

Life Is about Choices I Chose ... Live

How I Learned to Cope When Faced with the Stress of Cancer

by Mike Coy, RFC, CPBA

I've been asked many times by friends and family if I ever wanted to just give up when I was battling cancer. The answer is no. I had a six-month-old grandson, and I wanted to be able to take him to the park. I wanted to be able to play catch with him and watch him grow up. No, giving up wasn't an option for me. However, I do understand why someone would quit.

It is hard to explain to someone who has not gone through cancer why some people fight (sometimes to the death) and why some people give up (sometimes immediately) – why some win and some lose in the battle. The pain associated with cancer could make anyone want to give up, and that's why it's so important to find a reason to live and to hold onto that reason for dear life. Cancer destroys your whole body, and you have to keep your mind strong because if that goes, everything goes.

My reason to keep fighting was my faith that God had more in mind for me to accomplish, as well as my desire to see my grandsons grow up. I had faith

in my doctors and believed that they knew what steps to take and what treatments would get me well. I knew I had to have a positive attitude because of what I read about stress. For me, it was all about focusing on how to stop thinking about how stressed I was and remember how blessed I was instead.

Sitting out on my balcony in Chattanooga, TN, watching it snow, watching

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the Tennessee River flow below me, seeing the kids play and lovers walk hand in hand meant so much to me during some really tough times. But my tough times were physical. I was not going to allow them to be mental too.

Life is about choices – decisions we must make every hour of every day. In some cases, it's all about culture change, which is not easy to do. But in many cases, it's the only thing to do. I had to figure out why there was so much stress in my life. I had to figure out where my stress was coming

from. Then I had to figure out what to do about it.

I can think back on a day when everything was going south – a tough day at work, an appointment that did not work out the way I expected it to work out, and then going home and taking it out on my (then) wife.

But the point I am trying to make is that you need to find what is causing the stress in your life and figure out what you are going to do to fix it. It might be holding your grandbaby in your arms. It might be stopping at Dairy Queen one afternoon and picking up your favorite ice cream. It might be spending some time alone and thanking God for all your blessings. I know that works for me. Try it. It just might work for you too.

Finding the cause and taking steps toward relief are both important factors

in stress management and can greatly aid in the fight against cancer.

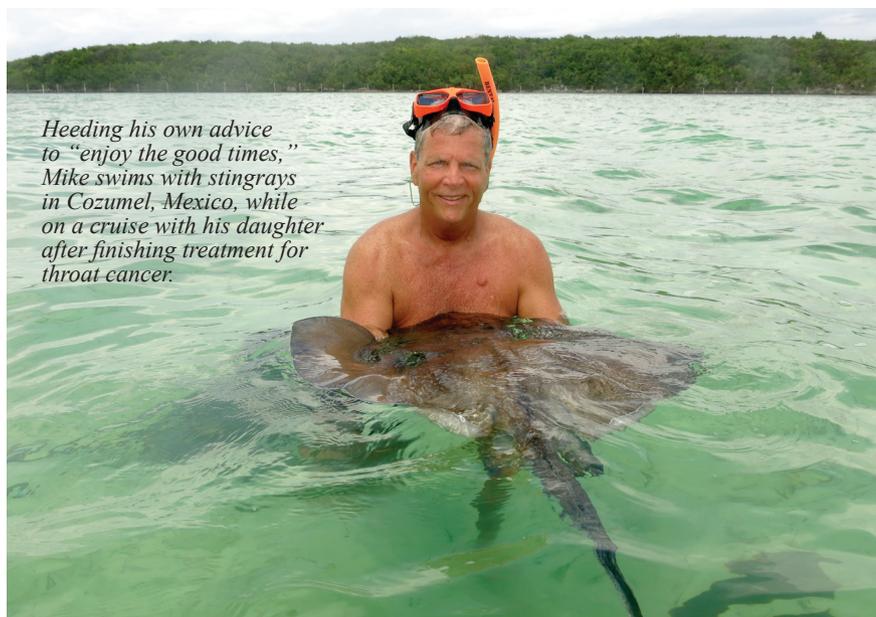
For anyone facing the trials and tribulations of this world, try to stop focusing on how lousy life can be and remember how blessed each and every one of us truly is. As I said, life is about choices – decisions we make that can be good for us or maybe not so good for us. And if I can reach out to just one person with my words, then all of this has been worth it.

Today is all we've got. Yesterday is gone, and tomorrow is never promised. The canvas we paint can be a blessing or a curse.

I hope you value your life and the people in it enough to get checked regularly and remain healthy. Stop to embrace this opportunity we call life. Remember to thank the loved ones who get you through the tough times. Enjoy the good times. Remember that, even if you have cancer, cancer doesn't have you. And, when life throws you a curveball, my prayer is that you'll knock it out of the park and proudly proclaim, "I chose ... live."

Mike Coy is a throat cancer survivor, public speaker, author, and healthcare reform expert. Learn more about Mike at IChoseLive.com.

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Heeding his own advice to "enjoy the good times," Mike swims with stingrays in Cozumel, Mexico, while on a cruise with his daughter after finishing treatment for throat cancer.