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Survivors Speak About Cancer's Silver Lining

The greatest gift to have come my way is that of time. Time to reflect on that which is important in life; time to embrace, process and release old emotional wounds; time to cook a really tasty meal; time to hang with my friends; time to sleep according to the body's own rhythm; time to make plans which include dreams; time to stand in line at the pharmacy and not get annoyed at the person before me taking 20 minutes to make their transaction; time to meditate, pray, watch movies, and take naps; time to appreciate, time to be, time to love and be loved, time to heal.

— Susan W., Quebec, Canada

Before cancer I would have done anything in my power to not spend time with the ill or dying. Now I lead a support group. Cancer gave me the gift of compassion, sensitivity, tenderness, and peace in the presence of the most precious people on earth.

— Chris B., Ventura, California

The warmth of the sun on my skin, the scent of nature as I inhale deeply, the feeling of rain on my face without running for the umbrella, the enchantment of snow as it falls from the sky, and the heartfelt joy of seeing my children's smiles.

— Valerie C., Howard County, Maryland

'You have cancer,' says the doctor, and then proceeds to tell you a bunch of medical information, which is like learning a foreign language for the first time. What the doctor doesn't say is that your life will never be the same, that what felt 'normal' prior to the diagnosis won't feel that way again, and that this experience can also bring good things to your life. Before I was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma a year and a half ago, I would have laughed and argued with anyone who would have tried to tell me I would find reasons to be grateful for my illness, but good things have come from this experience. ... Finally, cancer has taught me to take care of myself and to put my needs first. That may sound selfish to some, but it is probably the most important thing that I've learned through this experience. It hasn't happened overnight, and is something that I work on daily, but now I don't feel as guilty telling someone, 'I can't do it.' I know it's OK to be just who I am, cancer and all.

— Nancy O., St. Louis, Missouri