



Media One

Facing Ovarian Cancer

Transcript for chapter 4 of 4: Getting on with life

Daphne (diagnosed 5 years ago. Stage 3) - I never thought of myself as a cancer victim. I was always - even in the depths of it - I was always a cancer survivor. So for me at that time, it was to be positive and I've always been a very positive person. I would deal with what was going on on a day to day basis and mentally I would try and find the right way of communicating with this thing. It was war. It was absolute war. And one of us was going to win, and I was determined that it wasn't going to be the cancer.

Lisle (Age 74, diagnosed 10 years ago. Stage 2) - I didn't give it a great deal of thought. Every day I got up, I opened the blinds, and it was a new day to be lived. I always tried to do things so that at the end of each day I could look back and say, "I've achieved this or that." And it's very important for women, that even if they only walk down through the garden, to actually plan to do something each day - rather than to sit at home and just feel very sad for themselves.

Joanne (Age 44, diagnosed 5 years ago. Stage 3) - For all that cancer is, I think that the way it has affected my life, I've wanted it to be a positive thing. Because it has taken enough and I won't let it destroy the way I live my life or to live in fear. I've embraced the good that cancer does teach you and I think that is that you live your life well, you love and tell the people you love.

Helen (Age 54, diagnosed 5 months ago. Stage 3) - It's very hard to be very positive all the time. One can... I find I can be positive most, almost all of the time really, but by putting it in a box and not going near it and really pretending that it isn't happening. But I don't need to look at it all of the time. I also don't need to be positive about it all the time. And I don't need to believe that I am going to win a battle - because maybe I won't. Maybe it will get me in the end; probably it will get me in the end. But it doesn't mean that I can't enjoy myself now.

Veronica (age 55, diagnosed 8 months ago. Stage 4) - Every day counts, every day is precious. That it's no use to worry about what will happen in five, ten, twenty years. Many of my friends, because I'm 55 now, so they are slowly approaching retirement and worrying about their superannuation. Do they have enough? Will they have enough money to travel, to do things? And I'm not worrying about it. If I'm just alive, even with very little money, that would be the greatest gift.

Daphne - You've been challenged and you've learnt a hard lesson I think. To move on and live a full and prosperous life, you've got to look for what else is out there for you so that you can immerse yourself and get the cancer away from you - get the cancer and the whole experience away from you.

Joanne - So, I go back and forth to Bali, which is wonderful. And each time I get back there, I feel like I've put the flag back in the soil and I've made it back. I've got some lovely friends over there. I meet people all the time who are just great for my spirit. I buy and sell a bit of jewellery, I do a lot of fundraising - I'm passionate about the work I do for the Cancer

Council. I spend a lot of time with my mum, I go to the beach a lot, I enjoy my new little niece immensely, my sister, and doing the things that I love.

Maureen (age 55, diagnosed 6 months ago. Stage 2) - I'm going to go and see a naturopath after I've finished. You can't have anything while you're on chemo because it may interfere with it. So that's on the agenda. All the way through now, I've just been concentrating on having a healthy diet and eating good meals, with lots of vitamins and minerals and nutrition, covering all of the dietary requirements, drinking lots of fluid to flush out the toxins from the chemotherapy, just making sure the fluid levels are up, drinking fruit juices. Yeah, just being very health conscious.

Veronica - When I went for walks, I checked the distance. I could walk five kilometres. So then after walking all week five kilometres each day, on Sunday I walked ten kilometres. And then only I asked my oncologist if he thinks I will do any damage to my body if I walk *City to Surf*, and he smiled and he said, "If you like, you can run." And when the *City to Surf* came, I walked all fourteen kilometres and it was easy. And I enjoyed every moment and I was so happy when I came to the finishing line. And I ran in the past, four times, and I ran all the way. So this time, I was probably one of the last ones to arrive to the finishing line but I think it was very special. It was my most important *City to Surf*.

Sharyn (age 49, diagnosed 1 year ago. Stage 3) - It has been over, well almost a year now, since I was diagnosed. I've put on a lot of weight, of which I didn't have prior to being sick - almost twelve kilos. I feel healthy. From what they tell me, I look healthy. And I have changed my diet. My diet is definitely much improved - a lot of natural type ingredients, stay away from the processed food where I can, take a lot of natural products as well. But yeah, I think I'm doing really well.

Daphne - So many people ask me, "How did you deal with it? How do you feel you survived? What was it that helped you to survive?" And I look back on it now, and having read Lance Armstrong's book and being exposed to what I was, to me cancer was never about death, it was about life. So when I would hear people say, "Oh, I've got cancer" and they would say, "But you have to," because I would be in the chemo ward, I would say, "No I haven't. I'm getting rid of cancer. I'm not a cancer patient." I hated that word - 'patient' - I was a chemo 'customer,' you know? I was there as a customer, to have my chemo.

So I would empower myself as best as I could and the cancer was there doing what it could, but every day the force against it I felt was so powerful that it had to go. There was no place for cancer in my life. There was no place for it in my world. And even now, as I've gone on and I've got back to my life, I don't even think about cancer now. It never leaves you, it's there, but I deal with it now in a very different way, where it has no significance to my life. Whereas, at the early stages obviously, it was all I thought about. Now it's an experience that I had, it's an experience that is gone, and I've been left with amazing gifts. You know, my whole perspective on life now is so different to what it was before and what the cancer has given me - and I respect it for that - has been magical. But it doesn't need to come back. I'm definitely not interested in it coming back, it's an acquaintance I do not need to make again, thank you very much. For anybody else out there, that has that experience with cancer, you need to develop a relationship with it that empowers you and takes the power away from the cancer because that's really, in my mind, what helped me survive and get on with it.



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