body and Spirit at the Lack's Cancer Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dr. Wright is a physician board certified in multiple medical subspecialties, including medical acupuncture. In 1989 he received a diagnosis of terminal brain cancer and applied a combination of Eastern and Western medical treatments to survive his disease and become a practitioner of, and advocate for, integrative medical cancer treatment therapies.

Survivors' Stories

Surviving cancer is a fantastic triumph. We've been there. We know.

From the moment of diagnosis until the day you put your wig away for good, life as you know it will change. Some of these changes may last forever—and most of them will be for the better. You'll be stronger. You'll know who your biggest supporters are. You'll understand your body and your mind in ways that prior to cancer might have been impossible. You won't sweat the small stuff. Every day, you'll find something to be happy about. It's inevitable. Facing this terrifying diagnosis, you'll come away from the experience with an insight unique to we who have been up the cancer mountain and made it safely to the other side.

We know this journey will be difficult. We understand the ups, downs, and radical shifts cancer treatment creates. Our hope is that by reading about our experiences, you will take our hearts and courage and join them with your own.

No one wants to feel alone during this challenging time. Believe that no matter where you are or what you are feeling, there is an enormous community of strength and support waiting to be called on. Take advantage of this support. Lean on those who want to help. Use our stories to inspire your own.

It is a great honor for us to share our experiences with you, our sisters in arms.

We salute you, chemo girls. We wish you every blessing as you make your way up the cancer mountain. We await your arrival on the other side.

Our Own Stories

Marybeth's Story

It wasn't being bald, or sick, or bloated that got to me. It was losing my eyelashes.

That's when I realized that I was actually pretty vain about my appearance and didn't want to spend the last three months of my chemotherapy treatments looking like an albino rabbit.

With no history of disease in my family, and possibly the smallest boobs on the planet to be afflicted with malignancies, I found a lump in my left breast one evening, discovered a smaller lump in the right one the next day, and within two weeks was deep in the world of surgery and illness, cancer, and chemotherapy.

As a writer and former television news producer, I delved into the research on my affliction with almost fundamentalist zeal. I wanted to know what had happened to me and what I could do to make sure it didn't happen again. I spent days trolling the Internet, reading every breast cancer hit my Google searches returned, trying to understand, trying to cope, trying to gain some sort of control over a body that in forty-three years had never once let me down but was now sporting a pair of weapons of mass destruction too small to fill a modest A-cup bra, yet deadly enough to kill me if I didn't act fast.

Luckily, I caught my disease early. I had my breasts removed, went deep into the chemo trenches, had reconstructive surgery, and am now doing fine. But while I was facing cancer down, the hardest thing for me to deal with was my image in the mirror. Sure, I was a fighter. I was determined to do whatever it took to make sure this cellular

error didn't leave my husband a widower and my children motherless. And I knew, intellectually at least, that what I looked like was the least of my problems.

But it hurts to be bald. It's painful when eyebrows disappear, tongues swell, and the fringe of lashes a girl has taken for granted since babyhood lie like feathery memories on a pillowcase. It's tough to get up in the morning, and instead of seeing the face you've known your whole life, greet in the mirror a person who is supposed to be you, yet looks like a stranger.

I knew my insides were under attack. I knew that the chemo that was so difficult to endure was going to make sure I won the cancer war. But I didn't want to look like a sick person. I wanted to look like myself.

That's what brought me to the bookstores. Looking for all the inside tips and tricks other women who'd been down this road had already discovered, I found there was nothing on the shelves to help me—no books to explain what these necessary drugs would do to my hair and skin and energy—no guides to map out what I should expect during six months of treatment.

Debbie and I teamed up to do the work, and the result is this book.

Every woman facing disease deserves to understand what is happening when potentially lethal drugs are pumped into her medical port. She should be able to keep her skin, eyes, teeth, hair, hands, feet, mind, and spirit as healthy and vibrant as sickness will allow.

She shouldn't feel lost or hopeless. She should feel that in all the ways that matter, she's still in control.

If knowledge is power, think of these pages as a command post in your battle against disease. Learn about the drugs your doctor has prescribed, how they will affect your body, your mind, your metabolism, and your soul. Embrace

this opportunity to face cancer down, and keep it between your psyche and your skin.

After years on the front lines of illness, I know this: all women are survivors. We're all beautiful. We deserve to look our best, no matter what the circumstances. So here's to chemo doing the dirty work inside, and here's to us, facing it down by putting our best foot (and skin and attitude) forward.

Good luck!

Debbie's Story

I learned at an early age that when someone is sick, someone else also suffers—usually in silence.

I was 24, my boyfriend was 28 when a blood clot formed in his leg and landed him in the hospital. His stay was short, but his recovery slow. Being young and impatient, I just wanted him to get better so we could get on with our lives.

Two years later, we were married and tried to put the illness behind us. But a year later, he was hospitalized for three weeks with deep vein thrombosis. This time, recovery was nine months.

Three years after that—just five weeks after I had given birth to our first child—a clot passed through his lung, but we continued to do our best to be a normal growing family. I delivered our second daughter, he went to work, and I continued to grow in my career as a cosmetics executive.

Then a virus attacked his pericardium. His heart stopped twice. The nurse told me to bring our two- and three-year-old girls to the Critical Care Unit to see him, and being something of an expert at hospital procedure by now, I knew that meant they thought he may die.

Luckily for us, his cardiologist came to the rescue, transferred him to a New York City hospital, and four weeks later,

he was released to my care. He was 37. I was 33. Now, over a decade later, he continues to take many medications, mostly preventive, and goes to a hospital as a patient about every three years for something related—yet unrelated—to an illness that has no name.

I don't know if anyone who hasn't been a partner to a devastatingly ill person can understand the fear, the worry, the anger, and the exhaustion that dealing with disease brings. I was terrified at what could happen and furious at the dagger forever pointed at my family's happiness; yet, for the most part, I couldn't express any of these emotions for fear of how they'd affect my husband, our kids, our families—and myself.

Every day I work hard, stay strong, and try to ignore the pain this sickness in our lives triggers inside of me. But sometimes, the pressure leaks out. When my cousin was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and my college roommate found out she had breast cancer I experienced a sense of unease, unsure how I could help them when I was giving everything I had to my family.

In desperation, I reached out to a friend with HIV for advice. He had a lot of experience nursing dying friends, and he told me that the best way to cope with illness was to accept that it was happening, face it with all the courage I could muster, and stay positive.

This can be easier said than done. Depression and fear can paralyze even the closest, most well-intentioned friends. That's why I'm so happy to be writing this book. I wish I'd had it when I went to see my cousin and my college roommate so that I could share with them all the ways they could continue to look and feel good as they waged war against their disease.

I wish I could carry it with me so that if I receive the awful news that yet another person I know is facing one of

life's biggest hurdles, I can present her with this handbook of hope.

I've been working in the beauty business for over twenty years, and there's one thing I know: a bit of confidence, a touch of beauty, and a sense of personal well-being can bring out the best in any woman.

Looking good is a huge step in the psychological battle to be well. It not only helps you but gives a sense of relief and hope to those who love you and want with all their hearts for you to look and feel as best you can.

The road ahead is tough, but I'm confident that the insight provided by the friends you'll meet inside this book will help you cope—and triumph—as you continue your journey to wellness.

The Survivors' Stories

Chris's Story

Late on a Saturday afternoon in January 2001, during an out-of-state visit with my mother, what felt like a bladder infection brought me to a local walk-in clinic. The staff doctor examined me and gave me a prescription to fix the problem. When that didn't do anything to help me, I knew "something" was wrong.

That something turned out to be ovarian cancer.

