

Updated Terms and Conditions for Hanging Out With a Cancer Survivor

Please read the fine print regarding living with a goddamn deadly brain tumor in your head for 90 months.

January 11, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

I don't want to brag, but my spouse and I are fun to be around. Whitney is absolutely the funniest person I've ever met. She's clever, quick on her feet, and wields sarcasm with the skill of a samurai's sword.

We are definitely people you may want to hang out with, but I just want to be sure that before we do, that you're familiar with the terms of service; the conditions; the fine print, if you will.

The terms are as follows. If you would like to see whether a Team A&W hangout sesh is right for you, please select all that apply.

1. You are a healthcare worker, or partnered with one
2. You are a chaplain or other clergy person, typically from a non-doctrinal tradition or partnered with one who is
3. You are a mortician, death doula, or other death care worker
4. With respect to other acquaintances, a natural response to hearing about your life circumstances would be, "I bet they've seen some shit"
5. You read a fair amount of existentialism
6. Your natural response to loss that you've experienced and/or adversity that you've faced was sarcasm and/or cynicism
7. You are disabled, partnered with, or the care partner to someone who is
8. You are chronically ill, partnered with, or the care partner to someone who is
9. A licensed physician has told you or a loved one that you will die from a diagnosis you received
10. You have an advanced directive, notarized and all

11. You have a daily tear-off un-spirational calendar that you bought with your own free will
12. You deny that all events necessarily have a cause
13. You deny that your personal life is governed by a greater plan
14. You have quoted this line from Seinfeld at least once: "People, they're the worst"
15. You know what "death over dinner" is, and if not, you are googling that now
16. You cuss. A lot.
17. You are atheist or agnostic, and yet, you can articulate theological ideas and an understanding of the Bible better than most "religious" people
18. You are funny, because if you have a sense of humor, you've already nodded affirmatively with at least five of the above items
19. Someone has told you, with their whole chest, that any one of us could, "Get hit by a bus tomorrow"
20. Things you say resonate with people who are dying
21. Within 90 seconds of greeting someone who you haven't seen within at least three or more weeks your interlocutor will say, "I continue to pray for you"
22. You, in fact, do have a meaning and purpose to your life that is grounded in service to others, the equitable treatment of all people, beginning with those historically marginalized, increasing access to healthcare and social services, and affirming the unconditional love, value, and worth of all people

Tally your yes responses. If you scored below five, we likely made you feel awkward or uncomfortable within the past six months. More than five but ten or fewer, we had a good enough time together in a large group at a social event, and I'll accept your friend request, but the algorithm won't put us in each other's timeline. If you scored between twelve and fifteen, we're on a group text thread together with mutuals, between fifteen and eighteen, we have plans to hang out in the next couple weeks. If your yes responses tallied more than eighteen, we may actually be hanging out right now.

Courtesy of Adam Hayden/@Glioblastology

Listen. It's not that we don't want a big circle of friends. We absolutely do. Our community of support is vast and critical to our wellbeing. Our community has carried us through the past seven-and-a-half years. We rely on you for support. You bring us food, take the kids to the park, invite our boys for overnights, give the boys rides to their practices and extracurriculars, you react to our social media posts, you subscribe to this blog (thank you!), you send birthday gifts to the kids, and you babysit so Whitney and I can get a date. Financially, we've received jaw-dropping gifts from those who have it to give. You helped us replace our flooring, installed a new appliance, or organized a group to gift our boys an entire Christmas. These are all things that you have done for us, and we are profoundly grateful.

We love, appreciate, and need all of you. I hope you know that. I hope you have felt our deep

appreciation.

What I'm getting at it here is something sort of like the [beer question](#), but maybe deeper. The thing about living with a goddamn deadly brain tumor in your head for 90 months is that it's fucking hard. I mean, obviously, right, but, no, it's literally very difficult. When you got up Christmas morning you were maybe stressed about the kids loving their gifts. We were stressed because this may be my last Christmas. Now do that for eight Christmases.

And, yeah, I get it, like why be so dramatic. I keep living, so ease up, bro. Why so dark?

I'm not sure how to explain this to you, how it stays with you, when a doctor literally looks you square in the eyeballs and says, "You know you're going to die from this, don't you?" I'm not talking about statistics you read, or what you searched on Dr. Google, or a story you saw on 60 Minutes. I'm talking about a flesh and blood MD who is responsible for your care who gives you the ol' firm handshake and communicates to you the "we need to talk" soon-to-be-ex-girlfriend vibes.

I get the positive mindset and whatnot, but some things you just can't unhear; bells that you can't un-ring. The new tumor growing in my brain certainly hasn't helped much this year.

This is the old script flip that I gotta let y'all in on: We joke about death because it makes it ours. Death is blurry until life brings it into focus: portrait mode #ShotOniPhone.

During the holidays all of life's existential concerns are amplified. Take your "I hope I don't dry out the turkey" anxiety and apply it to your literal survival.

We've broken plans with you recently. We are going to do it again. Sorry. Like I say, we are fun to hang out with, but I will cry during no fewer than three commercial breaks when we're watching football together. I'd rather cry with someone who scored above fifteen. It's definitely not a you thing; it's an us thing. We love you and appreciate you. We just happen to be somewhat broken. I get it that all of us are, broken, that is. We all have our shit. I just don't have the energy to mind my tongue much anymore. I can code switch to savvy Adam for conferences, trips to DC, client meetings at work, and these are all part of what we all navigate everyday.

In the end, I can tell that Whitney and I exhausted our patience sometime around November 1, 2023. Going into 2024, I just thought it'd be good to circulate our updated terms and conditions.

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