

This Thanksgiving is even more profound as I walk hand-in-hand with Bill through his illness.

Metastatic pancreatic cancer, which Bill has, is a very weird disease. Bill has had it for 20 months. He looks great and feels pretty good now that he's off chemotherapy. As men will do whenever they gather, he recently had a contest with two college buddies. Bill won by doing 21 pushups. (You can imagine the internal struggle of the other two guys—happy that their buddy could do it but embarrassed that the guy with cancer beat them!)

But make no mistake this cancer is deadly. Once it takes a turn for the worse, it moves swiftly, sometimes in a matter of weeks.



I tell you this not to gather your sympathy. I am surrounded by love and Bill is next to me. That is all that matters in this moment. Many of you are missing someone who is no longer here. I understand how profoundly fortunate I am.

No, I tell you all this to beseech you to take the opportunity that Thanksgiving provides. Tell those who are important to you that they are appreciated and loved. Bask in the incredible warmth of *their* love. Pick up the phone and call someone who has drifted away and tell him or her they are missed. Most of all never miss a chance to give affection. I take every occasion I can to kiss Bill on the cheek or the top of his beautiful bald head.

As for you, please know that I appreciate you more than you can ever know. I feel your presence, cheering us on. Some of you know first hand what we are living and have reached out via email to say so. Many of you have lost your own Bill and remind me to grab each moment as it comes. The message I hear consistently is that love is all that matters. Thank you for continually reminding me of that.

I leave you with the profound words of Erma Bombeck, a very funny writer who brought much joy to her readers for many years and continues to through her books. You may have seen this piece before but it's worth reading again. Here is what she wrote when she was told she had terminal cancer:

IF I HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE OVER

By Erma Bombeck

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have talked less and listened more.

I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained, or the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would have shared more of the responsibility carried by my husband.

I would have sat on the lawn with my grass stains.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television and more while watching life.



I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner." There would have been more "I love you's." More "I'm sorry's."

But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute...look at it and really see it, live it and never give it back. Stop sweating the small stuff.

Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what. Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who do love us.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours with loads of love from me and mine!!!