

The title is centered in large, white, sans-serif font. The background is a blurred image of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water with hills in the distance.

To Misquote Mark Twain

“Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated.”

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MURRAY CALDER, STRATEGY DIRECTOR 12 OCT 2017

It seems that every day we hear breathless chatter from people who really should know better that this or that, TV or Big Brands, are dying. They're not. And neither am I.

November 30th 2015. St. Andrews Day. The 8th anniversary of my wife Emma and I getting together.

And the day I found out I had cancer. Specifically, Stage 4 Follicular Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. One of the roughly 1,900 people in the UK each year who are diagnosed with this form of cancer.

This was a rather unpleasant surprise.

It came at a time when I was under enormous pressure at work. I didn't cope with it very well.

I broke down over Christmas Dinner with my family. Then I spent a most unpleasant train journey home from Kings Cross, after a particularly fraught client meeting, having panic attacks in the toilet.

So I was signed off with stress for a couple of months. Then, after several sessions with my excellent NHS psychologist, I came back to work.

Until the cancer progressed to the point where I couldn't walk without severe pain from the swollen lymph nodes in my groin (every bit as unpleasant as it sounds).

In February this year I started a 6 month course of R-CVP Chemotherapy.

And it's knocked the cancer right back. So I'm happy to say that I appear to be on the road to managing my disease in a way that will let me live a full life.

That's not to say that I'm back to 100% Murray just yet. But, with the support of family, friends, colleagues, and my NHS cancer team (who I really can't thank enough) I know I can cope.

I'm not entirely sure what I've learnt from this experience (you're supposed to learn things from this sort of thing, right?) and everyone's experience will be different but a few observations I've made on the journey that might help when you next find yourself in a fix:

- If I've learnt anything at all on this journey it's that we are all, yes even you, on a spectrum of mental health and that it's not weakness to ask for help. It's perfectly normal to react to traumatic situations in your life with a flood of emotions, uncertainty and, yes, even mental health problems. Give yourself permission to have those feelings and know that there is help there if only you ask for it. You don't have to struggle through it alone.
- You are more resilient than you can imagine but friends, family, colleagues, even strangers on the internet can all give you the support you will need to make it through to the other side.
- As well as leaning into your situation, if you're able to, and taking action to deal with your problems so you can get on with the demands of continuing to live your life you must also lean back and take the time you need, to rest, recuperate, and reenergize yourself. Rushing into the heat of the action again does nobody any favours.
- Spending quality time with loved ones is an infinite well of support and encouragement but you also need some time to yourself to process and reflect upon what you're experiencing. Just don't overdo the reflection bit (maybe that's just me – it's what I do)

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