



Dianne, Caregiver (10:15)

My name is Dianne Gosling. I am 58 years old and my husband Doug has prostate cancer, advanced metastatic. He now is in palliative care. And we're taking care of him at home for as long as we can and then, at some point, I think he would like to go to a hospice. It's just getting me ready and him ready to make it comfortable.

In the moment

The ups and downs that come with cancer are really, really hard sometimes to deal with. You know, you have to deal with it, and you do, but it takes so much out of you. And there's so many uncertainties. We went out one evening and he almost passed out. And it terrified me. So it's hard when that happens because when I see him like that I think, 'Oh my God, like this could be it.' And then I think, 'No it can't be. It can't be. I don't want it to be. It's too soon. It's too soon.' And then I'll feel so like sad, and I'll cry, like I'll be by myself and I'll cry. And I try not to cry around him because I want it to be happy. I want his moments to be happy. You know it's like those Kodak moments, I want it all happy and light and...and we do talk about the hard stuff but I try not to cry. It's kind of like it's a... out of body experience. Even when I'm talking about it now, it's like it's the third party. I'm talking about somebody else almost, not me having these feelings, and I think that's how you deal with it. It's in the moment, and you know that there's going to be these ebbs and flows, and big valleys, and hills, and like that one, it was really like a big drop.

Talking through changes

I really felt he needed a wheelchair because I could see he was getting weaker. And I really felt he needed a hospital bed. We have the kind of house that he had to walk up several stairs, and it's hard on him to get up and down. Bringing the hospital bed in is a little bit different, because that's a really big step. That's making a big bold statement that things have really changed. And I think he was really ready for it. I think because we do talk a lot, and we always have talked a lot, about what's going on and we try to be as honest as we can be with each other. You know you can't walk on eggs through this process. You have to talk, and you have to be open about things because, you know, everything will fall apart. There are some things that we, I'm sure he doesn't say to me, because he's a very protective person, and he wants to protect me. Where I don't feel I need that protection, but that's who he is. And there are things that I sometimes may not want to talk to him about, because I don't want to worry him, and I'll talk to my friends. So when we finally did bring in the hospital bed, he was really, really ready. And it was the right time, and he felt good...because we had talked about it. Not everyone can do that. Some men don't want to talk. Some women don't know how to approach it. Some of my friends don't know — or didn't know, how to talk to him, but I'd just tell them 'just say, it really sucks you have cancer.' That's the best thing you can say, you know, be honest. And smile a lot if you don't

know what to say. So, I think we've been lucky. Our having this ability to talk has made each step easier because we can talk about it.

Looking after myself

I think one thing that does happen to caregivers is they do forget about themselves. They really do because their focus then is on making their loved one comfortable, and as the person they're taking care of gets sicker, they need more and more time. So I would have appointments to see doctors, and sometimes the appointments would take three months to get, and then Doug would have something wrong. And we'd have to go to Princess Margaret that day. So my appointment would then get shuffled, and then I might forget it, and I probably haven't even done it yet, so those kinds of things ... it's almost like you take a backseat and knowingly I think you do. I knowingly know I did. And I decided this year that I was going to get myself even healthier, to try to be healthy and try to fit in myself, my schedule, my doctors, my times. They still get changed because of things that happen with Doug and that's fine, but at least I'm attempting now to do them, and I think that's important. And I feel like the end run when someone's sick is the marathon. You know, I think you're building up for that marathon all through the whole cancer trip. And that's what I've been doing all these many years is getting for this next — it's kind of like you know, what's the — the end stage, you know, that... when the curtain's going to come down. So I'm trying to get healthy, lose weight, eat better, take care of myself, and it is hard. But I'm making an effort so I've got the stamina to take care of him because I know how tiring it is.

Getting away from cancer

I think to some extent him having the cancer for so long does kind of define who you are and who he is over the long haul. Because he has had it for nine and a half years and we are always aware of how he's feeling and we can or can't do events and things with our friends based on how he feels. So it does kind of rule your life. And as much as you try not to make it do that, because we really try. We have our friends over, or we would go over there when he was well enough and have an evening without — like a non-cancer evening. I would even ask him for a non-cancer day, early on, because I just didn't want to talk about it. I felt the need that I needed to get away. Because my husband was so...his bucket list was — instead of going to Hawaii with my wife and kids and all that, which I thought would be kind of cool — was to do something for the healthcare system, to help that. You know all these different things he was involved in and there were many, many multiples of things. And then talking to people about cancer, and that's all I heard. And it got to the point where I just thought, 'I just want to LIVE. You know let's have some living here without it.' And he couldn't understand that. I don't understand why he didn't understand, but ... it was just too MUCH. So then early on I'd ask for a day where we don't talk about it. And it was really hard not to. Because that's what your life is. So, it has been difficult and it does, I think it does, define you after a long length of time.

Surviving

Sometimes that loss of hope that's, that's the killer. And I feel so sad and so hopeless sometimes that I know nothing, nothing can help us now. You know it's not like there's a big miracle that's going to happen or I can fly him away somewhere and, you know, the water somewhere is going to make him all better. Or, you know, somebody's going to touch him in one of those, you know, places and he's going to fall back and say 'Hey, I'm okay.' I know it's not going to happen. And it really makes me really, really sad. So there's all those emotions.

And you can go through all those emotions at different times — sometimes at the same time. And sometimes there's a sense of anxiety. You know, I feel anxious sometimes and it's just all the stress of everything that's going on. I get caught up in doing things for Doug and I forget that 'Oh yeah, I'm diabetic and I should eat, you know, my meals. Hey, I should take my pills.' Instead of saying, 'Hey, it's time for your pills.' So that kind of thing also you've got to be aware of. There's so many emotions that you feel and it's okay to feel any of those emotions — they're all normal. Even if you think you're going crazy. You know, why wouldn't you? With all the sadness and everything around you that you have to deal with and think of. And, you know, I know, I know I'll survive. I hope I'll survive somehow, you know, I worry, I worry I'll die of a broken heart. That's my biggest fear. Because I know it can happen. But I can't let it happen because I have a daughter and she'll have children some day. But I think, how can I face 30 years without him? You know, what do you do? You try to pull it together and you try to think, 'Okay rationally, what can I do to make myself okay?' And that's what I'm trying to do. So all those emotions even those really sad, scary emotions are okay to have.