

Getting support at Gilda's Club by just showing up

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Last week I met with 30 cancer survivors at [Gilda's Club North Texas](#) to talk about survivorship, the time after treatment ends when we have to find our life again. We spend lots of time and energy on getting through cancer treatment, but little on the issues and concerns that linger when treatment ends. *CURE* published a great supplement called [Surviving Well](#) this spring to help survivors understand the physical and emotional issues related to survivorship.

At Gilda's Club, a cancer support community named for the actress Gilda Radner, those who came to talk about survivorship represented a wide range: men and women, old and young, those who were considered cured and those who were in stable remission. They represented a vast array of cancers: breast, lung, lymphoma, colon, brain. Some brought family, some came alone.

Despite their differences, their concerns were often similar. They are the same issues we hear from readers: fatigue, pain, survivor guilt, fear of recurrence, the feeling that they no longer inhabit their life. We only had an hour and a half so there wasn't time for in-depth discussion of everyone's issue, and I asked them to each give me one reason they had come. As we went around the room they talked about how cancer had come into their lives and how they had endured treatment -- for some repeatedly -- and what they wanted from that night.

In offering their questions or concerns came a magic moment of awareness that I often see at gatherings such as these. As they talked about fatigue or the sense of being out of line with their life, others who felt the same way nodded in agreement. It was the affirmation we all need that we may have diverted from the old life we had, but that the new life as a cancer survivor has commonalities that can be recognized if not embraced. In listening to others, your view of your situation often shifts just enough to feel the presence of the support that will get you through.

After the official meeting time ended, I chatted with a few of the attendees and noticed that others had formed small groups of two or three around the room where, brought together by the similarities of their feelings, they found community.