

Hope Floats

*Not just surviving, but thriving after
CANCER through exercise and eating well.*

By
Greg Ryan
Professional Fitness Expert

*SAVE a life,
share this!*





241 Sears Ave. Louisville, KY 40207

Hope Floats

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FROM THE AUTHOR

Two years ago, I decided to parachute out of an airplane. “Why should I be afraid?” I thought, as I looked over at my friend Kathy. She was smiling from ear to ear as she put on her jump suit.

Any challenges in my life seemed insignificant compared to what she had been through. On the outside, everything seemed fine; she always had an upbeat attitude, a great smile and good things to say. On the inside, however, either from the chemotherapy or the cancer itself, things just did not seem the same.

One, two, three, jump! Ten, eight, six thousand feet, pull the cord and then.... silence. Clouds seem to take on a much different meaning when you’re above them, looking down. The little irritating things in life don’t seem all that important, either.

While I spent less than five minutes total from plane to planet, the experience has given me the lesson of a lifetime:

Hope does float.

Personally, I can't relate to Kathy's struggle, nor do I claim to have walked in the shoes of a cancer patient. What I do know is that choosing to exercise and to eat a healthy diet saved my life, both physically and emotionally. Regular exercise and eating well have been proven to promote better health, even for those who have had cancer. I was lucky - fitness found me. You, on the other hand, must go looking for it.

The doctors will perform your surgery, check for side effects and leftover cancer cells, and then send you home with some brochures for counseling. They do their job well, but there is still much more to do in the days that follow. Survival is just the first step. What if you could choose to have more, to really thrive for the rest of your life?

No, you will never be the same, and most cancer patients just want to return to a life of some normalcy. Exercise and proper eating can help regain your life. It can give you both a physical and emotional boost when you need it the most. It can give you the basis for hope of an even better life, even after cancer.

There are endless lists of physical benefits that exercise and healthy eating can produce; however, it is the positive effects they bring to emotional and mental well-being that really saves lives. Cancer may change your body, but it can't touch your core strengths, your heart and soul. Through exercise and diet, I believe that you have the ability to create both better health and hope for a better life.

Someone once said, *“You can live a month without food. You can live a week without water. You can live five minutes without air, but you cannot live a second without **hope.**”*

When times are at their worst, hope is all that you and I have. As you look ahead to your future, have hope that you can regain some sense of control in your life by choosing to exercise and eat well. With these tools, you can continue not only to survive, but to thrive. The question is,

Are you ready to sail?



PROLOGUE

We both had done the math. Kelly added it all up and knew she had to let me go. I added it up, and knew that I had lost her, 'cos I was never gonna get off that island. I was gonna die there, totally alone. I was gonna get sick or get injured or something.

The only choice I had, the only thing I could control was when, and how, and where it was going to happen. So, I made a rope and I went up to the summit to hang myself. I had to test it, you know? Of course. You know me. And the weight of the log snapped the limb of the tree, so I...I...I couldn't even kill myself the way I wanted to. I had power over...nothing.

And that's when this feeling came over me, like a warm blanket. I knew, somehow, that I had to stay alive. Somehow, I had to keep breathing, even though there was no reason to hope. And all my logic said that I would never see this place again. So that's what I did. I stayed alive. I kept breathing. And one day my logic was proven all wrong because the tide came in and gave me a sail.

And now, here I am. I'm back. In Memphis, talking to you. I have ice in my glass... and I've lost her all over again. I'm so sad that I don't have Kelly. But I'm so grateful that she was with me on that island. And I know what I have to do now.

I gotta keep breathing. Because tomorrow the sun will rise. Who knows what the tide could bring?

Chuck Noland
Cast Away
Starring Tom Hanks

*Dedicated to
Mom and Kathy*



Ready to sail?

INTRODUCTION

Life was different now. While on the outside things were seemingly calm, my insides were being tossed like a ship in a hurricane. When I first heard that I had breast cancer, I was shocked, to say the least. Up until then, all my mammograms were normal. I wasn't grossly out of shape and I lived a somewhat normal lifestyle. Logically, why did this happen to me? "Not now, not me," I thought.

