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Author: Support, give time to cancer sufferers

By STEPHANIE DUBE
Staff Writer

Caring for others can be a fulfilling experience, not a tiring one, said Elise NeeDell Babcock, an author and counselor of cancer patients and caregivers.

"We may or may not be able to change the medical outcome, but we always have the power to support them," said Babcock, the keynote speaker Wednesday at a conference sponsored by the Corpus Christi chapter of the American Cancer Society and Spohn Health System.

About 70 patients, professionals, caregivers, family and clergy attended the conference, called "Prescription for Comfort." Babcock, author of "When Life Becomes Precious," a book on coping with cancer, spoke about giving without giving out.

"Whatever problems you have, look around for the victories, the things to celebrate," she said. "Find at least three new things a day to look forward to or be grateful for."

Donald Bergmann, who was part of a cancer survivors panel with Anne Dunn and Mary Kay Dziuk, stressed the importance of appreciating life.

"You think it's a terrible disease, but at the same time, you have to make the best of what you've got," he said.

Dziuk spoke of the victories she found.

"I'm here to tell you that there is life after cancer," she said. "Really, having cancer was a blessing because I did reprioritize my life."

One top priority should be scheduling alone time, Babcock said.

"If you're exhausted, you can't give your best," she said. "When you start to take time for yourself, you'll have more to give three months down the line, not less. This body's a gift and it's our job to take care of it."

Another top priority should be truly listening, Babcock said.

"How many times are we talking to someone and trying to do 10 other things?" she said. "The more we listen, the more someone feels better."

And listening involves going to the person who is hurting, Babcock said, speaking of the pain she felt when many of her friends disappeared after her son died when she had an early labor.

"Twenty years later, what do you remember? Who was there," she said.

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