The news that I had this disease stunned me. I was 51, and as far as I knew, perfectly healthy. But I soon learned that the symptoms of ovarian cancer "whisper" to its victims, who can easily explain them away: occasional lower backaches, fatigue. Who doesn't have those once in a while? Sometimes I was exhausted, but I work hard and play hard, so that didn't strike me as strange. I felt bloated, but I'd like to meet the woman who hasn't experienced that. And the unexplained fifteen pounds I'd put on made me regret the loss of my trim figure and flat abdomen, but I just figured encroaching menopause was to blame for the fact that, standing sideways, I looked four months pregnant, because I certainly had not changed my eating or exercise habits.

It turns out that all of these were warning signs of the invisible invader growing inside me. The bloating especially indicated something was amiss, though I had no idea that the gurgling, sloshing, gastric noises emanating from my torso were not indigestion or the flu but a complex malignant mass.

Once I returned from my mom's house, I went to see my gynecologist, who ran the tests that found a six-inch

tumor—Stage 2, Grade C. I immediately underwent a complete hysterectomy. Three weeks later, chemotherapy began.

My treatment involved eight hours of infusion. It would begin at 9 A.M. and end at 5 P.M. There were six in all, each one three weeks apart, and the side effects were very rough.

I lost my hair, my lashes, my eyebrows—within two weeks of my first treatment, all were gone. I gained forty pounds from the steroids and lack of exercise and had a face full of pimples too.

But that was not nearly as hard as the poisonous way the treatment made me feel. Forty-eight hours after leaving the doctor's office, I would be in bed with what seemed like the worst case of the flu imaginable. Pain coursed through my body, especially my legs. I couldn't read, or think, or watch television; my brain was unable to focus on anything. And this would last for seven days.

Once that first week passed, I would start to feel better. The second week things improved even more, and by the third week, I was feeling okay, but then I would have to go back and begin the nightmare again.

None of this was easy. What motivated me more than anything was a driving desire to live. I remember sitting on my sofa and thinking about the odds of beating this. My doctor told me that with treatment I had a 90 percent chance of recovery. I focused all my energy on that 90 percent and refused to let negative, scary thoughts bring me down.

Positive thinking is essential when facing this disease. I believe it helped me get to my current state of remission. It's been over eight years since my diagnosis, and I think of myself as being a lucky woman. With the help, love, and support of family, loved ones, and friends, I managed to get through a very difficult time.

Today I have my hair and my body back, and my life as well. The changes to my skin and self-image that were so hard to accept are all gone. Sure, I'm a little heavier than I was before, but I feel great. More importantly, I take nothing for granted. I still go for regular follow-up appointments with my oncologist and have regularly scheduled cat scans and ultrasounds. Ovarian cancer symptoms may indeed whisper, but I'm paying close attention to the sound of my body, and I'm very proud and happy to report that the only noise coming from inside me is the happy song of survival.

May that song fill your heart and your life, in the days and years to come.

Laura's Story

"Get a mammogram. Now!"

The command came from my sister that Monday morning in May 1999. We were on the phone, and I was describing to her what felt like a pea-shaped lump in my breast when she stopped listening and told me to go get it checked.

We had reason to worry. My mom had died at a young age from ovarian cancer, and I had already had a breast fibroadenoma, which is a benign tumor commonly found in young women's breasts. Within twenty-four hours of our conversation, I was listening to the radiologist's comforting words that it was merely a cyst. When I recalled for him my mother's early diagnosis and fate, he became annoyed and told me that too many young women were "making mountains out of molehills." He told me to forget about the lump and come back in two years.

Livid, I marched out of his office, purchased copies of my films, and made an appointment with the chief breast

surgeon at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan. Initially told that I would have to wait five months for an opening, I recounted my family history, and an appointment became available for the following week.

When my husband and I arrived at the doctor's office, a sea of women sat in the lobby, patiently waiting for their chance to see the surgeon. After three hours, my husband began to express his irritation, but I knew there was no way I was going to leave before I'd had my time with the doctor.

I did indeed have cancer. I had a lumpectomy, and after learning it was malignant, I went deep into research mode, calling doctors all over the country and trying to decide what course of treatment would give me the best chance of raising my three children to adulthood and growing old with my husband. A recommendation from a doctor at Dana Farber in Boston made the most sense to me. Two months after finding the lump, I underwent bilateral mastectomies and followed the surgeries with six months of chemotherapy.

Because my husband and I had lived through my mother's battle with cancer, we knew what we were facing. I sat down with my children and explained as best I could what was going to happen to me. I think the honesty helped. My eight-year-old son came up with a signal that meant he needed private time to ask me questions. Being open and direct with them seemed to help them cope with my illness better than I remembered being able to when my own mom was sick.

Chemotherapy was not easy, but I was determined to keep a positive attitude and never give in to cancer. I went to every treatment wearing my favorite loafers and a soft pashmina and carrying my designer bag. My clothes were my chemo armor. I also did my best to keep my sense of humor and never let anyone treat me like an invalid.

A week after my first treatment, our family went to Lake Placid, and I proved to everyone how strong I still was. I water-skied, hiked up White Face Mountain, and saw more beauty and felt more inner strength than I had ever before experienced. And while my doctors didn't love these antics, the constant activity and striving to be normal empowered me. I visualized myself as a warrior and kept my sights on victory.

Today, ten years have passed since my sister insisted I get to the doctor. I am healthy and happy and full of life. But I believe that the one downside to being ever upbeat and positive about my situation was that to this day no one realizes how difficult a journey it was for me, both physically and emotionally. I was so very scared, and tired, and worried about my family. Looking back, maybe it would have been better if every now and then I relaxed and let someone else hold up the world.

Over the years, I've come to see cancer as a gift: it has taught me to appreciate my life in a way I hadn't before. I cherish each day like stars sprinkled from heaven, and I value all the love that has been there for me.

I wish each of you this gift—the joy of the rest of your life.

Patricia's Story

My husband and I were making love just before Mother's Day in May 2004 when he discovered the lump in my right breast. The next day my friend, a breast surgeon, did an ultrasound. We looked at the screen, and as doctors, we couldn't deny the truth—I had cancer.

As a gynecologist, I knew what I had to do. First, I contacted the radiologist who had been following me for the

last seven years with annual digital mammographies and ultrasound examinations to track the microcalcifications discovered on my baseline mammography back when I was 35, and arranged a biopsy. Then I enlisted my best friend from medical school, who is a breast oncologist, to find excellent doctors not emotionally attached to me because of work, school, or friendship, to be on my medical team.

Within two weeks, my lumpectomy was over, but the pathology report was not great: a 2.6-cm hormone-receptive positive, HER 2/neu tumor and 26 lymph nodes were removed; two nodes were positive. I had extensive vascular invasion, and one of the eight margins was borderline. Re-excision didn't get me the clean margin I sought.

This was frustrating—scary too. My mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer at 64, and I had thought my digital mammography and ultrasound screenings, done each year, six months apart, would protect me from advanced disease. But it seems I have “camouflage breasts” that essentially hid the mass. During my biopsy, the radiologist admitted that had I not shown her the tumor by palpation [touch], she would not have seen it on the ultrasound.

At 42, with a thriving medical practice, a happy marriage, and a young child, my number-one priority was survival. I chose aggressive chemotherapy, a mastectomy, and followed that surgery with six weeks of daily radiation.

Without a doubt, chemotherapy was the most challenging part of the journey. My hair fell out, my bones hurt, and each treatment was harder than the one before.

Even more difficult was the fact that my husband had to be away for six and a half weeks of my treatment. Though this was rough, his absence taught me to lean on people. Like many women, I had a hard time asking for help. But I couldn't cook, and my daughter needed to eat, so friends

would come to my house and leave meals for us in a cooler we had waiting on the back porch.

