

The View from Here

By: Justine Chichester

There are so many great quotes about friendship. One of my favorites came from the champ himself, Muhammad Ali. He once said, "Friendship is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything."

When I first came home from the hospital, I was not prepared for how different my life would be. Before my fall, before all of the tests and subsequent surgeries, before the couple of years in and out of the hospital and then in and out of rehab, I led a very active life. I had a background in theater and dance. I sat on the Board of Directors of a charity organization and managed to work full-time. But after one slip, one night in front of my house, all of that completely changed. I spent the next couple of years immersed in my medical issues. That became my life.

While I was in the hospital, I wanted nothing more than to be home. Once I was home, I felt derailed. Sidelined from life. The transition from the hospital back home was not easy for me. I felt homebound and unsure how to get back to my life as I once knew it. Everyday tasks that used to be so easy for me, were now so difficult. Wheeling around my house, where I used to walk, took a lot of getting used to. I wasn't comfortable in this new life and as a result, I began to isolate myself from the outside world. Friends and family would call or email and I started not returning their phone calls or their emails. I watched the world go by as I slowly isolated myself from it.

I have been so lucky to have a loving family and a few close friends with me throughout this experience. To say that my best friend is persistent would be an understatement. She pushed through. When she called and I didn't answer, she would send text messages. When I wouldn't answer her text, she came to the door. And she knocked on the door until I answered. She continued to try. She didn't give up. While I felt like the world was going on without me, she helped me remember that I was not alone and I could rely on my friends to help me through this transition. As a result of her persistence, I answered the door. I let her in, and by doing so, I realized that

I could rely on those close to me to help me adjust to my new normal. I started answering the phone and those emails. With the support of my friends and my family, I slowly began to participate in my life once again. I started getting out, and I was excited about meeting up with my friends and not feeling like I had to be so alone.

I've learned so much since that day two years ago. One of the most valuable lessons, though, has been the power of friendship. It is so important to reach out, even when someone may seem distant. Don't give up on those you love, no matter how busy life can be. We don't always know exactly what battles our friends and loved ones may be facing. Sometimes just letting them know you are there, and that they are needed, can make all the difference.