



## Dear Friend,

If you are reading this letter, chances are that you or someone you care about has recently been diagnosed with cancer. I'm sorry that this is happening. Try to stay positive and remember that many cancers are treatable, especially those caught early.

Despite this, diagnosis is extremely stressful and overwhelming for patients and their families. Although there is no one right way to navigate a diagnosis of cancer, I'd like to share some suggestions based on my experiences to help you navigate those next few steps....

### **Bring someone with you to every appointment.**

This is a time of personal crisis. As a result, processing the information presented by your doctors may be difficult. So bring someone with you — someone who is objective, reliable and knows how to be your advocate. To help retain all the information, consider taking notes or better yet, record the conversation so you can replay it at a later time.

### **Learn everything you can about your cancer.**

At a minimum, you'll want find out the name of the cancer, its size and location, where it started, and if it has spread. Find out if it's a slow-growing cancer or an aggressive cancer. Also ask your doctor about molecular profiling before you have any surgeries. The more information you can gather, the better.

Before searching the Internet for additional information on your cancer, please read this article from the American Cancer Society on what to look for and what to avoid as you search for reliable information.

### **Understand your treatment options.**

The number and kinds of treatment choices you have will depend many factors including the type of cancer; the stage (extent) of the cancer; the genetic composition and molecular profile of the cancer; as well as your age and overall health to name a few.

Make sure you clearly understand the goal of each treatment option. Not all treatments for cancer are given with the intent to cure. Treatment can be given to help prevent disease recurrence, to minimize symptoms of disease, or to simply prolong survival. Knowing the goal of your particular cancer treatment and the potential risks associated with that treatment will enable you to make the most informed decisions possible about your care.

For those who hope to have children naturally at some point in the future, make sure to ask your oncology team about infertility risks. This is a conversation that needs to happen BEFORE treatment begins.

## Always get a 2nd Opinion

A cancer diagnosis almost always makes people feel like they have to start treatment as soon as possible. But the truth is that in many cases, you have a time to get more information. Second opinions will either confirm what you've already been told or present different options to weigh. They also help reduce the chance of misdiagnosis and provide greater peace of mind.

## Last, but certainly not least, know that you're not alone.

Your care team will be your first source of information and support, but there are many places where you can get more help if you need it.

Our website CancerHawk will connect you to information, resources and organizations that help anyone touched by cancer. Try reading through our MUST KNOW section first as it contains loads of helpful information that every cancer fighter and supporter should know. You can then search for resources and relevant information by your diagnosis or by the type of assistance you are in need of.

Connect with a social worker and oncology navigator as they are experts in helping cancer patients overcome obstacles to treatment (financial challenges, insurance and employment issues, managing daily life, evaluating treatment options, etc.). Peer mentoring programs and online support communities are also very helpful as they provide critical advice and support from others who have been there or are there now. Remember, you don't have to do this alone.

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [robyn@cancerhawk.com](mailto:robyn@cancerhawk.com).

*Sending you much love, light and healing wishes,*

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Robyn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'R' being particularly large and stylized.

Robyn Stoller  
Founder & Executive Director, CancerHawk Foundation, Inc.

#KickCancersAss #KnowledgelsPower #BeEmpowered #Advocate #NeverGiveUp