



Strategies for Dealing with Illness

Sitting here in glorious sunshine all is right with the world. What is it about fine sunny weather that raises people's mood? My sense of fun comes out and I particularly enjoy lots of water play with my children in the garden and eating outside. Today, however, my little bit of heaven was overshadowed by the news that someone I know is dealing with the stark reality of cancer.

My immediate reaction, was to ask what I could do to give help and support, followed quickly by queries to find out all the details. This particular woman did not want to talk about her illness or hear warm positive stories about other peoples' experiences with cancer. Rather very calmly and very clearly she let me know that she only intended discussing her illness with her consultant and that she intended to remain working as much as possible.

I had to put a lid on my curiosity and try to ensure that I fully acknowledged and respected how this woman has decided to deal with her illness. I found this hard as my approach to health issues is so very different. I immediately try to gather as much information as possible and I talk about it to lots of different people to see who may be able to give me support.

Indeed if the same cancer diagnosis were given to six different people each would have their own strategy for how they would want to deal with their illness. There is no right or wrong way to deal with illness or any other serious situation. What is important is that we try to ensure that the strategy we use is the one that will work best for us.

And so I have a two-fold challenge for you this week. In the first instance I want you to take time to consider what strategies you use to deal with health issues. Even the simple ones give us indicators for our patterns in more serious situations. It is good to know what we do and understand why it is important for us.

The second part of the challenge is directed at those of you who are giving support to another individual at the present time. Having understood your own strategy, how do you ensure that when you are giving support that it is the other person's needs that are met? What checks and balances do you have in place to ensure that the other person is getting what they need to receive rather than what you need to give?

Finally, well done on giving support to others. It is part of what makes us truly human.

Warm Regards

Mary