

Who Is On Your Team?

June 14, 2017 By [Lisa Vento Nielsen](#)

As someone who has been self-sufficient since (almost) birth - an oldest child who helped raise younger siblings from a young age and who has always been an “old soul” being in the position of needing help is akin to torture.

Unfortunately for me, though, being diagnosed with cancer meant help is needed. There are appointments and decisions to be made that young ears should not be privy to until they need to be told. Then there is surgery and treatment plans that need to be handled and trying to care for anyone other than yourself during chemotherapy is a joke.

Someone told me shortly after I was diagnosed that this would be the “year of you” meaning that I would now, for the first time in almost my whole life, have to put myself first and take care of ME.

As a mom for the past decade and a caretaker for others my whole life, this is not something I thought I could do and it was oddly freeing in a lot of ways. I went from being a helicopter parent to looking for people to take my kids out without me hovering nearby.

I learned to let go and just try to stay as well as possible, which is kind of a trick when you are getting poisons pumped into your body every two weeks. I would love to tell you the 16 weeks of chemotherapy “flew by” but that would be a lie (sorry but more on that soon on how to survive chemo).

There are people in your life that would surprise you - both pleasantly and unpleasantly and I know you would be as surprised as I was about who steps up and who runs away. There were the people who told me, “I will be there with you every step of the way.” who then disappeared for months. There were those who told me straight out to just call them when I was done with treatment (and not before).

Then there were the people who just stayed - who if I did not answer my phone were at my door to make sure I was alive. I had a lot of pleasant surprises during my time as a newly christened “sick” person -this is just it, you go from being healthy your whole life and running everything to boom being broken down and unable to function or look in a way you recognize as you.

There are the people who stepped up from far away and who never let a day go by without just checking in on me - which means so much still.

Having those constants - the people who stand by you and just treat you like you and not like some weird infected alien is a blessing and it makes you realize how lucky you are - cancer or not, you are lucky. You have a team, people to help in any way you need.

The “in between” people are those who say, whenever they see you, “Anything you need, just call me.” - those are hard to place and handle and not to diminish their words because I assume that is what I would have done if my acquaintance Sally (for instance) was the one who was diagnosed and not me. Sometimes I felt bad for not calling on them but I do believe as a “strong” person, I did not want to bother anyone.

So in the time between, I think about how I formulate my next life - because being super focused on family and raising my children is not enough to support my identity as friend, wife, business owner, teacher and more - I know I need to expand my horizons and figure out what will make me most balanced now.

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