

WORKSHEET 12 · CHAPTER TWELVE · WHEN CANCER CHANGES YOU, YOU CAN'T GO BACK

Welcome Home

Sometimes healing isn't about going back. It's about getting acquainted with the person who is here now.

One of the hardest parts of breast cancer, chronic illness, grief, trauma, or any life-altering experience is that we often spend years trying to get back to who we were before.

I know I did. I kept waiting for the old me to return. The energetic me. The healthy me. The productive me. The carefree me. The me who didn't need to think about medications, scans, symptoms, appointments, surgeries, grief, trauma, or survival.

But healing isn't always about going back. Sometimes healing is about getting acquainted with the person who is here now.

STEP 1

Honor Who You Were

Take a few minutes to write about the version of yourself you miss.

What do I miss most?

What did she love? What did she do easily?

What did she believe about herself?

What losses still hurt the most?

Allow yourself to grieve as it comes. Don't force it. Don't push it away either. Sit with whatever you feel, and don't rush this part. Loss deserves to be acknowledged.

STEP 2

Meet Who You Are Today

Now write about the person you are today. Try not to judge this version of yourself. Simply get to know her.

What strengths have emerged? What have I survived?

What weaknesses have I felt? How have I coped?

How have I become more compassionate, wise, resilient or authentic?

What do I understand now that I didn't before?

What am I still struggling to understand?

STEP 3

Notice the Parts

Think about the different parts of yourself — those that were there before, and those that have appeared along the way. Tick the ones you recognize, and add your own.

- ☐ A Warrior — or a Patient, a Survivor, a Thriver (use your own word)
- ☐ A Caregiver
- ☐ A Protector
- ☐ A Perfectionist
- ☐ An Angry Part
- ☐ A Grieving Part
- ☐ A Scared Part
- ☐ A Tired Part
- ☐ A Hopeful Part

What parts have shown up to help me survive?

What has each part been trying to do for me? How has it tried to protect me?

What does it need from me now?

Remember: even the parts you dislike usually began with good intentions.

STEP 4

Write a Letter

Write a short letter to yourself. Tell yourself what you most need to hear. Offer yourself the same compassion you would offer a loved one. What would you say if your best friend had survived everything you've survived? Write those words to yourself.

Dear Me,

STEP 5**Finish This Sentence**

Read your answers slowly. Notice what feelings arise.

I am no longer...

I am still...

I am becoming...

A Gentle Reminder

Integration doesn't mean you stop grieving. It doesn't mean you love everything that happened. It doesn't mean you stop wishing things were different. It means you're no longer trying to exile the parts of yourself that showed up to survive.

You are allowed to miss who you were. And you are allowed to welcome who you've become.

Both can be true. And perhaps that is what healing is.

This worksheet accompanies Chapter Twelve of *Reluctant Warrior: A Memoir & Breast Cancer Emotional Survival Guide* by Dr. Christina Hibbert. It is a reflective exercise, not therapy or medical care. If it brings up more than you expected, that makes sense — please consider bringing it to someone who can sit with you in it.