

A Patient's Journal of Gratitude

Patients who have been diagnosed with cancer can understandably experience many negative thoughts. As a way to work through this negativity, Pathfinder Tina Staley often asks patients to begin writing a gratitude journal. "I ask my patients to identify three things they are grateful for at the end of each day," says Staley. "The gratitude journal helps them find joy even during very difficult circumstances. It teaches them that even in the midst of the desert, there is a rose."



Cancer Patient Linda Parrish (pictured with Staley and Parrish's husband, Larry) began writing in her gratitude journal. In addition to identifying those simple things that bring her joy, Parrish has also used the journal to track her progress as she works to quit smoking.

Excerpts from Mrs. Parrish's journal:

August 11th, 2007: 13 cigarettes. I love to walk outside, hear and see all of God's creations. It is so relaxing to just hear birds chirp, to hear the crickets at night, and see the beautiful sky and clouds. I also like to hear rain and wind. These sights and sounds are better than any stress medicine.

September 23rd, 2007: 12 cigarettes. I am thankful that I can clean bathrooms and my kitchen, wash

clothes, make beds, dust and mop. I might not want to do these things, but I'm thankful that I can. I'm also thankful that I can cook. I can't cook as fast or as long as I use to but I will be doing it in the near future.

October 14th, 2007: 11 cigarettes. I am thankful that my health is improving, and if it should happen to decline, I know that with the Lord, my husband, daughters, and family, we can make it again. I am thankful for the doctors, nurses and caregivers that are at Duke.

November 6th, 2007: 10 cigarettes. I am so thankful for my husband Larry. At times I don't know how he puts up with me. What I mean about this is my moods at times. Sometimes I'm a nag. I love him with all of my heart. It is my honor to be married to him. I hope that one day he will know just how much I love him.

December 4th, 2007: 9 cigarettes. I am thankful for each day that I am with my wonderful husband, daughters, and grand kids. If and when it is my time to go home, I want them to look at all the good times that we have had and not to be sad. I want them to remember that I will always be with them and I will always love them with all of my heart and that we will all be together.