

In May of 1999 my family found out that my 49-year-old mother Ruth had stage 3 Ovarian Cancer. Shortly after this prognosis, we learned that 1 in 3 people have cancer. Chances are high that everyone that reads this article has experienced it within their family. Without me reciting our initial weeks of misdiagnosis and emotional hell – I'll simply acknowledge that we can nod our heads and state “we've been there” like many of you. It has been a traumatic experience, yet as a family team our positive attitudes have allowed us to make every day what it is – another great day of life!

Many of you reading this are exploring this *website/newsletter* to learn of ways to better educate yourselves about the disease and understanding if there is anything else you can do to “better” your situation. Recently a friend of mine found out that her mother has ovarian cancer and contacted me to find out more about the disease and any learnings I may pass forward. I share these learnings with you today.

If tomorrow my family found out that one of us had any type of cancer we would do the following:

- Get a second & even a third prognosis. Having only one doctor's analysis and recommendations could limit you in your options for resolution (both short & long term)
- Use websites and chatlines to ask others in situations similar to yours for suggestions and questions about “the other stuff”. Like “what was it like to...” and “how did you deal with..”. If the individual who has cancer is not up for searching these means have a family member or friend do so instead. SOMEONE should plug into the resources as soon as possible - the information you collect will definitely help you create questions for your doctor/ car givers and also provide the solace of understanding that you're not on your own and that others have felt / gone through similar experience
- Make it your job to educate yourself instead of others (doctors & nurses) educating you. We are all fully aware of the health system and it's pressures of those providing it to us. You need to take full responsibility for yourself. Ask the questions and questions the answers you receive.
- Create a journal – write down whatever comes to mind and make it something you treat yourself to everyday. Record what you're feeling, how you're feeling, anything that comes to mind. Writing down your thoughts will get them out of your mind which will assist you in dealing with your situation objectively.
- Write down your questions for your caregivers. This will help you keep your sessions on track and make sure you cover everything you need to with your doctor/nurse with the somewhat limited time you have.
- Plug into your friends & family members. If this is not enough go further, look into community support program, speak to a counselor, and ask your doctor/nurse for additional recommendations. My family is truly a great example of how love & support can play a role.

Everyone's situation is different yet, every diagnosis requires a medical response in some sort of form, and includes a full array of potential emotions to be felt to the core. I admire each of you for making the time to learn more. It's one thing I wish I had done more of when my mom was diagnosed.

Wishing you & your family all the love and support to make you strong enough to beat this!

Ruthie's Runners – Nancy Milton
\$85,000.00 raised for Ovarian Cancer in 3 events