

Nurture the Emotional Side of Cancer

Cancer insight by Talaya Dendy, a board-certified patient advocate, cancer doula and podcaster. She's also a Hodgkin lymphoma thriver.

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I have always loved things that are different, one-of-a-kind, colorful and creative. Color is life! I am always inspired when I visit art museums and attend plays. They speak to my soul, whispering, "Don't forget to nurture this side of you."

That is exactly what happened while I was navigating life and work. I am an analytical person by nature, and that side of me thrived at my job. However, my artistic and creative side yearned for attention.

That was usually a sign that I needed to take a step back from reality, have some downtime and recharge. Unfortunately, it would take a cancer diagnosis for me to stop, drop everything and tap back into that creative side, where my true, deep emotions reside.

Talaya Dendy

Courtesy of Talaya Dendy/Jeannine Marie Photography/Block Portrait Studios

During my cancer journey, I had to become an expert at alternating between the analytical and creative at the drop of a hat. Actually, they worked pretty well together!

As someone who was never sick, other than a cold or the flu, had never broken a bone or stayed a night in the hospital, I was shocked when I received the news that I had Hodgkin lymphoma. I knew the lump on the left side of my neck was something, but I never imagined it was cancer!

I took the entire weekend to feel the words of my diagnosis and work through the emotions connected to them. I was sad, angry, confused and afraid. You name it! Those emotions were my personal guests for the weekend, and we all sat with each other and wrapped our arms around

one another.

I was led to connect with them. I had no idea what I was doing at the time, but my spirit said that connecting with my emotions was what I needed. I am so glad I listened and took action. It was the first gift I received during that part of my life with cancer.

Spending time with my emotional friends gave me strength to start the new week by stepping into my power and begin a journey like I had never experienced.

During cancer treatment, I took some time off from work, which allowed me to focus on healing and the emotional side of cancer—not just the medical and physical sides, which typically receive the most attention.

One of the many ways I did that was by spending time with my mom and taking in art. The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and Walker Art Center were a couple of the places that helped me put cancer on the back burner for a short time.

Seeing the big Spoonbridge and Cherry sculpture made me laugh because it reminded me that sometimes the curveballs in life are big and over the top. However, unbeknownst to us at the time, they have a cherry on top.

What was I going to get from cancer?

When you feel heavy and weighed down, remember these words by Pablo Picasso: “Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life.”