

Cancer



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Patients who have been diagnosed with cancer face two distinctive options: to fight the cancer with every last ounce of energy or to simply let the disease take its toll, but enjoy the last bits that life has to offer. Fighting cancer can be a hard and painful task and takes tremendous energy and willpower. It requires a positive attitude even in the face of excruciating pain and the knowledge that the treatment can sometimes seem as bad as the disease, but the other option is to just ignore the treatments options, let the cancer take its course and try to enjoy what time you have left.

The option to ignore treatment and try to enjoy the time you have left can be tempting. After all, quality of life matters more than length of life, right? Wrong! Once a person has been diagnosed with cancer it is likely that they are already facing great pain and suffering. Depending on the type of cancer, it can take away the ability to breathe easily or the ability to digest food. In the case of bone cancer, it can cause excruciating pain, often beyond what pain killers can help control. At that point, giving up is just that, giving up. It is not a matter of trying to enjoy the time you have left.

Instead, every waking moment is spent with the knowledge that you are living on borrowed time. There can be no real enjoyment of things or people around you because they come with a built in expiration date. Every action hangs under the dark cloud of impending death. With a decision to fight the cancer, cancer victims are asserting control over their own destinies. Sure, they should still attempt to spend times with loved ones and finish that “must do before I die” list, but in fighting there is the knowledge that they could win. There is hope and there is joy at the victories.

Almost every form of cancer can be defeated with either radiation therapy, chemotherapy or surgery. These options are tough. Radiation and chemotherapy often cause secondary symptoms that can be difficult to live with. Surgery always has inherent risks, from the risks with the anesthesia to the risk affiliated with removing whatever is cancerous. Still, there is something about the human psyche that makes our time feel more valuable if we are fighting to keep it. If we have already given up and decided that we will die, then the time we spend feels wasted.

It feels as though the best of our life has already passed and we are simply sticking around a few extra minutes to say goodbye. It's a lot like ending a date and knowing that you will be going home alone. If you know without a doubt that you are going home alone, then the last few soft kisses outside the front door seem like mercy kisses and do nothing to improve your overall life. If, however, the possibility exists that you might not go home alone, the anticipation and desire builds in the last moments as you try to make it happen.

The same is true with our lives while affected with cancer. Even if radiation makes your hair fall out and chemotherapy makes you vomit, at least you are trying to not go home alone. You are struggling for one more soft kiss or another hour of shared jokes. Fighting for your life after being diagnosed with a fatal disease is painful and can be depressing, but giving up means letting the depression and the cancer win. What fun is there is a game that you know you have already lost?