The other thing on my mind was "what about my body?" Things were now going to be different on the outside, too. What would I look like? What would others think? And my hair! Never in my life did I think of wearing a wig. After the initial shock, with some reassurance from God, my husband and the doctors, I realized now it was up to me.

Before cancer, I never thought life could change as quickly as it has. One moment I'm going through my everyday items, and next thing I know, a part of me is threatened to be taken away. Maybe even my life. What do I do now? Where do I go from here? How

will I cope? Who will be there when I need them most?

Then I realized it all started with me. Was I going to be the victim or the survivor? Was I going to mope around just enough to get by, or was I going to get on with my life?

I decided that I needed to get on board or else my life was going to just wither away. I had to keep breathing. I had to believe there would be life after cancer. Was it tough? Sure it was. It still is. But, I had two choices; get up and walk or stay on the couch and die. Either I eat healthier or continue to scarf down the junk food and feel rotten.

For the last few years, my sail has been up. The wind has taken me to places I never thought possible. I'm healthier, I'm active and I am determined to go on. Do I know where my ship will take me? No. Maybe it's best that way. I do not wish cancer on anyone, but in some crazy way, the cancer opened my eyes to what matters most to me; my faith, my family and my fitness.

I am so thankful I got on board. What about you?

Kathy

Part I

AT THE DOCK

DERIVE:

To arrive at a reason

To trace the origin

To receive

1

BOARDING PASS



Getting Your Pass

Why, how, when and where? Why me? How did I get here? When did it start? Where do I go from here?

One of the most confusing things in life is when logic doesn't exist in circumstance. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, you get this boarding pass with the word "cancer" written on it. You have no idea which cabin number is yours or where this ship is sailing. Here is where you question your path, purpose and future. What eludes you most is, "Why me?"

"There has to be a reason this has happened to me," you think.

In the long run, which question is more important to answer – "why me" or "what can I do right now to start feeling better?"



*Am I going to beach my life or am I going to
sail on?*

Getting Down to It

The truth is you may never understand why you got cancer. There are many theories, but you may never know for sure how or why it happened. So where should you focus your energy - on your past or on your future?

Getting Real

The best thing to do is invest in the immediate future by answering these questions:

“Am I going to beach my life or am I going to sail on?”

“Where am I going from here?”

Have you ever noticed how some people get through adversity better than others? Why? It boils down to their attitude. Being resentful or grateful will determine how long you stay stuck on the sandbar. You can stay beached for the rest of your life by being resentful, or you can choose to cruise on out to sea by being grateful for the days to come. Easier said than done, isn't it?

We might just make it. Did that thought ever cross your brain? Well regardless I would rather take my chance out there on the ocean than to stay here and die on this crappy island spending the rest of my life talking to a %&##@#\$\$! **volleyball!***

*Chuck Noland
“Cast Away”*

2

ALL ABOARD



Your Ticket to Better Health

Sailboats and big ships are slow, but they are reliable in getting to their destination. If you really want to feel better, it will take a certain type of slow and steady approach: an *all-aboard attitude*.

Last year, I was on a cruise ship in the Bahamas. It was scheduled to leave port at 4:00 p.m. At dinner that night, we were one table mate short. Apparently, he arrived at the dock five minutes late. Five minutes! His wife said there they were, waving goodbye to each other, and there was nothing they could do about it.

Hey, when the captain says four o'clock, he doesn't mean 4:05. Either you are on board or you aren't.

The bottom line is that you will have good and bad days. So what is the right mindset? I suggest that you buy into this journey, get your ticket and get on board.

Personally, I had no idea where exercise and eating well would take me 20 years ago, but I knew that if I kept at it, one day at a time, fueled by some hope, then something good had to happen. All I asked was, “*God, just give me one more day. Give me the strength to walk today. Allow me to have a good attitude. I’ll worry about tomorrow, tomorrow.*” Then after a while, my attitude started to change, my health started to change, my life changed. Thank God I got on board early.

Don’t be left at the dock - let your commitment be your ticket to a better future. Get on board for *life*.

*SAVE a life,
share this!*



3

CALM BEFORE THE STORM



When Time Stands Still

“Mom, how are you feeling today?”

“*Oh, ok,*” she says, as she pats her stomach.

This reminds me of how she would pat my head when I was a little boy and didn’t feel so well.

