

The New Normal Versus a New Beginning

by [Joyce Aleshire](#)

[Print](#)

How many times in your caregiving have you heard the words “New Normal”? I have used the term in talking to others and at our cancer caregiver meetings.

You get the diagnosis—it doesn’t have to be cancer; it can be any disease—and all of a sudden, you have to get used to the “New Normal.” Not just your loved one and you as the caregiver, but the whole family.

It’s true that life is no longer as it once was for all concerned. Your daily routine has changed and so has your thought process, trying to cram everything into one day and realizing it is NOT going to happen. New Normal is rearranging your daily schedule to accommodate all concerned loved one, caregiver and members of your immediate family.

That laundry you usually did every Monday morning may have to wait until Tuesday or Wednesday. The cleaning—who doesn’t like putting that off? So, it’s another day or so before you get to it. It’s not going away; it’ll be there when you have time.

The New Normal can even interfere with your cooking dinner. Maybe the time will have to change and be a little later than... Normal.

It’s those routines we’ve been locked into that make it hard to adjust to that New Normal. Some of us get comfortable in our routines and are creatures of habit and go into panic mode when something comes along to challenge our daily rituals.

There’s the loved one, whose life has been changed dramatically, who carries guilt for having this New Normal change their life and everyone else’s around them. How must they hate those words?

Their New Normal started the day they got diagnosed, not the day of their first chemo or radiation, which usually comes after a surgery (maybe two). When they heard the words, “I’m sorry, you have cancer,” their Normal came to an abrupt halt!

I’ve heard doctors, nurses, other caregivers (including myself) use the term New Normal and I always thought it was a good analogy.

The definition of “Normal” is regular, natural, staying with the general standard. So, the New Normal for the loved one and their caregiver is the same because it is what we will now know as Normal from now on. There are “naturally” office visits, testing, and possible surgeries. The “general standard” of chemo/radiation becomes a “regular” part of a cancer patient’s treatment.

The definition of “New Beginning” is a start...the point at which something begins.

The cancer patient and caregiver are starting a journey, a New Beginning for both, filled with apprehension, anxiety, fear of the unknown... don't most New Beginnings start out that way?

I think I prefer the term New Beginning. Just the words alone bring a sound of HOPE!

The New Beginning that the cancer patient and caregiver will experience will include confusion. They will both be confused, not knowing exactly how they got on this path. Stopping for directions at this point is useless, so they continue.

In this New Beginning, nerve-wracking emotions are coming into play. Things will settle down in due time; but until then, it's "one day at a time." We've heard that before, too, right?

Your New Beginning will have a few obstacles here and there; but with perseverance, you will see the fight you never knew you had in you.

These New Beginning challenges can be quite traumatic!

Those good reports come few and far between for some, while others can just breeze along and go with the flow. Each good report is a New Beginning as they continue to march on!

With each New Beginning, you learn something—how much stronger you were than you ever imagined. You're grateful for another day, another chance at life as you continue your fight.

Those New Beginnings can bring sadness with an unexpected setback, but give you HOPE for a recovery. New Beginnings can let you see the simplest things in a different light—a new appreciation of something you used to take for granted.

Each day is an opportunity for a New Beginning!

Lao Tzu, a philosopher, and poet, said: "New Beginnings are often disguised as painful endings." They certainly can be. However, every day is a New Beginning to start over. Your New Beginning is your life! If you are having a bad day, struggling, maybe having a setback, having trouble coping, remember another New Beginning is on the horizon. It's called...Tomorrow!