



Rowena Kissun,
Rachael Smith
and Matt Baines

MY CHEMO BUDDY CURVE BALL

When I was diagnosed with stage 3 Bowel Cancer three months ago my first instinct was to either hide away or run away. I didn't want to face people, to see the pity in their eyes or hear the sympathy in their voice. I felt trapped and alone, despite being surrounded by many amazingly supportive people that love me.

I found it difficult to be the 'ill person' because until that moment I had always been the strong one, both physically and mentally. I also felt irrationally ashamed of my disease, like I was incomplete or tarnished. I no longer belonged with the 'normal' healthy people of society.

Then, as the initial shock subsided and the word 'cancer' became part of everyday life, I realised that I had a choice. Instead of hiding or running away I could share my story and become part of the conversation. Through my own small journey, I could help release the taboos and talk candidly and openly about cancer so that others could understand a bit more about what it's like.

One night I received a message from Tim O'Berg and Rowena Kissun. These two inspirational, kind-hearted human beings had connected through one of Rowena's blogs and wanted to introduce me to someone.

This person is Matt Baines, who, as I was

shocked to discover, had been diagnosed with stage three bowel cancer just one week before me! Not only were we roughly the same age, with young children and the same chemo journey ahead of us, we also lived just a few kilometres away from each other!

It was such a relief to hear that I was not alone (not that I would wish cancer on anybody) but the fact Matt and I could, in many ways share this journey and help each other was so incredibly comforting.

Matt and I instantly related to each other's journeys and have since become good friends. He started chemo a week before I did so we support each other through each other's challenging weeks.

The chemo journey, as you can expect is an emotional and physical battle. Every three weeks we go to Mackay for an intravenous drip of chemo which slowly runs through our veins. Every person is different, but for me, the first four days are the worst. Imagine the most brutal hangover of your life combined with unrelenting sea-sickness and the intense desire to get out of your own body. There is nothing you can do but sit and wait for it to pass.

From the day of the intravenous chemo, I also take 8 chemo tablets each day for 14

days. These leave me dizzy and detached but otherwise able to function normally which is a relief. I finish the tablets one week before my next round of chemo begins and I consider this the 'sweet spot', a small window of reality.

As many of you know, I am following an integrative medical plan with Rowena Kissun from Kissun Clinics. In addition to the chemo, I take a powder in my smoothie each morning which helps reinforce my gut lining that has become weakened by the chemo. I also take a tonic containing concentrated turmeric and other natural ingredients and zinc to reduce the metallic taste in my mouth.

I combine this with a largely sugar, dairy and carbohydrate free diet and have found, to my surprise, I can live a relatively normal life. I work full-time in a job I love, I tickle my son until he giggles and I laugh with friends over dinner.

As I write this I have six more treatments to go, I am a quarter of the way through and although this feels like a long journey ahead, I am so grateful that it was treatable. I am one of the lucky ones.

If you would like to hear more regular updates of my chemo journey you can follow my Facebook blog – My Cancer Curve Ball.