I continued to work throughout treatment, changing my schedule to accommodate my needs. Finances were part of the reason, but it was more a desire for normalcy that motivated me; being busy and professionally engaged gave me back that sense of control I'd lost after diagnosis.

I also made it a point to take care of myself, going for regular facials and massage. A cosmetologist taught me how to draw on my missing eyebrows. I drank lots of water, exercised, and never went anywhere without my wig.

Cancer was a hard road for me. The bone pain took three years to end. Because estrogen fed my cancer, my doctor shut down my ovaries with Lupron, and that threw me into early menopause. Between a slowing metabolism and all the steroids given with the cancer-fighting drugs, I gained 25 pounds, and during one especially long airline flight I developed lymphedema.

But for every problem, I found a solution. Tired of taking hormone-suppressing medications, I stopped the Lupron and had my ovaries laproscopically removed. I work out almost every day to control my weight. Whenever I get on a plane I wear a special sleeve and glove to compress my arm. And though I really miss my breast, I decided against reconstruction because of a theory I'd heard that this could trigger vascular growth and recurrence.

These changes to my body are very hard on my husband. I know he looks at me and wonders where his sexy wife went. But I am at peace with my decisions. I want to raise my daughter. I want to grow old with my husband. I want to be cancer free, and I will continue to do whatever it takes to make these things happen. Extraneous issues don't bother me anymore. Staying alive is what matters now.

I hope you are able to find a similar kind of peace within yourself, along with the strength to stand by your decisions, and the wisdom to do what you know is best for you.

Rosemarie's Story

“Could you feel this for me?” I asked my best friend that day back in 1997. I'd just gotten out of the shower at her house, and the ball I'd found in my left breast a few days earlier was still there, still hurting, still making me feel that the walls of my life were about to come crashing down.

I had reason to be nervous. I was only 27, but my mom had gone through breast cancer at 42, and I remembered all too well her battle to be well. It was probably the fear of it happening to me that made me ignore my breasts for the most part—not doing self-exams, not wanting to ever have to face that “what if . . . ?” moment.

But there I was, looking anxiously at my friend, who could feel the lump just under my armpit. She tried to reassure me, saying it was probably nothing, but suggested I call my doctor, just to be sure. So I got in touch with my mother's gynecologist, who was also mine, and knowing our family history, he insisted I come in right away. After examining me, he said it could be a cyst but wanted me to have a mammogram and then a sonogram. Within a day, confirmation of what I had secretly dreaded had come to pass: I had breast cancer.

Because of its size and location, I had a lumpectomy. The pathology report showed that the in situ tumor had been excised successfully, was hormone-receptor positive and HER 2 Negative, and there had been no spread.

This news was something of a double-edged sword; though these results were good, the next steps were not at all clear. I went to seven different oncologists and each one

told me I could aggressively treat the cancer with radiation and chemotherapy—or forget the chemo and just do radiation. The choice was mine.

I look back on this now and wonder what these doctors were thinking, leaving such an enormous decision to a terrified twenty-seven-year-old without a clue as to what should be done. I had no one to advise me. My mother was wracked with guilt that she had done this to me, my sister and father were terrified that I was sick. I was really, really scared of what it would do to me after witnessing my mother's struggles with chemo.

I decided to have eight and a half weeks of radiation. When it ended, I felt fine and sort of relieved. It hadn't been that bad, and now it was over.

Three and a half years later, though, another lump appeared in my left armpit. I was instantly overwhelmed with fear, anger, and guilt. I couldn't believe it was happening again. I felt sure that had I chosen chemo before, I wouldn't be facing a second bout of cancer now.

My surgeon removed the new tumor and 27 lymph nodes from under my arm. This time around, there was no choice about treatment. Chemo was coming. The fight for my life had begun.

In a way, I was happy for the clear course of action. I was afraid, but at the same time it felt good to have a doctor take charge of this aspect of my life and give me direction on what I had to do.

I also received, in the midst of all this horror, an amazing gift. About three months earlier, I'd started dating a great guy. Once he learned I had cancer, I was sure he'd be gone. Instead of leaving me, however, he became my savior. Not baldness or nausea or scary moments of pain could make him leave my side. His strength centered me. Together, we made it through.

Today, six years after my last treatment and ten years after that fateful day at my best friend's house, I'm cancer free. I'm also married to my wonderful man, and we're hoping my doctor will soon give us the go-ahead to start a family. We know there's a chance I may not be able to have a baby, but we're ready to give it a try.

Cancer has taught me that yesterday is history and tomorrow a mystery. All we have is today. I suppose that's why it's called the present!

I wish all of you this gift: the wonder and joy of today.

CHAPTER 6

A Girl Thing



THE SURVIVORS REMEMBER

Marybeth: My treatment triggered menopause, and that, combined with steroids and poor food choices, piled twenty pounds on me. I'd always been athletic and fit, so this was hard for me to deal with. I worked out whenever I could, but it wasn't until chemo ended and I went on Weight Watchers that I was able to regain some control over my weight.

Chris: I gained forty pounds. Some of it was chemo, and some of it was my complete lack of exercise other than lifting my fork at the dinner table. I dieted after treatment, and lost twenty-five, which is fine. My skin cleared up too. Even though this was hard to deal with, it was all temporary.

Laura: It was important for me to be in control throughout my cancer. Staying in shape was the only way I could actually retain some control over my body, but I still lost about thirty-three pounds during treatment.

Patricia: My bones ached and the hot flashes from menopause were very frequent, but I took that as a good sign. It meant my body didn't have any estrogen. I gained weight and have had to work hard to get rid of the extra pounds, but I think that would've happened to me anyway—my body just slowed down faster because treatment put me into early menopause.

The Side Effects

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| hot flashes | vaginal dryness |
| loss of appetite | yeast infections |
| mouth sores | bladder infections |
| reduced libido | compromised sexuality |
| weight gain | changes to taste |
| weight loss | |

The Pearls

Chemo dishes out its rough blend of side effects on an equal basis. Men get prostate and testicular cancer, women get breast and ovarian. We each get as bald as the other. Treatment isn't any kinder to male skin than it is to ours.

Our complex reproductive systems, however, provide many more organs for cancer to affect. Feeding on hormones, these cancers thrive on the biological fuel that powers our female engines. The first thing chemotherapy does is starve cancer of the food it needs to live by shutting down our hormone producing capabilities. This is an incredible, life-

saving medical breakthrough. It's also why we suffer in unique ways our brothers in arms will never experience.

Enduring the sexual side effects of chemo can have a direct impact on how we look and feel. Aching bones and hot flashes have an impact on our posture, wardrobe, and attitude. Solving these problems restores our comfort and confidence. We feel better, we look better, and we radiate once again from within the feminine beauty that is our special domain.

WHAT'S GOING ON

Eliminating estrogen from our bodies is one of the most effective weapons oncologists use to halt a hormone-positive tumor in its tracks. Without this nourishment, the cancer cannot continue to exist. Highly effective chemo drugs wipe out malignant cells present in our bodies. Our empty hormone reserves make sure new tumor cells never get the opportunity to grow.

Our ovaries and vaginas depend on a regular supply of estrogen to operate properly. Without it, they shut down. Menstrual periods become irregular or completely disappear. The flesh inside our vaginas becomes thin and dry. Opportunistic infections arise. Struggling to replace the missing hormone, our pituitary gland sends an emergency signal to our ovaries to get to work. They do not respond. Moving into overdrive to conquer this breakdown, the heart races and the skin sweats, and we are left feeling clammy and cold. Emotions go haywire. Metabolism slows. We put on weight. We are not happy campers anymore.

