The Beatles' "With a Little Help from my Friends" and cancer coping

November 22, 2017 By Robin McGee

So it is official. I need three more additional chemotherapy treatments. I dread it, but I welcome it. It is something I have to move through to get to the other side. I will be on chemo during Christmas, and that is not so fun, but once done I get a few weeks to recover before the heavy surgery in mid-to-late January.

Recently, I gave a talk to the medical receptionist course at Nova Scotia Community College. I drew a timeline across the two blackboards, and together we put an "R" on the line when we came to a place when appropriate medical reception would have turned things around for me. We identified over 14 such places. And that was just The Cancer Olympics story, not the awful events surrounding this recurrence, which was also replete with such error. The students were very engaged. One put up her hand to say that this class was the most important of any they had – that it shocked them into realizing the great privilege and also the great responsibility associated with their future work. They gave me a standing ovation, as well as their famous Nosh cookies!

Many have asked why I have not put out a Beatles song on this blog yet. I am a fanatic Beatlemaniac. There are so many Beatles songs that lend themselves to my situation: "Blackbird," "Hey Jude," "Let it Be," "The Long and Winding Road." Paul McCartney still gets letters daily from people who say these songs saved their lives. But today, I want to choose another famous and charming Beatles song that truly underlines my reality…

"With a little help from my friends," is a song from what many consider the greatest album of all time, 1967's Sgt. Peppers' Lonely Hearts Club Band. There are many stories surrounding the creation of this song. Composed for Ringo, whose limited singing range made for songs that everyone can sing along to, John and Paul spent an afternoon together banging away at a piano for dreamlike hours. Something of their own camaraderie infuses this loving song. Touchingly rendered by Ringo, it is a tender and inclusive song, at once communal and personal.

But for me, this song goes out to all of you who have helped me and supported me: those who brought food; those who sent cards; those who called, emailed, and messaged me; those who tended my garden; those who took me on outings; those who visited; those who offered to put me up at their houses; those who sent me songs; those who read The Cancer Olympics (especially those who wrote Amazon reviews!); those who bought me headscarves and other gifts; those who mowed my lawn; those helped with chores; those who carry my school caseload; those who took

on my abandoned patients; and, those who sent encouragement via social media. So many uncountable acts of kindness and community. I truly love you all: I could not “get by” without you.

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