



## Coping with Cancer As a Couple

Recorded on: August 5, 2013

### **Patricia (Tish) Beck**

Sarcoma Survivor

### **Rob Beck**

Spouse, Caregiver

*Please remember the opinions expressed on Patient Power are not necessarily the views of our sponsors, contributors, partners or Patient Power. Our discussions are not a substitute for seeking medical advice or care from your own doctor. That's how you'll get care that's most appropriate for you.*

---

### **Andrew Schorr:**

Hello and welcome to Patient Power. I'm Andrew Schorr. Let's talk about communication when a couple is hit with one of them diagnosed with cancer. Rob and Tish Beck join us from La Grande, Oregon, where they have a family farm in northeastern Oregon. They have been on Patient Power before.

They've been married 30 years, but 10 years ago they had an unwanted visitor. Tish was diagnosed with sarcoma, and she's has recurrences along the way, so it's been quite a journey. Communication is so important.

Thank you so much for being with us, Rob and Tish. Tish, tell us about how you've worked on communication.

### **Tish Beck:**

Well, you know, it's just an ongoing thing, so we're still working on it, 30 years later, but...

### **Rob Beck:**

...we're still no better than we used to be.

### **Tish Beck:**

I think we're a little better, but, yeah, it's just a daily thing, you know. You're going plug away at it and you learn, I think for me personally, and this is going to make me choke up. I see a more gentle side in Rob now after all this, you know. He works hard, and he's got a few employees he's got to keep track of, and so, you know, but the gentle side comes out when somebody's ill or hurt, and I see it more often now, and that's a blessing.

---

**Andrew Schorr:**

Tish, do you tell Rob when you're scared?

**Tish Beck:**

Not always, most of the time, yes, but not always. And again I think sometimes I realize when I'm scared or nervous he probably is too, and it feels like it compounds it maybe, you know. I mean I know he struggles too, you know. He's hoping for the best news possible. I'm hoping for the best news possible. So it's kind of an unspoken, yeah, we're both scared, let's just go march through this and get it done and hopefully get some good news and get home.

So, yeah, I'd say 50 percent of the time. When I just get to a real place where I feel like, oh, I can't handle it right now, then I share. But when I just know it's those butterflies and I'm kind of nervous, then I just, you know, hang onto it and wait it through.

**Rob Beck:**

Every four months when we go to those checkups, neither of us realize how stressed we are. And this is after 10 years of going through this, or 11 almost now. We don't realize until afterwards. We're in the car heading for home for a four-and-a-half hour drive home and, boy, you just, you know, then you start talking about it and realize all the pent-up things for the last three or four days that we've gone through.

**Andrew Schorr:**

So, unfortunately, you're both veterans in this. What would you say to other couples who are coping with a cancer diagnosis?

**Tish Beck:**

My very first appointment with radiation, I believe, I remember going into the waiting room and, like I say, our very first visit there, and there was a lady standing there. And she just looked at us and she said, this your first visit? She was a patient as well, just waiting her turn. And we said yeah, and she said, yeah, you looked a little nervous. And we just shook our head, yeah, we're a little nervous. And she said, well, don't you worry. Love will get you through it. And I just remember that so well. And I just kind of felt like she was a little guardian angel just put there to remind me that that's what's going to carry me through. And so, yeah, just, you know, if you got somebody you care about, stick with them and hold 'em up and support them.

**Andrew Schorr:**

Hey, Rob, could you say it any better?

**Rob Beck:**

No, absolutely not. It's interesting when she talks about somebody she saw that recognized us as beginners, and we've been in the same position. Three, four, five, six, eight years into it, and you go in for appointments and see people acting exactly like she said, afraid and together, and yeah, you just want to reach out to those people.

**Andrew Schorr:**

I think you're doing that right now. Rob and Tish, thank you so much for being with us once again on Patient Power and for sharing your story and really good advice for other couples facing a cancer diagnosis. We wish you all the best, more grandchildren and many years together.

**Tish Beck:**

Thank you.

**Andrew Schorr:**

I'm Andrew Schorr. A really powerful story, a powerful couple. Thank you for joining us. Remember, knowledge can be the best medicine of all.

*Please remember the opinions expressed on Patient Power are not necessarily the views of our sponsors, contributors, partners or Patient Power. Our discussions are not a substitute for seeking medical advice or care from your own doctor. That's how you'll get care that's most appropriate for you.*