

What to remember and what to forget

By **Katy Yoder**
Columnist

I had an extremely painful visit to the dentist recently. I'm a little worried that I may have done some permanent damage to the assistant's arm when I grabbed her. I had no idea it was coming. In my mind, I was just going in for a quick fix to a little problem in my mouth. What happened next was anything but routine.

I left the office feeling wobbly, stunned and close to another round of tears. I tried to compare the pain to my surgeries I had during cancer treatments but the experience was just too different. I had no time to prepare for what lay ahead, but I'm also not sure I wanted to be prepared.

These days when I go through anything that makes me unhappy, I ask myself a simple question: "Is this a matter of life or death?" If the answer is no, I adjust my attitude and give thanks. I've found myself asking other people the same question, I may be irritating them because I'm taking away their need for sympathy with a big picture retort. I can't help it. There are so many

situations that get blown out of proportion. Going through cancer and fearing that I might die put so many things in perspective.

So the dentist appointment was terrible. My jaw hurts and it clicks when I try to chew ... big deal! I'll get over this; it's not a matter of life or death. I'm trying not to dwell on traumatic experiences that have the potential to color my life and sway my attitude toward a big pity party.

I have friends who are dealing with cancer right now. They are in the fight of their lives. That's life or death! I want to remember my experience so I continue to be grateful for the life I have now. As difficult as my cancer experience was, it is now in the rearview mirror. Chemo-brain does a good job of robbing me of many memories both long-term and short-term. Sometimes it's hard to recall just how scary and painful it was.

That's where my sweet hubby comes in. When I need help remembering, he's right there helping me. He went through it all with me without the benefit of pain meds or a sense of shock that

rendered me a bit numb. He felt it all and watched me go through it.

When the silly things that irritate spouses crop up, like any marriage will do, I remember what a stellar support system he helped provide. I remember all our friends and family who rallied and helped with meals, flowers and kind words that meant so much.

As I walk with friends battling now, all I can do is try and provide comfort in whatever form helps them the most. I don't want to burden them with unwanted attention or gifts that pile up in a corner. It's a gentle balance figuring out how to help someone going through the hardest time in their lives. Sometimes just saying you love them is best.

I just had another six-month check up with my oncologist. I had a blood test a week before, knowing that the results would affect my life profoundly — in one way or another. I watched the blood leave my vein and found my mind blank. The implications were too big. I chose to go to my doctor's appointment alone. Possibly to prove to myself that I was

strong enough now to face things under my own power.

It turns out the most traumatic moment of the appointment was getting on the scale and seeing a number that didn't fit with my post-cancer life. Once again, it was time to put it in perspective and deal with the conversation I was about to have with my oncologist. We visited for a moment talking about our shared love of kayaking and the time we'd spent on the water this summer. Then he shifted gears and looked at the computer screen that held the results of my blood test.

When he told me my numbers looked great, I felt a relief gently whisper that everything's OK and I could breathe. We went through the motions of listening to my lungs, heart and checking my lymph nodes. Then he wished me well and said he'd see me in December.

So my dentist appointment was a trial, but it's also a long way from my heart. Cancer has taught me so much about attitude, perspective and choosing how I look at the world. I want to remember that for as long as I am blessed to be on this earth.

Fire briefly closed McKenzie Highway

Firefighters made quick work of a small lighting hold-over fire last Wednesday, July 15, on the west side of the McKenzie Pass.

The fire caused the temporary closure of the McKenzie Highway at the junction of Highway 126. Vehicles from Sisters were allowed up the road but only to the Dee Wright Observatory. The fire was burning close to the narrow, winding road.

Two helicopters, three engines and several hand crews got the fire contained quickly, according to KVAL News. The road was soon reopened.

The blaze is a reminder that fire from a lightning strike can smolder for days before flaring up under hot, dry conditions.

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