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How to Part Dark Clouds

These four tips can help you find the silver lining in the stormiest situation.

By Hollye Jacobs

1

Make a self-preservation plan.

We all have certain times that we tend to feel low. Pinpoint the time of day (or day of the week) when you typically struggle, and schedule something pleasurable. I do this with 30-minute naps on weekday afternoons and regular Saturday hikes (my own form of meditation). Care for yourself and preserve your well-being by making these activities as unalterable as any other commitment.

2

Think small.

Therapists tell you to make lists of things you're grateful for. This is good advice, but I found it helpful to focus specifically on the small stuff (for me, it's snuggling with my dog or being able to walk to work). It's easier to count on the little joys in life. No matter how bad things are, there are always tiny gifts that pile up throughout the day.



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Supportive and Insightful Guide to Breast Cancer, is forthcoming from Simon & Schuster. Visit thesilverpen.com.



Suggesting that a person “look on the bright side” is fine if you’re dealing with a snagged sweater, but when the situation is serious—you lose your job, go through a divorce, or receive a life-altering medical diagnosis—it takes a lot more to remain optimistic. Every bit of me was challenged when I was diagnosed with breast cancer three years ago. As a healthy, happy, vegan nurse with no family history of the disease, the diagnosis rocked my world. And while I did my fair share of crying and pillow punching, I committed to having a positive attitude. Doing that enabled me to not only endure my treatments, but also thrive after cancer. Here are four tips that helped me—and that might come in handy for you if you’re ever faced with a daunting life event.

3

Create a support staff.

Learning how to rely on people during my illness was extremely hard for me. As a nurse, I had always been the caregiver. As a patient, I now had to depend on other people. But you’re not going to get all of the support you need from one person. Designate different people for different jobs. When I was sick, one friend organized food delivery for my family. Another was my emotional picker-upper who always made me laugh. Yet another friend listened to my unfiltered, tear-filled monologues.

4

Put yourself in your happy place.

On down days, visualize yourself somewhere more pleasant. Think of it as your happy place. For me, this means walking on a beautiful beach where I can hear the waves and feel the sun on my face and sand under my feet. Perhaps you’d prefer to be eating a croissant in a Parisian café. Wherever you’d rather be when you are feeling overwhelmed, close your eyes and take yourself there.

COURTESY OF ELIZABETH MESSINA