These issues, though difficult for any woman to deal

with, hit chemo girls particularly hard. We're already doing all we can to fight the good fight. The last thing we want is a new combat front. These symptoms are also difficult for many women to discuss. Deeply private and personal, an intimate conversation with your oncologist about the state of your vagina, sexuality, bones, or periods might be hard for you to initiate.

"It's sometimes very embarrassing for a woman to discuss these issues with her oncologist, especially if he's a man," Dr. Thomas Caputo says. As chief of Gynecological Oncology at New York Hospital, Dr. Caputo treats hundreds of chemo girls annually. He's well acquainted with just about every sexual side effect they'll face. His overriding advice to these women is to understand that doctors are unfazed by these issues. They have much help to offer—if they know it's needed.

"Though it may be uncomfortable for you to talk about sexual issues or matters concerning your libido or vagina, if you are upfront with your caregivers, they should be able to help you overcome or at least cope with whatever it is that you are experiencing," says Dr. Caputo.

Modesty, dignity, shyness, and pride all have their place in our lives, but when it comes to the side effects of chemotherapy, it is almost impossible to imagine anyone on your oncology team being surprised by any symptom you report. It may be difficult to get the words out, but if you find the courage just to state your problem, you'll likely come away from the conversation with a solution or two that will help make a difference in how you feel, how you look, and how you carry on.

Hot Flashes

Shutting down hormone production usually throws a woman into menopause, which is the cessation of the menstrual period. Younger chemo girls (under 40) will likely resume their periods once treatment ends. The older the patient is, however, the greater her chance that chemo-induced menopause will remain permanent.

During treatment, it doesn't really matter whether your menopausal state will continue or end. Understanding and dealing with the symptoms is what's important.

The most well-known side effect of menopause is a hot flash. Your heart pounds, your body heats up, you sweat, your face turns red. As the flash subsides, a feeling of chilliness or clamminess occurs.

While there really isn't any way to stop a hot flash from happening, there are things you can do to make them less severe.

"Look for body-building foods," suggests Dr. Canzone, an Eastern medical doctor. "Try anti-inflammatory foods, such as asparagus, cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, berries, dates, figs, avocado, fish, different summer squash, winter squash, green beans, root vegetables, whole grains, and lamb, because they will help your system adjust.

"Avoid vinegar, smoked foods, cashews, peanuts, and pistachios," she continues. "They cause inflammation, and what you want at this time are the more cooling foods in your system. Don't over acidify your body with heavy foods, fatty meats. If you don't digest and break down your foods, that can cause too much heat in your body and hot flashes."

Dietician and nutritionist Amy Bragagnini agrees that dietary changes may help. “Avoid hot spicy foods, alcohol, caffeine, hot beverages, and soups,” she says. “Keep yourself hydrated. Soy contains estrogen-like compounds called isoflavones. It has been suggested that soy may help reduce hot flashes, but I would advise caution if you have had breast cancer. Ask your doctor if this is a safe choice for you.

“Your thyroid might be out of balance,” Dr. Canzone adds. “Ask your doctor to run a full thyroid panel to make sure that’s not the source of the problem.”

“Reflexology and shiatsu are helpful because there’s too much fire in the body, and it needs to be cooled,” says massage therapist Gayle MacDonald.

Cheryl Chapman, a massage therapist specializing in oncology and mastectomy patients, agrees that massage helps. She advises using common sense and caution during the session.

“Warm oil will only make it worse,” she says about massage practices. “Use cold stones on the face, in the hands. Let the massage lower the heart rate.”

Infections

Without hormones producing the lubricating juices that keep our vagina and urinary tract in balance, bladder and yeast infections become more common. They are almost instantly recognizable. If you notice a discharge in your panties or feel a certain pressure in your abdomen, call the doctor. Quick intervention is the best way to stop these

problems in their tracks. Once treated, there are several ways you can lessen your chances of getting another.

“Yeast infections are very common for some women, while others almost never get one. It’s dependent on the chemistry of each woman’s body,” Dr. Caputo says. “To combat an occurrence, you can try taking acidophilus. Add yogurt and cranberry juice to your diet. Wear cotton underwear. Stay away from tight pants—give that area of your body a chance to breathe in clothes. Avoid harsh laundry detergents.”

If you follow this advice and still end up with an infection, Dr. Caputo recommends prescription creams, oral medications, and nonsensitizing creams that can be applied to your vulva.

“Tell your doctor, or call your gynecologist—they can prescribe Diflucan or a symptom-appropriate medication,” he says.

With bladder infections, Dr. Caputo says regular urination and lots of liquids are the best defense. “Go to the bathroom often. Don’t hold it in. Urinate after sexual intercourse. If these infections become frequent, go to a urologist, who can examine you with a scope to ensure that there’s not some contributing problem causing this to happen.

“Notify your oncologist the moment you feel an infection coming on,” he adds. “Get on an antibiotic right away. That will knock the infection out.”

Bone Density/Osteoporosis

Chemo drugs and estrogen-blocking hormone treatments are particularly effective in treating certain types of female-

specific cancers. They also raise the likelihood of decreasing the mineral density in our bones, which leads to osteoporosis.

“Think of your bones as a bank for calcium,” says orthopedic surgeon Dr. Brian Torpey. “The deposits you’ve made in terms of calcium intake throughout your life, as well as your level of physical activity, will determine your bone stock, as it’s called. Chemo can be likened to a withdrawal from your stock—it reduces your calcium resources.”

To replenish what chemotherapy is taking from your bones, Dr. Torpey advises eating the right foods and taking supplements.

“Maintain your intake of supplemental calcium around 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams per day. Supplemental vitamin D intake should include 200 to 800 IUs. Eat low-fat dairy products like cheese, milk, and yogurt. Include fresh fish, spinach, broccoli, and orange juice in your diet.

“Depending on your age, I would also recommend getting a baseline bone density reading before you begin your treatment so that the amount of calcium in the bones can be monitored,” he adds. “Because of the long-term effects the patient may have to deal with once the cancer is gone, we like to make sure their bone strength is at appropriate levels. We want them to enjoy the rest of their lives without being frail or compromised.”

Dr. Torpey says that the closer you are to menopause, the more important it is to get this baseline scan. If you’re in your forties or fifties, ask your doctor about scheduling a scan. If you’re in your thirties or younger, discuss risk factors including weight, ethnicity, and family background

with your oncologist to decide when to schedule your baseline scan.

Sex

You may think that dealing with cancer means that your sex life is gone, but that's only true if you want it to be.

"If a woman is going through chemo, I recommend she send her partner for a massage," says Cheryl. "Everyone needs touch. They need contact. Massage is a good way to satisfy that skin hunger without any related intimacy."

"Real life is not like a Hollywood movie," Dr. Caputo says. "No one is having as much sex as we think they are. But intimacy is important. During cancer, it's not impossible to maintain a sexual relationship with your partner, as long as you don't pressure yourself into a state where you cannot function as a sexual being."

As a gynecological oncologist, Dr. Caputo is well versed in the various symptoms that could put the kibosh on physical intimacy during chemo.

"There is limited or no vaginal estrogen. The vagina becomes dry, making sex painful. Women may lose their interest in sex because it's uncomfortable, or they feel unattractive, or they're tired or stressed, or their hormones have been wiped out," he explains. "There are things we can do to help them, as long as they let us know this has become a problem.

"The first thing I tell all my patients is don't quit your job," Dr. Caputo says. "Try to keep your life as close to nor-

mal as you can. Exercise. Go out. Talk on the phone. Don't withdraw from the world. This will all affect how you feel about your life and yourself. Being isolated and unhappy is not conducive to propping up your libido."

You don't have to make love during treatment in order to be healthy. But if you find the stress of your illness and its effects on your love life are starting to affect your mate as well as your own heart, consider ways to rekindle intimacy.

