

How to Survive the Cancer Roller Coaster

Matt McClain offers tips to help newly diagnosed people advocate for themselves and improve life with and after cancer.

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Matt McClain is working with the nonprofit Imerman Angels, a one-on-one cancer support community, and he is on the patient-caregiver advisory board of the Kidney Cancer Association. His tips can help newly diagnosed people advocate for themselves and improve life with and after cancer.

1. Learn about your health. It's helpful to know what a comprehensive metabolic panel is or the difference between red and white blood cells.
2. Get educated about your illness. Look to the American Cancer Society, Kidney Cancer Association and others. "That helps alleviate the fear and uncertainty," Matt says.
3. Write down your questions. Before your doctor's appointment, make a list of topics to discuss.
4. Remember: It's your body, your health. Treatment is a partnership between you and your doctors.
5. Don't obsess about statistics. When you're diagnosed, your first inclination is to hop online. But the numbers are at least five years old. For kidney cancer, for example, much of the older data don't take into account the advent of immunotherapy, Matt notes.
6. Get psychological help if you need it. Fear, worry and anxiety can eat away at you. Go to Cancer.net and search under "Coping With Cancer" for guidance.
7. Connect with cancer groups. Take advantage of groups at a local hospital or peer-to-peer counseling organizations, like Imerman Angels.
8. Recognize that everyone in life has to give things up. "It's an unfortunate part of aging that we have to relinquish certain activities that we cherish," Matt says. "But other opportunities will arise—be open to things you've never tried before."

For our related cover story profile on Matt, see "[Becoming Mr. Mellow After a Kidney Cancer Diagnosis.](#)"
