



Jen U.

My life was forever changed on November 30, 2015, when I received a cancer diagnosis. I felt like a deer in the headlights; shock, fear, confusion, uncertainty. Over the previous four years, I'd watch my mother lose her gracious 5-year battle with ovarian cancer, been executrix for her estate and sold her house, bought a new house for myself, had knee replacement surgery, and retired - by default - from my professional organizing business; so many transitions and changes. And now this.

I don't know why it took me a month to get to BCCR to meet with Jennifer and for my one-on-one with Holly, on December 31 to be exact. I was so surprised they were working that day, and what a blessing it was because my surgery was immediately after the holiday. Holly answered so many of my questions and concerns, helping to calm my anxiety.

Over the next 10 months, I had a mastectomy, chemotherapy, and radiation, and experienced complications from surgery, as well as an allergic reaction to chemo that damaged my lungs and resulted in several hospitalizations. I took all these treatments one day at a time, just dealing with what was ahead of me on any given day; this approach served me extremely well and kept stress minimized. I referred to chemo days as my "spa days" where the infusion nurses took such excellent care of me with warm blankets, hot soup, and always hugs and compassion. It was a gestation period of sorts for the "new normal" of my life as a cancer survivor.

From then until today, I've been a regular participant of the Friday Brown Bag support group. These remarkable women have become my "breast friends," sharing and caring for each other, with both laughter and tears. It's a safe place to express our deepest feelings, fears, reliefs, and blessings. I always feel better after a meeting.

This new normal can be a scary place, but I put my energies into making quilts, many of them for charity, especially the BCCR. I've also enjoyed being a P.A.L.S. mentor this past year. That initial walk can be so lonely and frightening, and I love being able to share understanding and hope with other women who are just beginning their journey.

We are so fortunate to live in an area where the services of BCCR are available. The support, friends, and knowledge I've acquired here are an integral component of my recovery and ongoing care as a cancer survivor. I am so grateful.