Confronted with vaginal dryness, Dr. Canzone suggests vitamin E or coconut oil as an aid. "You can just insert it into your vagina with your fingers," she says. "Or let your partner. It's very light and it will help you feel more lubricated and comfortable."

Dr. Caputo agrees that creams and oils can be very helpful. "Use over-the-counter vaginal moisturizer or lubricant inserts. They provide appropriate levels of lubrication. They're nonhormonally active and nonirritating. Look for Replens or other products specifically designed to help vaginal tissue regain elasticity and moisture.

"Vaginal dilators help stretch the walls of the vagina," he says. "These can make intercourse more comfortable. You can use a lubricant that is not hormonally active."

Check with your doctor to see if these remedies are appropriate for you. You can also try yoga, meditation, and exercise as ways to bring your body back into a more normal state. This can help you maintain your relationship as a joyful, intimate partnership.

Eating Right/Staying Fit

The food choices you make during chemo will have a huge impact on your ability to deal with almost every aspect of your cancer experience.

“Nutrition is a huge part of cancer treatment,” says Amy. “Proper nutrition can help people build strength, withstand the effects of cancer and treatment, and manage fatigue or prevent it from happening. Eat small meals. Get adequate protein, fiber, fluid, and nutrition into the diet. You’ll be healthier, more upbeat, and feel better.”

If you are what you eat, be a hero and put into your body the protein and fiber and liquid and vitamins it needs to withstand the chemo assault. A proper diet of smart, tasty ingredients will manifest itself in a very positive physical way. You’ll look better, you’ll feel better, and you’ll *be* better if you feed yourself the smart way. Here’s how.

Be Prepared

Keeping the right kinds of food in your house will make it easier for you to remain nutritionally balanced during your treatment.

“Doing the shopping and stocking the pantry and the freezer so that you have your favorite foods around and can eat when you don’t feel like eating is really the key to success,” says Amy. “Cook in advance. Have friends and family prep meals and store them in your freezer or fridge. Have a variety of choices available. This will make eating much easier.”

“Ask friends to make soups for you,” Dr. Canzone says. “Go around your town and find the restaurant with the best, freshest soups. Buy a week’s worth so you always have something tasty and nutritious to eat. Make sure you freeze the soups in one cup containers so the soups do not sit in your refrigerator and spoil.”

“You want to have enough choices so that something will spark your interest,” Amy says. “Keep plenty of fruits and vegetables in stock, canned, frozen, or raw. They are good for vitamin and mineral intake.”

“Whole grain breads are filling, easy to digest, and fiber rich,” says New York-based chiropractor and nutritionist Dr. Joann Weinrib. “Rice and potatoes are easy to make and eat. Try to stay close to fresh. Watch your salt intake. That can dehydrate you at a time when you want to maintain hydration.”

“You want to maintain a positive attitude and think that some of the harder side effects, like nausea, constipation, or diarrhea won’t happen,” Amy says. “But you also want to be able to combat those symptoms if they occur. A good way to do that is to be prepared with appropriate foods.”

Eating Before Infusion

Going for treatment can be a nerve-racking business, especially if you’re dealing with a lot of postinfusion side effects. Don’t let your fears and anxieties get the better of your ability to eat.

“Be in nutritional training as you prepare for chemo,” says Dr. Canzone. “If you properly nourish your system before your infusion, it’s likely that some of the more difficult

side effects such as nausea and vomiting can be lessened or even eliminated.”

Dr. Canzone says brothy soups are a good choice the day before treatment. “Start off in the morning with a hot soup that is filled with nutrients—a chicken soup, a vegetable soup, or a tasty bone marrow broth,” she advises. “These are calming to your system, because you don’t have to work hard on digestion. These foods help ease you into your infusion by soothing your body while you feed it.”

“As the day goes along, supplement with finger foods like dates and figs and avocado. Prepare a cold smoothie, something that’s pleasant smelling and tastes good.”

Amy agrees that it’s important to consume easily digestible foods before heading to treatment. “A low-fat meal with a little bit of complex carbohydrate and a little bit of protein is the best,” she says. “It can be as simple as a couple of pieces of whole grain toast with some peanut butter, a bowl of high-fiber cereal with low-fat milk and some juice, or egg whites and a bagel.”

Never go to your infusion hungry or on an empty stomach, Dr. Canzone advises. “The drugs will gnaw at your stomach and cause all sorts of uncomfortable side effects.

“The biggest problem I find is that people don’t nourish themselves enough to get through chemo,” she says. “The taste buds are off. Treatment knocks out the appetite. While it’s understandable not to want to eat, patients have to find a way to feed their bodies so that they can withstand the drugs they’re receiving and continue to thrive.

“Dates, figs, and raisins take the decay out of the body. They are high in nutritional value,” Dr. Canzone says. “They’re

also sweet and easy to eat. Even if you're very nerved up about the chemo to come, make a point to put something in your stomach before you go for your treatment.

The PMG nurses agree. "Eat a small meal to maintain your strength and protect your stomach," they advise. "Bring water or juice and some crackers with you so that you can continue to feed yourself lightly throughout your infusion."

"Stay away from preservatives and chemicals," Dr. Weinrib says. "Keep your food as close to fresh as possible."

Eating After Infusion

Once your treatment is over, you'll go home. Once there, continue on the path of small, easy meals and finger foods. Maintain a diet mix of protein, complex carbohydrates, and liquid.

"If your doctor has told you that you're going to be feeling bad for a few days after treatment, eat a little bit more leading up to infusion day to compensate for the days that follow when you don't want to eat as much," Amy says. "Try not to let your system become completely empty. You'll likely be more nauseated on an empty stomach than you would be if you had something small to eat."

"Try soups with protein and fiber," Dr. Weinrib says, "such as chicken and rice or noodles or beef broth and potatoes. Or buy some protein powder and mix it up with some yogurt and fruit in a shake."

"Treat yourself like a baby," Dr. Canzone says. "Would you feed a baby a steak? Even though you need to build up your blood, you have to do it in a way that's gentle to your system. Beef broth is great. A cold fruit smoothie with-

out milk will help if you're nauseated or suffering digestive fire. Avoid dairy, as that could exacerbate the problem. Go in the opposite direction of what your stomach is feeling—if it's hot, give it cold foods. If it feels settled, try warm, gentle broth. As your body settles, introduce some poached salmon or some steamed vegetables, whatever you can handle that's not too rich."

"If you get home and can't eat, find a fluid with nutrients so that you receive some protein, vitamins, and minerals—something like a clear, liquid protein drink," says Amy.

If nausea is a problem, avoid hot foods or those with a strong odor. Go for either cold drinks or meals that can be served at room temperature—salads, pasta, cereals, figs, or dates.

"Concentrate on high-protein foods—lean meats, low-fat dairy products, egg or egg whites, beans, hummus, peanut butter, nuts, trail mix. Anything you can think of that will lend itself to getting more protein into your diet is good," Amy says.

"Don't forget about hydration," says Dr. Weinrib. "Gatorade or Pedialite are great. Seltzer water is a nice alternative to regular water, if you find that it's too heavy in your system. There is also coconut water, which has a lot of potassium and is gentle to your system. You can find it at health food stores."

Dr. Weinrib also recommends drinking green tea. "It's everything it's cracked up to be," she says. "It helps absorb oxidants, improves your healing quotient, fills you up, and is very soothing."

Since hydration is so crucially important right now, anything that drains your body of fluid is going to work against you. Avoid alcohol and caffeine and keep a glass of appropriate liquid nearby.

“You don’t have to drink the whole thing down in one sitting,” says Dr. Weinrib. “Just have it nearby. Whenever you look at it, take a sip. By the end of the day, you should have taken in about six to eight glasses.”

