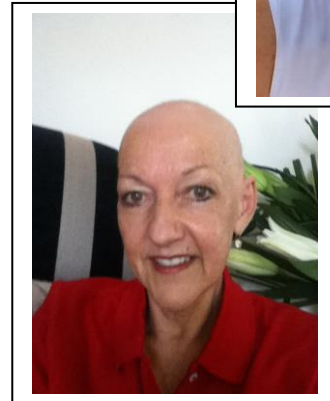


# SURVIVING CANCER

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### Part 2



**I don't know much about cancer. But I do know what it's like to have it ... and survive it. I kept a journal for more than a year during chemo and radiation. Writing about it helped me a lot.**

12 July 2013

*I've just come back home from radiation, it's number 27 today. My chest looks like it's been hit by a blow torch and I have to wash my car because it's driving me nuts that it hasn't been washed in months. But everyone says 'if there's anything I can do, just give me a call.' As if I'm going to ask someone to wash my car, surely they can see it needs a wash!*

Sometimes it's hard to know what you can do to help a friend who is going through cancer. You can feel helpless and not know how to make an approach. Here are some things people did to help me survive – spontaneous, generous, creative.

- ❖ Every 3 weeks when a new round of chemo began, my school friend since we were 11 years old, sent a small gift in the mail to brighten my day – pretty soap, note paper, a CD, some nice tea, hand cream.
- ❖ When I hardly felt like eating anything, my neighbour enquired if I'd like some chicken soup for dinner that night; it arrived all bubbly and hot, already served in a bowl, ready to eat. No cooking required.
- ❖ I phoned another neighbour to ask if I could have some of her aloe vera for my burnt skin. She not only brought me a piece, but planted an entire plant in my garden so that I had a ready supply.
- ❖ A male colleague said he would shave his head in sympathy if I lost my hair – sure enough, he kept his word and sent me a photo as proof.
- ❖ A friend cooked tiny meals, packaged them in plastic containers – with a motivational quote stuck to each lid just to keep my thoughts on track.
- ❖ Another friend wrote regular newsy letters always ending with a message saying no need to write back, save your energy.
- ❖ A colleague sent intermittent SMS photos of beautiful sunrises from his waterfront home, no message attached, no words needed.
- ❖ I was given a Buddhist mantra for the down days: *May I be well. May I be happy. May I be peaceful.*
- ❖ My sister came to stay several times, not for conversation, but for company – I learned just 'being' is actually 'doing' enough.
- ❖ My younger brother, the family comedian, who had a heart attack a few weeks after my cancer diagnosis, sent me a cartoon with this well-known quote; "What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger!" This became our private joke – only he could get away with saying something like that.
- ❖ A friend sent me an array of natural skin care products – just reading the ingredients made me feel better – aromatic botanicals, softening jojoba, soothing aloe vera, hydrating rosehip – just what I needed to be kind to my body.