“The doctor says you will be able to go home in a few days.”

“*Hope so,*” she whispers as she closes her eyes and falls asleep.

I had never seen my mom in this way. For thirty-five years, I only knew her as the Rock of Gibraltar. But that day, the roles had changed. I was praying for strength, to be there for her.

Mom had colon cancer. “*What? This was just supposed to be routine checkup. How can I have cancer?*”

“Just happened,” the doctor said.

“*Didn’t just happen,*” she says, whispering in my ear.

Since that day, Mom has lived through two bouts with cancer, first in her colon and later, in her thyroid. Both times, she was treated with successful surgeries and suffered no long-lasting side effects.

She insists that what caused her illness were stress and bad eating habits. Mom claims that in both cases, within two years almost to the month of being diagnosed, she experienced a lot of stress in her life, followed by poor eating habits.

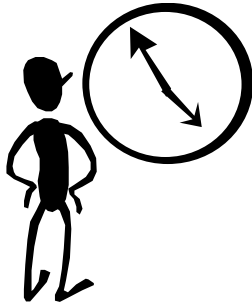
“*Didn’t just happen!*” she says.

I never will forget the look on her face and the feeling I had in my stomach as we heard the doctor say *cancer*. In some way, it felt like time did stand still, and from that moment on, the rush of life just didn’t seem as important.

You might have arthritis, high cholesterol or diabetes; these health conditions are serious, but not show-stopping. But *cancer*? What did you do and how did you feel when you heard that word?

Time stood still, didn't it?

First you may go into shock, but soon you start to figure out that you need some sort of coping mechanism to handle the news. So what will you do?



Take time to deliberate, but when the time for action has arrived, stop thinking and go in.

Napoleon Bonaparte
French general & politician (1769 - 1821)



Wind for Your Sails

Hey, life's not fair and when things happen, there is often no logic to be found. So what do you do? You try to accept it the best you can. You get on board.

The goal is not to focus on why, but on what you can do to improve your health.

Yes, the winds of life will come at you from many unexpected directions. Feeling both blown about by its force and numbed by its impact, it may be all you can do to hang on.

First, you survive by just staying above water. Soon after, you're paddling. Before you know it, you're cruising along better than you ever could have imagined.

Getting immediate exercise can be the wind that propels you to a healthier horizon. It may be the one thing that gets you off the dock, keeps you afloat and allows you to set sail.

Part II

SETTING SAIL



Ahoy, Matey

4

LEAVING YOUR DOCK



Fear of the Future

If you are going to sail, you have to leave the security of your dock. Sure, it's scary to face the unknown. However, it can't be any worse than what you have already experienced. The best thing to do is to concentrate not on the effort, but on the outcome.

You may think that all of your circumstances, including your environment and your workout, have to be perfect in order to start. Such a universe doesn't exist and it never will. Even in the best of times, we won't be at 100 percent of our potential all of the time.

If you want something badly enough, sometimes you just have to make it happen! By taking action, you replace fear with a sense of control over your life.

What is fear? Fear is only:

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

Fear of Losing Control

In order to leave your “safe” surrounding of sickness, you have to want to sail so badly in order to feel so much better that you forget your fear and just take a leap of faith.

Having cancer makes you feel like you have no control over your life. At the very least, exercise can allow you to regain some control and to focus on the positive, not the negative.

Setting sail means you have to leave of the dock. Leaving your dock is getting control of your life, not losing it.

5

SETTING SAIL



Wind, Water and Waves

There are many things to get ready before the journey can begin. If you have ever sailed, you know that once the boat is ready, you just untie the ropes, point the bow out to the open water and sail off.

There is such an invigorating feeling about the wind, the waves and the freedom of the water. As you set your course to improve your future, the view of a healthy life, strong bones and more energy on the horizon gives you the strength to make the right choices.

Setting up a game plan can be almost as exciting as doing it. The anticipation of accomplishing something warms the insides. The start of something new rejuvenates the soul. It gives your heart a new lease on life.

One thrill of sailing is being out there on the water and on your way. Nothing can replace that feeling at being one with nature, yourself and your Creator. On your voyage to better health, nothing can replace your determination to do what needs to be done. Where will you go from here? It is up to you to set the course.

*SAVE a life,
share this!*



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