To make sure you’re properly hydrated, look at your urine. “It should be lightly colored,” says Amy, “If it’s a dark amber, you may not be getting enough fluid.”

Dry mouth and cracked lips may signal a lack of adequate moisture. If you’re experiencing this or your urine is very dark, ask your oncology team about your kidney levels. They are a good indicator of your body’s hydration.

As you move away from infusion day, keep the food and liquid flowing into your system. This is the proven path to overcoming the hardest effects of chemo. It gives your body the tools it needs to recover.

Putting on the Pounds

Though you may have imagined that chemo would shrink you down a size or two, many women find they gain weight during treatment. There are a variety of reasons for this—fluid retention, steroids, menopause, lack of exercise, and poor food choices are some of the most obvious. If you want to keep your weight in check, safe and sensible approaches are the best way to begin.

“Eliminate salt,” says Dr. Weinrib. “Go through all your foods and make sure nothing has salt. Chips, pretzels, hot

dogs are all loaded with sodium. You want your intake to be close to zero. Any one item that's over 400 milligrams is too much."

"If you're gaining weight, do a dietary recall to find out what, when, and why you're eating," says Amy. "Are your habits emotionally based? Are you eating out of boredom or stress? Are you skipping meals? Try eating lots of small meals throughout the day. Never skip breakfast. It kick-starts your metabolism. Even if it's just a little bit of yogurt, or a protein bar, or a few crackers with peanut butter, put something in your stomach in the morning. That sets the nutritional tone for the rest of the day."

Another commonsense approach to weight control is staying active.

"Daily physical activity can elevate your immune system and keeps lean body mass strong. It can help improve appetite and elevate mood," Amy says. "Speak with your doctor first about your exercise/activity plans."

"Even though we all have different strengths and weaknesses as well as different attitudes about exercise, it's absolutely essential for anyone who wants to restore their vitality to partake in some sort of daily physical activity," says former NFL star John Nies.

"You don't want to push yourself too hard," he continues. "Move, stretch, increase your heart rate, and exert some effort on behalf of your body. Don't think of it as a chore, but as a blessing that you are able to move, and breathe, and engage in physical activity. Think of your body as a precious jewel or a holy temple. Treat it with love and respect. It will respond in a positive way."

The Skinny on Weight Loss

Some chemo girls experience significant weight loss during their treatment. If this happens to you, make sure you minimize the depletion of lean body mass.

“High calorie, high protein, nutrient dense foods should be eaten,” says Amy. “Eggs and dairy and lean meats are all good sources of protein. Make sure you’re eating every two to three hours through the day. If you find you don’t want to chew, utilize supplement drinks. Find recipes online for high-calorie smoothies that contain flax seed, milk, oatmeal, fruit—anything that you can put into a blender to pump up calories and taste will create a drink that’s satisfying and nutritionally sound.”

“I ask my patients to drink a milkshake if they aren’t nauseated,” Dr. Canzone says. “Sometimes they’ll protest and say they contain sugar, but sugar is okay, as long as it’s not overdone. It’s better to drink a milkshake than to stare at a plate of food and not eat any of it.

“Feed yourself the things your body can handle,” she continues. “Treat yourself kindly. Focus on what is still wonderful about you. This will help offset the feelings of nausea, fatigue, and malaise that often wreck an appetite. If you create calmness in your whole being, you’ll find your desire for food returning. By eating gentle, nourishing meals, you’ll go a long way toward maintaining your health and your physical and spiritual balance.”

Changes to Taste

As chemo continues, you may find your taste buds responding to foods differently, or not responding at all. While

this makes it harder to eat, there are some strategies you can employ to offset the problem and maintain a reasonably healthy diet.

“Try experimenting with different flavors, seasonings, dressings, and marinades,” Amy says. “Anything that will give moisture to food can help improve flavor and assist with ease of swallowing.”

Amy recommends citrus, such as lemon or lime squirted on meat, because these fruits have a flavor even the most challenged mouth will be able to taste.

“Good mouth care is also important,” she adds. “Rinse your mouth with baking soda and water to keep your mouth moist, clean, and healthy.”

If you are experiencing a metallic taste, avoid canned foods. Switch to plastic eating utensils.

“Sometimes a metal fork or spoon adds to the offensive sensation,” Amy explains. “You want to stay away from anything that is aluminum or metal or silver. Go for a more taste-neutral plastic.”

If you develop mouth sores, “Try sucking on an ice pop during infusion,” the PMG nurses recommend. “They’ll hydrate you and help eliminate sores.”

Dr. Leonard Wright says tea tree oil will also help alleviate this symptom. “Dilute it with water and swish it around in your mouth. The sores or lesions will clear up quite nicely.”

The Rainbow Connection

No matter what your diet was like before cancer, pay attention to what you’re feeding your body during treatment.

These choices have a direct effect on your health during chemo and in the years that follow.

“Definitive research shows that the best way to ensure proper nutrition and physical well-being is to get more fruits and vegetables into our diets,” Amy says. “Go for extra fruits and veggies. Make a rainbow plate, with dark green leaves or vegetables, carrots, yellow bell peppers, or multicolored fruit salads. Consume a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, nuts or seeds, and low-fat dairy every day.”

“Take a good supplement that has the full spectrum of minerals and vitamins,” Dr. Weinrib says. “Don’t depend on them to provide you with appropriate nutrition. Use them to help build up your reserves. Get the majority of your nutrients from food, not vitamins.”

Amy agrees. “If you want to maintain good health and good strength and withstand the effects of chemo, make sure you eat well.” If you need information on how to do this, contact a registered dietitian at your treatment center.

She also recommends contacting these sources for further nutritional advice:

- The American Dietetic Association
- The American Cancer Society
- The American Institute for Cancer Research
- www.eatright.org
- www.cancernutrition.com

“That last one is an oncology dietitian website with lots of great information,” Amy says.

Nutritional Beauty

Eating well is an obligation we must fulfill if we're to get through chemotherapy with strength and resilience. The food choices we make have an instant effect on our ability to heal and manage our situation. Being hungry or malnourished leaves us weak, anxious, tired, and confused. Proper nourishment elevates our mood, raises our coping skills, and enhances our sense of personal power. Chemo girls can greatly enhance their fabulousness by making a commitment to ingesting the protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals our bodies crave. Friends, family, and others who want to help you can lend a hand in this area by dropping off meals you and those you live with can enjoy.

Reaching out to your circle of supporters will go a long way toward making sure you receive your daily bread, giving them the opportunity to do something truly important and useful for you.

Enhance your physical fitness, elevate your spirit, and brighten your inner glow. Serve yourself the gift of nutritional health, and you'll dish out a message of positive energy to everyone who cares about you. Your hydrated skin, sparkling eyes, and honest smile will prove you can do more than survive under the enormous pressure of cancer treatment. You can thrive.

If we are what we eat, eat smart. Eat well. Your body will thank you—and your deepest beauty will continue to shine through.

To learn more about the topics discussed in this chapter, please visit these websites:

www.cancer.org

csn.cancer.org

www.bodycentralnyc.com

www.medicinehands.com

www.cherylchapman.com

www.cancernutritioninfo.com

www.aicr.org

www.eatright.org

www.healthcastle.com

www.njpowercenter.com

www.naturedoc.org

www.massagesource.com

www.mayoclinic.com

www.wegeinstitute.org

EPILOGUE

Parting Pearls



“BC” has many different meanings in this world. It can stand for “Before Christ,” “Before College,” or “Before Children.” But once you’ve been diagnosed, your world will always be divided into two distinct phases—“Before Cancer” and everything that comes after.

