Post-CT Scan Crash

My latest scan results were stable, but we weren't celebrating. Here's why.

November 10, 2020 By Dann Wonser

Friends and Family,

I won't bury the lead to this story: My latest scan results were again stable. It's been six years since I started in the clinical trial for Tagrisso, a drug that has now been approved, and which normally is effective for thirteen months. This should be cause for over-the-moon celebration, shouldn't it?

This time when Genevieve and I got the news, we couldn't even muster a "whoopee." It was like someone let the air out of us. We both walked around the house moody, and barely mentioned it again. This felt so wrong!

What about this whole "happy-cancer-survivor-who-is-grateful-for-everything" we are all supposed to buy into? It's a great goal, but sometimes it just ain't there.

I have so many friends who would be popping the champagne corks and dancing in the streets if their scan results were stable, so why weren't we?

I think the answer is an overdose... of STRESS. To paraphrase Shakespeare: How do I stress thee? Let me count the ways.

And so I did:

· Political upheaval. There is more uncertainty, fear, and mistrust – many times over - than at any time in my lifetime. For comparison, I'm ancient enough to include the Vietnam War, and even the Cuban Missile Crisis.

· There's this thing called a pandemic. You may have heard about it.

· Now that we're thinking about what it will be like after the pandemic, we're learning that it may take years to get back to "normal." It's probably going to be gradual.

· Here in Portland, smoke from forest fires blew into the city and left us with the worst air quality in the world (no exaggeration – it was on airnow.gov) for more than a week. It was so thick we hermetically sealed ourselves into our house, and couldn't see past our neighbors' house due

to smoke that looked like a dense fog.

· Add all this to the “normal” scanxiety that drives our stress levels up to somewhere past… oh, let’s say Saturn, for about two weeks each time leading up to getting the results.

Together, these triggered a cocktail of stress hormones, including the two you hear most about, adrenaline and cortisol. Those hormones are useful in a fight-or-flight emergency, but when the stress is prolonged, these system superchargers drain your reserves. They suck the life out of you.

And just in time for Halloween!

So how do we get past this being drained business, and get back to finding the joy in life? Genevieve and I kept up our daily walks and yoga, and socializing with family and friends. We also took a trip to our place in the high desert in central Oregon, where the sun shines most of the time. Keeping up exercise, social connections, and structure in your day all help, but it still took time to get it all back.

Back to grateful! Back to celebrating good health! Back to appreciating everything that is going right in the world!

However.

We still have an election coming up in a few days. That is going to produce stress for EVERYONE, no matter what your political beliefs, for weeks. If your candidates and measures lose, it could be tough. If they win, you may still end up deflated. And if there is post-election upheaval, well, that’s going to be one more layer on the stress cake.

At least when you know it’s coming, you can take steps to make it a little easier. It doesn’t matter whether that stress is the next scan, or the next election. I plan on doing these to help in the coming week(s):

· Brace for impact! If you expect to be happy but you’re not, it’s a big letdown, and easy to think there’s something wrong with you. There isn’t.

· Keep up your structure: It’s easy to skip your daily routines when you’re feeling stressed, but these are the very things that help you get through it.

· Eat healthy: Who doesn’t want to resort to eating really tasty crap under stress? If it only didn’t make you feel worse after, it would be a winner.

· Exercise! It’s easy to skip under stress, but it’s a stress antidote.

· Get lots of sleep: NOBODY functions well without reserves.

· Connect with the people you love and care about. ‘Nuff said.

· Reduce your busy schedule until the worst of the stress has passed.

· Be kind to yourself. For example, I won't do everything on this list perfectly, but I plan on giving myself lots of credit for making my best effort. It's part of loving yourself. I hope you can do the same.

This was a long post, considering it took two weeks to realize there was anything I wanted to say. I guess those are the times we need to dig the deepest.

Love,

Dann

P.S. – VOTE!!!

This post originally appeared on Dann's Cancer Chronicles on October 30, 2020. It is republished with permission.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/postct-scan-crash