

Bookshelf

BY KATHY LATOUR

Many books arrive at CURE throughout the year. Here are a few we think you may want to know about.

Cancer Etiquette: What to Say, What to Do, When Someone You Know or Love Has Cancer

[Lion Books Publisher, 2004]

By Rosanne Kalick

If you are a survivor, you have had one or more of the experiences Rosanne Kalick talks about in her new book—the incredibly inconsiderate comment that couldn't have been said at a worst time. For me it was after my mastectomy. Friends and family were keeping me company around the clock, and a new intern from my church popped by. She was an older woman and I didn't know her well, so when she blathered on about how I would be fine, I just listened—that is until she said, “It's not until the cancer goes to the lymph nodes that it's terminal.” Since I had a malignant lymph node, there couldn't have been a worse thing to say—but she did. My reaction? Stunned silence.

Kalick recounts many tales like this one while giving options for how the patient and friends and family can respond with words and actions that help instead of wound. Of course, she starts at the obvious point that cancer is no longer a death sentence and until we get that message out, we will continue to have people respond to news of our diagnosis with information on hospice. Kalick also has a chapter on gifts and one on helping medical professionals understand how to better communicate.

Communication and finding ways to be present and show love and concern are problems for people who don't have cancer, so it's easy to see why knowing what to say or do will be an ongoing problem. But slipping a copy of Kalick's book to a well-meaning but insensitive friend or family member (or doctor), may be a good starting point.

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Living with Colon Cancer: Beating the Odds

[Prometheus Books, 2005]

By Eliza Wood Livingston, CNM, PMHNP

As a certified nurse midwife, Eliza Wood Livingston is able to carry readers through her initial diagnosis and surgery in a way that demystifies the procedures and tubes. Throughout the book, she interlaces definitions, tips, and

practical advice in boxes and sidebars. Especially helpful is detail on her colostomy, beginning with Wood Livingston's own initial repulsion to the family naming her stoma "Stella" and coping with humor, as family and friends would inquire as to Stella's health and happiness.

Throughout her treatment for stage 3 colon cancer, Wood Livingston paid close attention to her inner voice, her dreams, and her feelings, listening for information that would help her heal. She travels bravely to explore caretaker burnout and the costs to loved ones with her ongoing bowel obstructions and hospitalizations. But in the end, Wood Livingston has given us a great recounting of her journey with all its potholes and detours—another wonderful map in the quest for the new normal that is survivorship.

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Lessons from Joan: Living and Loving with Cancer, A Husband's Story

[Syracuse University Press, 2005]

By Eric R. Kingson

Eric Kingson admits that his initial idea was to write a book about how research and finding the right physician and treatment resulted in remission for his wife, Joan, who was diagnosed with metastatic colon cancer in 1998. But he found, as many do in the journey, that the magical information is how to live with cancer and how to approach death.

Kingson took it a step further by giving the reader insights into not only the medical journey—finding doctors, coping with insurance, making decisions on clinical trials—but also the emotional journey of a family as it moves into hopeful reality that allows for facing the end of life with support, communication, and love.

In the first half of the book, Kingson looks back on Joan's diagnosis and medical decisions with remarkable detail, and readers will appreciate his candid blending of the family issues that live alongside cancer. But he doesn't stop with Joan's death, taking readers into the experience and a family's grief. In addition he gives the reader a summary of the "practical lessons for negotiating cancer" that include tips and copies of letters and notes to insurance companies to help secure coverage for new treatments.

In the first chapter, Kingson describes it as a book about "living and dying with dignity, hope, and humor. And how doing so enriches many lives and helps with the healing of those left behind." He has done just that.