

After returning to work: Keep talking and adjusting if necessary

In our final stage of the return to work we look at the ongoing weeks and months after the initial return.

Last but not least, be aware that it often takes months to fully recover from treatment – emotionally and physically. Arguably this is the most difficult stage of all four because you should be elated but you are likely to feel worried, uncertain and scared about the cancer returning – after all, in many cases you didn't feel ill when the cancer was diagnosed, so how do you know that it's not still hiding somewhere inside you? And suddenly you have to be a fully functioning, rational human being!

That said, for many of us going back to work provides a welcome return to normality, an opportunity to forget the cancer for a little while but we need to plan flexibly, if that is not a contradiction in terms! In many cases side effects can start after treatment has finished or result from the medication we have to take. To help you through, keep in regular touch with your manager and HR to monitor any adjustments you have made and to provide them with the information and guidance that will ensure you get the support you need.

Of course, what I've described isn't always the case. Some people sail through their treatment and others, still far too many, don't. What it's important to remember is that each year, more and more of us are surviving and thriving post treatment and will be able to lead rewarding and satisfying lives. And yes, it's a hell of a 'journey'!

Written by Barbara Wilson, Founder, Working With Cancer