



Speaking from Experience *Breast Cancer*

Transcript for chapter 5 of 6: Staying positive

Glenise (diagnosed 8 years ago, aged 45) - You feel that you're the only person on this earth that has got this disease. You're not - unfortunately there are a lot of women out there with breast cancer. But there are also a lot of people who are getting cured of breast cancer.

Barbara (diagnosed 4 years ago, aged 45) - The one thing I would say is to never give in to it. Always be positive and if for some reason you're not happy with the course of treatment laid out for you, seek other opinions until you are happy. And ask as many questions as you can. If you are armed with the knowledge, you can go forward and give yourself the best treatment and the best survival rate.

Ruth (diagnosed 4 years ago, aged 29) - Some of the main things that helped me were keep a positive attitude, were the close friends - they were constantly around me, supporting me, offering help. That was a big thing, when they offered help, doing physical activities, or taking me out, getting me out and about, that sort of thing. And that helps a lot - just trying to maintain a normal life. But getting information about what was going on as well. I really needed to understand what was happening medically. Not that I had a great understanding of it, but just getting an explanation of what the cancer was doing, how it attacked and how the chemo was treating it.

Glenise - I then went along to see the radiotherapist, asked her numerous questions. I just wrote down, for days, I walked around with a notepad and a pen. I just wrote down every question that I could think of.

Barbara - I asked straight away what was my survival rate. And that answer was that, overall, breast cancer patients, there was a seventy per cent survival rate. But I wanted to know what *minewas*, because I had a grade three tumour and the glands were involved.

Ruth - To really help yourself understand it, ask a lot of questions of your doctors. Do a lot of reading, research and everything - help yourself to understand it. That made it easier for me, once I understood what was going on. That made me understand that it could be treated and I would be able to beat it - so that gave me my positive attitude.

Barbara (diagnosed 7 years ago, aged 54) & Husband - Think positive, have positive thoughts. And also talk about it with those closest to you. And continue to have positive thoughts.

Sophia (diagnosed 5 years ago, aged 49) - Treat it differently, not as cancer. And try not to worry too much. Of course you will worry, it's normal to be worried, to cry and all of this. But not to overdo it. And try to find ways to make yourself happy and to go through with it. Because there's always life after a cancer operation. Some people, they are afraid to say the word 'cancer.'

Glenise - Ask for help. If you're feeling down, tell somebody. No one can help you if they don't know how you're feeling.



Barbara and Husband - I worked with over a hundred people in a large office. And I remember the first day I came back, one of the men had baked me this beautiful big chocolate cake. And so I really only had a fortnight away, and in that time we went to Sydney for four days and the sky looked bluer, everything just looked more beautiful.

Barbara and Husband - Yes, it was the 'Putting the breast to rest holiday'.

Barbara and Husband - Yes, well, see... we could have a sense of humour about it.

Barbara - I found it very important to keep as normal as possible. I didn't want anyone else around me to change, just because I was going through something I didn't want them to change or to treat me any differently or do things for me that they hadn't sort of done before, wrap me in cotton wool and things like that. I just wanted things to be so normal and my whole family was normal, just flowed along beautifully.

Ruth - Between my husband and I, we kept positive all the time so I don't think I felt that it was life threatening to me. Even though it was cancer - you know, the meaning of the word 'cancer' and everything. But I don't ever recall feeling that it was going to beat me.

Glenise - You're working, you've got two children to support, yourself to support, food to put on the table, you just know that my will power said I've just got to keep going. And I did.

Sophia - When I had appointments and I had a long wait, I asked at the desk if I could go and visit the chemotherapy room. Because I couldn't go. And I went, and I saw a young lady with a scarf and was crying watching TV and all this. I started talking to her. I can't remember the exact words but she had tears and it turned into a smile. She smiled and she said, "Did you really go through what I'm going through." I said, "Yes, look at me." And her sister was there and she said, "I don't believe you went through it. You look that healthy." I said, "Yes, but I did. You will be the same if you try. You've got to try, don't give up," I said. "Don't give up."