

Diarmuid's Story

My wife, late-wife, Jacqueline, and myself were preparing to get married, and six weeks before our marriage, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Things did improve, we got married, we got married at home, which was a great day, a day I can always still remember. However, because of the illness, she was asked to come back into hospital on the following Tuesday, so that was the first reality-check of her illness.

What we had to do was sit down and look at how can we manage this. It's all about managing [chunks at the minute]. I always remember one statement, and that's when the doctor used to come in and ask me a very simple question: "What are you doing tonight?" In hindsight, I thought, "Are you crazy? You know what I'm doing tonight, because what I'm doing tonight, I'm doing 24/7", and I fell into his trap because what he said to me, "I'm a professional person and I don't do 24/7, so why are you doing it? You can't do it because you will need to be there some other day". So, he gave me a great tip, and that is: you are the main carer, and if there's family, subject to the family being able to cope, have them come in and do bits and pieces for yourself.

Now, my relaxation was go for a walk, get out of the house for a couple of hours, be available if you're required, and that proved to me to be my way of managing the whole process. Even, at times, allow them time-out. So, please don't even look into their face all the time and go, "Are you okay? Are you okay?" Of course they're not okay! Allow the person time on their own, because you have no idea the pain, whatever they're going through. They need time out.

We were mindful of, the day of treatment, three days afterwards was sickness, so what we done there was we prepared a wee plan that, the day of the treatment, prior to the treatment, we would go out and have a meal together. That was our face-time together, that was our good time together. That worked out very well for us because we'd know the next three days was going to be quite trying, but the beauty of the next three days, it was coming to an end as well, so then we looked forward to [a feast]. So, it's so important that you stay positive and build a wee plan.

Your frustration is natural, so don't think that you're weak, you're letting yourself down. That's a natural thing. Nobody can carry all the unknown in their head. Don't feel bad that you are getting frustrated, because you will be frustrated, believe me, you will be frustrated that: number one, you're trying your best to do your best; number two, you're not a professional person; and number three, you're wanting to help the person that you've committed to the rest of your life. The worst case scenario would be two people being ill as a result of an illness, and that's why I say please step out when you're becoming frustrated.

The 18 months was great times as well as bad times. When Jacqueline passed on, eh...sadness, hurt, anger, yeah, that's all the stuff that's in the textbook was there, but I also took a bit of comfort out of she's now in peace.

I have now re-married again and I've now got a child and it's a whole new experience to me. I've got an opportunity and I'm glad to say I got an opportunity to re-marry again, and I count myself very lucky that I got that.