Hard as it may seem to believe right now, once your treatment ends, life will return to normal. Eventually, you’ll pass whole chunks of time without giving a single thought to cancer. But the memory of what you faced will remain inside you and, in a variety of ways both large and small, change you forever.

As you move through your cancer journey, our experts and survivors have each expressed a wish for you. Consider these their parting bits of wisdom from people you may never meet, but who want you to know that you are braver than you think, smarter than you know, and more beautiful than you could ever imagine.

From Marybeth

About two years after I completed chemo, an article in *The New York Times* got me thinking about the changes cancer and chemotherapy had on me. Called “Is Looking Your Age the New Taboo?” it reported that Americans were so afraid of showing their age that women who had yet to turn 30 were undergoing plastic surgery to reverse what they feared was their loss of youthful beauty.

This message really hit a nerve with me because “BC” I was one of those women, always fighting the battle against gravity, cellulite, and wrinkles. When cancer came knocking, I finally stopped worrying about being super fit and shiny and smooth and learned to cut myself a break. I wrote this letter to the editor of *The New York Times*, which was published a few days later:

“Who’s the Youngest of Them All?”

Published: March 5, 2007

To the Editor:

Long before sunscreen was a standard ingredient in moisturizer, I stayed out of the sun. I exercised, did yoga, ate grains, avoided meat, colored my hair and maintained a body mass index of 18. Though I loved it when people thought I was a decade younger than my actual age, I never for one moment relaxed in my battle against aging.

Then I was diagnosed with cancer. My breasts were removed. My hair fell out. My once-perfect skin was scarred from surgery, my formerly limber joints creaked, my rosy skin turned sallow and steroids included in my chemotherapy shot my weight up 20 pounds.

Today, at 46, I’m in menopause. I carry an extra 10

pounds that just won't go away. I have wrinkles, graying hair and limited flexibility. I also have a profound sense of my "real" beauty. Where I once sought perfection, I now celebrate my life, and my triumph over disease gives me a beauty no cream or vial can provide.

I once believed that I'd be going for injections to smooth those lines around my mouth and brow. But now I'm proud to look my age; I've earned every year.

My hope is that you'll be proud of what you've done to fight your disease. You've earned the right to stand tall no matter what sickness has done to your body. Don't believe for a second you aren't gorgeous because anyone who can do what we have, look cancer in the eye and refuse to blink, is truly, deeply, spiritually beautiful.

From Debbie

Remember to ask for support. Those around you may be just as afraid, or even more afraid, than you are. Reach out and you'll find the comfort you may seek. Be strong, but don't go it alone. Those who love and care will be there so that together you can make the journey toward recovery.

From Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy, Ph.D.

There are the illnesses of the physical body and the illnesses of the soul, the heart, and the mind. If we have health in our souls and our minds and our hearts, we are much better off than those who have physical health but are spiritually ill. See the work of Allah in the medical treatments you receive, and use your illness to take you higher in your faith. If you can do this, you will find hope, strength, per-

severance, and courage. You will become closer to the peace and beauty of God.

From Amy Gibson

Who we are is the essence of what we carry. No one can take that from us. You can lose your hair, but you'll never lose your essence. So put your makeup on and go to chemo dressed like the lady you are. Believe in yourself and try not to give into depression or think of yourself as sick. The better you feel about yourself when dealing with a health issue, the greater your success will be.

From Amy Bragagnini

In the big picture of your life, this is a speed bump, not a roadblock. Get your treatment, whatever that entails, and then move on. Enlist all the help that's available for you, from dietitians to support groups to exercise and spiritual care. Get whatever you need to be well in both body and spirit.

From Anastasia

Be strong, and believe and feel with your entire body that you will overcome this. Our bodies react amazingly to our emotions, so remember to keep positive.

From Betsey

Don't be afraid to talk about it. Open up to your closest supporters and make a plan for how you're going to deal with this time. Let them help you stay focused on what you

need to do. Don't forget the support groups. There's such a community out there, such a sisterhood that you can be part of—it's really amazing!

From Brian Torpey, M.D.

Medicine is constantly changing and doctors now are far more approachable than they once were, so don't hesitate to ask questions. Take advantage of information technology to learn what you can about your condition, what's going on, and what you're dealing with. Tap into all the positive support that's out there, so you have whatever you want and need to get through this.

From Cheryl

You always need someone to talk to, so find a counselor or someone to confide in, talk with, and cry with. Women don't do well at asking for things. You have to learn to let go of that and ask for what you need. Do research. Make sure you understand what you're being told, and don't be afraid to speak up if there's something you don't understand. Upset the applecart if it's in your best interest to do this, and put yourself first whenever you can.

From Chris

Positive thinking is essential to recovery. You just have to focus on life and on all that you still want to accomplish. Let that be your inspiration. No matter how hard it is for you, others have faced even greater difficulties. If they can do it, so can you.

From Christine

I've never met a woman who loved everything about her body. The whole point of fashion is to make the most of what you've got. If you want, you can look stylish every day. This situation is only temporary. Embrace the new you and look forward to getting better.

From Deann

Find the friends who will be strong with you, and let them help you. It is not easy to lose your hair, but if you have the support you need, it will be a lot less traumatic to experience these side effects. If you open yourself up to people, you will find that there are many who want to lend you a hand.

From Eivind

Be an advocate for yourself. Do what you must to find the answers you seek and do not be afraid. Be kind. Be strong. Find uplifting friends. Lean on a strong shoulder, stay busy, and live your life with optimism, as close to normal as you can.

From Father Dan

We are all joined in the long line of life. It is not only us, it is all creation, all the people who ever were or ever will be who share God's presence and enjoy God's salvation. No one is ever alone. God is always with us.

From Francine

I believe in hope, but hope alone doesn't get you anywhere. Combine hope with passion—for your life, your health,

your family, for the things that really matter to you—and that will get you through. Focus on the passions that resonate in your soul and you will heal. Your future will once again be what you want it to be.

From Gayle

Women don't ordinarily put themselves first or allow themselves to be taken care of, so when help is offered, say yes. Throw out everything in your life that you don't need and isn't working. Draining friends, needing to have your house spotless, being president of the PTA—if it's too much for you, let it go, and concentrate on what works for you and makes you calm and relaxed and happy.

From Howard Murad, M.D.

Isolation is prevalent in our society for both the healthy and the sick. My advice is to reduce that isolation because when you are ill it is common to withdraw from others. At the same time it is vital to acknowledge your feelings. Join a support group or network where you can openly discuss what is going on psychologically and emotionally. I believe you will be healthier and stronger if you do.

From Joann Weinrib, Chiropractor

Keep the faith. You're on a journey now that will change your life. All the people I know who have gone through this have come out of it much stronger. Now you'll have a new life story. Trust that your inner strength will help you do whatever you need to be well.

From John

Have faith. It is our greatest ally when faced with adversity and fear. Let go of fear, which is our biggest nemesis and can undermine our ability to aid ourselves in the healing process. Love is life's most powerful force. When we call on it and collectively use it for a given task, we can conquer suffering. Smile and laugh as much as you can, for they are two of the best remedies for healing almost any affliction.

From Krista

I know what you have to face will not be easy, but you are not alone, and there is nothing wrong with wanting to look good. Of course, beauty starts from within. During this time, if you can look in the mirror and be happy with what you see, that will boost your endorphins, which are nature's high, and they in turn will boost your immune system. Go ahead and pamper yourself—by looking better, you will not only feel better, but you will actually help your body heal.

From Leonard Wright, M.D.

Look at yourself and understand why you want to live and then use that as your anchor to this world. Make your reasons part of your fiber and your soul, and fit this motivation into every part of your life. Envision your future, and make plans for it so that you are always moving toward your dreams and goals.

From Lloyd Gayle, M.D.

