Is it fighting for more time with loved ones in your future?  Is it a life full of dreams you want to accomplish?

As I reflect on all that happened in 2020, I must admit there is a weight inside my belly that makes me want to go somewhere else. It’s painful to think of those we lost and watch the suffering of those we love. As a private counselor, I hear a repeated theme of heaviness. People miss their families, friends, and the simplest of things we took for granted before.

In Michigan, it is also that time of year when Seasonal affective disorder rages with cloudiness and a winter that wants to just hold on with tight knuckles. There is a hope for better days soon. For those who are not cold and snow enthusiasts, we know spring will come. Do you dream about time in the sun? Are you planning your garden with newfound zest? Do you look forward to some socially distant outdoor time with friends you miss?

As I awoke today, I was reminded of a song that says, “It is in the waiting." Spirituality has always been a major coping tool and I have found music from my faith to be an anthem during times like these. One part of the song goes as follows;

Take courage my heart

Stay steadfast my soul

He's in the waiting

Hold onto your hope

As your triumph unfolds

He's never failing

We all have our definition of spirituality and I encourage you to use what works for you. But I share these lyrics as they echo wisdom from what I have heard from cancer survivors. These wise warriors have learned to cope with their disease and have learned how to tune their focus—to hold onto hope, to take things moment by moment, to celebrate the small victories, and to grip all that gives them strength.

Faith, attitude, and support are the pillars of strength. I’ve also learned from them just how pivotal mindset is. One caregiver shared with me how he and his wife had big goals such as “getting well" but they learned to embrace the small victories as their “north star." One step toward their road to recovery was being able to hold their grandson again. “Being well” was something that would take a long time. Having evidence of markers along the way to that goal was a game changer for them.

Another favorite story of wisdom came from a woman I met when I first started my career. She was sent to social work to help get her affairs in order.  This woman was a single mother of two precious young boys who had metastatic ovarian cancer. It was in her brain, spine and liver. She was told she would not survive six months. I remember her telling the support group how she had big and small goals. Big goals such as "I am not leaving this planet until my boys graduate.” Smaller ones were things like, “I am not leaving this planet until I make cookies for my son’s Halloween party at school." I know pure determination does not save everyone with cancer but this spunky mom meant business. She was attending her support group for six years before she finally discontinued because she was too busy planning her wedding. She used hope and goals like a ninja warrior.

So now it’s time to connect all the dots in this blog and in my brain as I sharpen my focus. I have learned from the cancer survivors in my life the importance of staying strong mentally, appreciating moments in the here and now, and preparing with hope to move forward. We see signs of hope as more and more are vaccinated and being smart about social distancing.

We have the greatest minds in the world working on this, so I will do my part to give them the time they need by wearing my mask, distancing, and washing my hands more than usual. I will adapt to what is out of my control by making the best of my situation, and I will try to focus on my blessings rather than these temporary challenges. And I look forward, knowing all seasons in life come to an end. “Spring” is on the calendar. And until I get to experience it, I will prepare for it.