



Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

Ask Me Anything!

KATHY O'KEEFE KANAVOS ADDRESSES YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

I just found out that I have breast cancer in my left breast. I was madder than hell because I already have multiple sclerosis and glaucoma. I found out about the cancer a few days after Christmas of this year.

But, now it's been a week and I am ready to fight. I refuse to go down without a fight. Doctors told me they would remove it then radiation therapy, but first I have to have a genetic marker test to find out if the cancer would reoccur if they remove it. Now that part scares me. I am praying & pleading to God that the test comes out negative.

Please pray for me.

Donna

Hi Donna,

I don't blame you for being angry, but I'm glad you have the fight in you. Look, you've survived some really nasty stuff already and I know you have it in you to survive this "bump in the road." I had gene testing done when I was diagnosed with recurrence (which made me hopping mad!)

My test came back negative (which surprised the medical community) so rather than letting them take out my cancerous area, I left it in while I took the 6 month chemotherapy called CMF and had them check the therapy's progress every 2 months with an MRI to be sure the area was shrinking. That confirmed that the chemo was working. I am praying for you! Stay in touch because I care.

Ask me anything!

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

I've been hit twice by this nasty thing called "cancer." In 2005, I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 38. Endured a bilateral mastectomy and aggressive treatment.

Unbelievably, exactly two years later to the week, I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Follicular Lymphoma. Three cancerous lymph nodes in my neck. Endured even more aggressive chemo and radiation to the neck. Not fun for anyone.

Since then, I have received four rounds of "maintenance treatment" every six months. No breast cancer, lymphoma in remission. I have three children ages 10, 9, and 6 and a loving husband. Since 2005, I have lost a sister and uncle to lung cancer and my father to liver cancer. My children are certainly old enough to understand some of what cancer means.

So what's my fear? My fear is that this "maintenance treatment" I have been receiving every six months has kept the lymphoma in remission and that once I am not receiving it anymore, the lymphoma will return.

If you are struggling with your own diagnosis, or know someone who is, please email Kathy with your questions and concerns at: katkan@comcast.net

Logically, I know this is an irrational fear. Logically, I know the statistics on recurrence. Logic does little to ease my fears. All the statistics in the world offer me no ease.

The probability of me having breast cancer at 38, as the fifth of five daughters with no family history on either side of my family, were astronomically low.

The probability of being diagnosed with a second primary cancer, when I have none of the risk factors associated with lymphoma, were astronomically low. So I cannot seem to convince my mind that this will "probably" not recur once the treatments are stopped.

Sorry if I am coming across a bit harsh. My fears are winning over my mind and I need some kind words of comfort.

Samy

Hi, Samy,

I understand your feelings and fears. I was diagnosed with stage two-breast cancer when I was 44 with no history of it in my family. Five years later, while taking Tamoxifen, an estrogen-receptor modulator treatment, I was diagnosed with recurrence.

This extended treatment in pill form has been used for 20 years to reduce the chances of recurrence or getting another form of breast cancer. It didn't work for me.

I'm not telling you this to scare you. Just the opposite. The way I look at it, there are some very special people who can survive cancer multiple times, and you are one of them. More women than ever before are surviving multiple cancers. And, like me, you now belong to a club to which you would prefer not to be a member, but the alternatives are even less desirable.

I, too, had anxiety attacks that defied logic. Emotion is not logical but it is a normal part of healing and thriving after surviving. Then I realized I needed to change my perception of illness, recurrence and remission.

If you catch a cold and then get over it are you in remission or are you cured? I view it as being cured. If you catch another cold, did you get it back? No. You got sick again. You got well before so you can do it again. You don't live on cold medications so that you will stay well. I am not in cancer remission. I am well. I am cured.

We all want to live a long and prosperous life. The truth is that we live from the moment we are conceived, until the moment we die. We all must die, that is the rule of life. And, who wants to live FOREVER anyhow? So, I began to focus on living life to its fullest and not focusing on inevitable, death. I will not die from cancer. I will die from life, just as I would have before cancer.

I hope you find this of some comfort. Life is a bag of sh#@ and giggles. Sometimes we must hold our nose while we laugh.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Hi, Kathy,

I am thankful for the many Blessings I do have in my life. But, living in unbearable pain from cancer and the therapy I have endured is so hard. The new pains and the old pains mixing with over 32 years of Migraines! I'm sorry. I do share too much when I should just talk of the good!?

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos was interviewed on the Dr. Bernie Siegel Show on January 3rd

Follow either of these links to listen to her interview about Healing Dreams:

[HealthyLife.Net with Bernie Siegel, MD](#)
[Direct Link](#) to Kathy's Interview

I'm still grieving over friends who died during treatment and all of my favorite cats that passed during this cancer battle. I so miss them. My cats always cheered me up! Focusing on them helped me. I still have a few left but my favorites are gone. Now my bed is empty. They helped my migraines with their meditating, healing purrs. I've heard that the purrs cats emit are the same sounds in sound therapy!

My cats would sit on my broken bones or my surgical sites or by my head when I'd get my Migraines. That's hard to get over. I know the longer and further out I get from treatment, and if any of this pain ever stops and I heal, I can go on. Do you think I will ever stop missing my friends and my cats? Thank you for kindly commenting. Thank you for caring!

Wishing everyone their own wellness and healing!

Linda

Dear Linda,

Yes, it is very painful emotionally to lose loved ones during treatment. Unfortunately, that is one of the side effects of battling cancer that no one tells us about—casualties of war—when our "buddies" in the foxhole beside us don't make it.

I grieved for my fallen friends, too. Then I realized something very powerful. When it is my time to "pass-over" I will have many friends waiting for me. It will be a great "Welcome Home, Kathy" party. I think you will have many friends waiting for you, too. And, that includes your cats. Our fur babies are very important to us. It sounds like your kitties stayed around to take care of you until you were well. Then, unfortunately, it was their time to leave you to finish healing on your own.

Cats are very wise. My cat, Baby Cakes, was 26 years old when he passed-on. He was with me through both of my cancers, so I understand your grief at losing your fur babies.

Yes, their purr is magic and very healing. During my nap-time Baby Cakes used to place his head on mine, wrap his paws around my neck and purr so loudly that I could not hear the ringing in my ears from all my treatments. I would fall right to sleep.

Often when an alpha cat gets ready to pass on, it will designate another pet in the "pride" to take its special place with its human mother. Observe your cats and see who your most beloved feline child chose for you.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos is a two-time breast cancer survivor who penned **SURVIVING CANCERLAND: The Psychic Aspects of Healing**.

She is represented by Scovil, Galen & Ghosh Literary Agency & **Steve Allen Media**. She's a phone counselor for R.A. BLOCH Cancer Foundation, Q&A cancer columnist for *CapeWomenOnlineMagazine*, an inspirational speaker, mentor, cancer volunteer, and Cambridge Who's Who Executive Professional of the Year 2009-2010.

Kathy was recently interviewed on the Dr. Pat radio show, and told how her dreams found her cancer that the doctors missed. You can listen to a podcast [here](#).

Visit her [website](#) and [Facebook page](#); follow her on [Twitter](#); and connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).