

Geoffrey's Story

My wife is called Joanne and she has been diagnosed with lymphoma cancer. The lymphoma cancer grew for five or six months at the bottom of her spine. She has been taking in to the Belfast City Hospital, where she is undergoing treatment.

It will be a shock at the start and you're not thinking about what is happening in the future, but you have to come to the realisation: this is a different change. Your future is going to be a total different thing to what it was in the past. You have to concentrate on keeping your wife happy, as saying, "Don't worry – I'm going to be with you and I'm staying with you", because she gets thinking she's going to change, losing her hair, etc., and things like that, but you have to reassure her that, "I'm your husband and I love you and I will be staying with you, and I'm right with you right to the end, and whatever you need, we will get that for you and help you out in any way as possible".

I have three daughters: one is aged nine, one 15, and one at 20. It's hard to juggle school-runs and family life and travelling to the hospital, but it's something, again, where you have to come to yourself and say this is something you have to naturally do. You also have to comfort the children and explain to them, if they want to know – you don't force it onto them.

For any men who's listening out there, it takes a wee while [laughing] to just do things that you've never done before that the lady of the house would have done, your wife or whatever, so, there'll be a bit of a change there, but you will get your head around it, that what you have to do is just a natural thing, that...and you'll say to yourself, "Oh my goodness, gracious me, did she have to do that [laughing], I didn't do that". It's a wee bit hard at the start, maybe wondering what setting the washing machine should be at for which type of clothes you have in, but you'll have to get the manual out and have a little look at it [laughing]. But as the weeks goes on, it will become natural and you'll just do it and that will be it.

When you get some free time, the best idea would be to do something that you like. If you like to go walking, maybe go for a swim, it's very therapeutic, the swimming, or go maybe and have a chat with your neighbour or a relation or a friend, go out and get a break away from it all, or you might prefer just to put the television on, get a favourite movie, and just sit back, get the recliner, put the feet up, and chill-out!