

## **Anne Ogden – Closing Ceremonies Speech**

This time last year, I attended an event sponsored by the Eastern Ct Assoc of Realtors, that benefited the Terri Brodeur Breast Cancer Foundation. The speaker said that one in eight women will get Breast Cancer in their lifetime.

I stood there and turned to the person next to me and repeated that statistic. It was shocking. I just got chills hearing it. Then

#myunexpectedjourney2019 began December 18, 2018.

Nothing can prepare you to hear the words “you have cancer.” No diagnosis of Cancer – no matter what type it is or where it is – is an easy one to hear or fight through.

You face some of life’s toughest battles and decisions in a time of extreme duress. It is a roller coaster of emotions: shock, fear, stress, anxiety, sadness, depression and insomnia. There are scans, tests, surgeries, appointments, second opinions, consultations and follow-ups.

Cancer is a very demanding disease, physically and spiritually. There are challenges, pain, sadness, isolation.

It is a learning experience too. It is not just about Stage anymore. Tumor grade is not the same as the stage of a cancer. Cancer stage refers to the size and/or extent (reach) of the original (primary) tumor and whether or not cancer cells have spread in the body. Cancer stage is based on factors such as the location of the primary tumor, tumor size, regional lymph node involvement (the spread of cancer to nearby lymph nodes), and the number of tumors present.

There are so many types: nuclear grade, cribriform type, Estrogen and progesterone receptor positive/negative, HER2 positive/negative, BIRADS grade, IDC, DCIS, ductal carcinoma in-situ, lobular carcinoma in situ, density, ducts, BRCA1 and BRCA2, genetic testing , Onco-type DX testing.

No two diagnoses are the exact same. So many things go into a treatment plan: Chemo or Radiation or Hormone Therapy – and there is a lot of waiting around to figure it all out.

As I walk through this journey, I realize few people know what it is like to hear the diagnosis, to undergo treatments. They don't know what it is like to deal with this daily, to hold your everything together --your job, your friends and family, your finances, your security and your peace -- all while it feels like there is a hurricane trying to rip it all apart.

No matter how sympathetic and encouraging they all seem, your friends, family, co-workers, none of them understand the fatigue, the worry, the pain and the pressure to keep it all together while all you want to do is fall apart - unless they too have walked this path.

I was hesitant to put my diagnosis out on social media – not wanting the pity or the sympathy. But my diagnosis inspired two friends to go get their over-due Mammograms and another friend to decide to stop smoking. So I have decided to share my experiences and hopefully inspire others, to be aware of their bodies and find your “why” to living.

My cancer experience turned my life into a series of appreciating moments, being aware and seeing what's around me became a new and constantly changing lens for my life

A friend of mine told me to stay off the internet – but I was thirsty for knowledge. I wanted to know about every term and meaning. I looked up every word from my Pathology report. I wanted to talk to others who would understand. I found several sites that I follow daily, these women have become friends. They understand the emotions, the pain, the confusion. They know what it's like to have a life-changing diagnosis and treatment, not to mention after-treatment issues.

If someone you know just found out they have Cancer, be genuine, supportive and help them get in touch with others who understand. Because in the very beginning when you are faced with the hurricane, talking to others who get it - will be the best support.

Believe me, we all find a way to get through each phase. Along the way, there are feelings of sadness, isolation, confusion, and even anger as you face each day because it's a grieving process for what was and an adaptation to what is, no matter how the pendulum swings

When the foundation first asked me to be the face of the walk, I thought “how can I be of any help” then when I met with the committee and thought about the friends that I have already helped, I knew I could make a difference.

By sharing my Journey through photos making others aware of the Cancer Struggle and finding a reason to fight. Thank you for having me as the honorary chair of the 14th annual Walk Across Southeastern Connecticut.