Take it one day at a time. Deal with each issue and symptom as it comes. Don't try to prejudge things and don't try

to anticipate what's going to happen next, just go with what's happening and know it will be over. It *will* end.

From Kurt

You are part of the universe, not separate from it. If you make trust your path and embrace your illness as part of yourself, you may find that what is happening to you will help you wake up to the oneness of everything, and through that you will find your true nature. Look at this experience as a challenge to be spiritually at peace, and embrace this opportunity to find serenity and calm. If you can find your way to the oneness of everything, then nothing bad will ever happen. No matter what occurs, it is all good.

From Leah

Do whatever you need to do to look good, or hot, or make you feel your best. A lot of this is internal—the strength and the bravery and the fight to be well. Be strong and be positive. Even if we don't know you personally, we're still pulling for you. The world is on your side.

From Louis Philippe

We are social beings. You can't become a recluse and close the doors. Get out there and talk to people so that you know you're not alone. Focus on what you can do to feel better about yourself. It's a bit of a process, but this is not the end. There's so much help and more and more people are surviving. It's like HIV—once that meant life was over, but now it's just an illness you live with. Make a plan, like a recipe, and then follow it through.

From Michele

This is just a transitory moment in time. It will pass, so don't hide under a bush and fear the changes that have occurred. Concentrate on how you are going to feel your best during this phase of your life. Your future is coming. Hang onto hope and deal with what is happening as best you can so that you still get out there every day and live your life to the fullest.

From Noah Gilson, M.D.

The benefits of treatment far outweigh the difficulties. The side effects will fade over time. Hang in there and trust that, though it is tough, the chemo will work and you will be okay.

From the Oncology Nurses at Princeton Medical Group

People want to be supportive. Accept every bit of help that is offered to you. Line up people to drive you to your chemo, or take notes for you at your doctor's visits, or prepare some meals, or keep an eye on your kids. Be honest with them about what you need. You'll find caring volunteers ready to be of service to help you get through.

From Oribe

It's important to keep a good head throughout this whole thing, and find ways to make yourself look attractive. You need confidence and courage. Be strong and brave and if you can, keep a sense of humor. Someday you'll laugh about when you had to shave your head.

From Oscar

Look ahead to the future and keep a positive spirit. You are not alone and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. As time goes by you will grow healthy and strong, and so will your hair.

From Pastor Pat

What is impossible for human beings is possible through God. Be kind to yourself. Take it one day at a time, one task at a time. Decide what you need to do today and then just do that one thing. Lean on your friends. Don't be afraid or ashamed to feel grief, or anger, or anything negative. You can't choose your feelings—if you try, you do violence to the way God made you. You can't tune out the negative, because then the positive feelings are not happening naturally, either. Just accept that this is happening to you, that it is part of life, and that it will pass. God is with you. Find strength through faith.

From Patricia

Think positive. Be your own advocate; stay on top of the literature. Fear only decreases as time passes and when you are feeling well. Accept help—most people want to help and are kind. Be selfish—put your needs first. Give your body what it needs to heal.

From Patricia Wexler, M.D.

Wanting to look good is not trivial. It's about you feeling healthy and good about yourself. It's not about just being

grateful that you're alive; it's about being grateful that you're alive and also facing every day with your best foot, and your best attitude, forward. You don't have to present yourself to the world looking sick. You can feel healthy, you can look healthy, and you can be healthy. When I see my patients embrace this attitude, it makes me very happy.

From Peter Staats, M.D.

There are a lot of options for patients today, so don't suffer silently. If you're in pain or you're uncomfortable, search for ways to be better. Speak to different doctors, look for different treatments, and don't stop until you find what you need. Don't settle, and don't take no for an answer.

From Rabbi Roos

Don't lose sight of who you've been your entire life until this moment of diagnosis, and be that person. Stay true to who you are, to your real self, and don't let this change how you see yourself. Be the person you've always been, and continue to strive to be the person you want to be.

From Rick

Don't compare or anticipate what is going to happen to you based on someone else's experience. You'll have your own journey, and it'll be as individual as you are, so don't get caught up in celebrity stories or movies or in what others say is the right thing to do. Follow your own instincts and deal with the changes that are happening to you as best you can. It's okay to want to look good, and when you do, you'll feel better.

From Robert

I do not recommend that women who are ill or going through chemotherapy try to disguise themselves with layers of glamour. Instead, wear what consoles you and is in tune with your inner feelings. As a patient faces fears of all kinds, it is most important to get yourself grounded into a more pure state of consciousness so that you can see the inner light of God and know that angels are all around, watching over you.

From Rosemarie

Take full advantage of your support system. It's important to have people around you who'll listen if you want to talk and let you be quiet if that's your preference. I tried to shut people out because I didn't understand how much they cared. If I had one thing I could change about that time, it would be to open up to those who wanted to help me and let them be there for me. It's important to make yourself participate in the world even if you want to be private about your illness. If you do, you'll find that you're really not alone.

From Samuel Schneider, Ph.D.

Depend on those who love you and who will be there for you, and do whatever you need. Don't be afraid to speak about your feelings, and let those who care express theirs to you. Let people know if they're doing too much or being overbearing. It's perfectly natural to want space, or feel bad, or wish for solitude. People will be there to help you, as long as you let them know both what you need and what you don't.

From Sandy Canzone, O.M.D.

You're not a statistic. The body wants to live, and you can give it that chance. If there's a friend or anyone who'll walk this walk with you, let them. You aren't alone.

From Sheikh Rahman

See this moment as an opportunity to increase your faith, and take the life that is still yours and use it very well. Use your illness as a blessing for all those who know you, who interact with you, and who love you. Your positive approach to your illness may give you so much strength that what you have put off and pretended to ignore your entire life will be understood and made right. Through this, you will see the work of Allah in our lives. Use it to be well.

From Theresa

This disease will run its course. It does not change who you are. This is a temporary setback. Embrace how you look, and do what you can to make it better. Handle this with the dignity and respect you are due. Make yourself look as beautiful and feel as beautiful as you can, and when this is over, you will be empowered and more beautiful than you ever thought you could be.

From Thomas A. Caputo, M.D.

Be strong. You are not the first to have to face this and you will not be the last, but you will be well again. Just reach into yourself and find the courage, and the will, to do whatever you need to make it through.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



If learning you've got cancer is one of those life experiences that prove how much people need the support of family, friends, and community, as authors we found that writing a book about cancer treatment is surely another.

While we created this book, we know that without the help of the following people we would not have been able to generate a single word. So with the deepest gratitude we thank all the experts who participated in this project and gave so willingly of their time, expertise, and experience. Thanks as well to their assistants and support staff who worked tirelessly to make sure that the interviews took place, that the quotes were verified, and that every deadline was met.

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walk, and raise both funds and awareness for cancer research, treatment, and cures.

And to anyone whose name might be missing, we both thank you for being there for us; while you may not be on this list, you'll always be in our hearts.

Marybeth Addis

On a personal note, I would like to thank my “baby” Christopher and “big boy” Brian for being the best boys a mom could have; my dad, John V. Maher, for showing me through example how to face cancer with courage, strength, and humor; my mom, Veronica Maher; sister Christine Kessler; brothers John and Michael Maher; sisters- and brothers-in-law; nieces and nephews; aunts and uncles; cousins; and family friends for their cards, good wishes, and ever-present support. My mother- and father-in-law, Vincenza and Vincent Maida, for holding my family together as we dealt with this disease; Vinny Maida for holding my hand as I awaited surgery; Caren Maher for putting me back together when I was literally falling apart; Stephanie Escandon, for rides to the doctor, talks on the phone, wonderful lunches, and ready support; and Janis Wilkins for never leaving me alone in a hospital room.

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Debbie Adds

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