



Massachusetts Society of
Clinical Oncologists

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As I sit in my corner of the room looking out, there are many people whom I come in contact with on a daily basis. These are patients and their family members, colleagues, co-workers, friends and family. Not a day goes by when many express frustrations, discouragements, and disappointments for many different reasons. My mother always said that within a dark cloud there is always a silver lining. When you are given lemons, make lemonade. And to quote Monty Python "Always look on the bright side of life." These feelings of frustration, discouragement, and disappointment may be caused by different issues; a certain treatment did not go according to plan, a computer is not working correctly, or with all the work you have put into something, it did not seem to go well. We all can relate to these issues and moments when life gets out of hand. There are times when we feel so frustrated that we can all get somewhat discouraged, and even the smallest issue can seem so big and such a heavy lift. As I was struggling to find a topic to write about, this subject came to me while I was tuning up my snow blower for this up and coming storm. To give you some background, I will digress for a moment. When I was a kid growing up in rural Southeastern Massachusetts, every Saturday morning my father, myself, and my younger brother, would be working on one of our family cars to keep it going for the next week. There was always a part to be sought after, oil and filters to be changed, or a tune-up changing the points and plugs. Many a time (most of the time), things did not always go as planned, and this would be very frustrating for my father. Another part would break, that last bolt to remove the water pump was frozen on the motor, and we could not find the wrench to remove the oil filter (because my brother put it in the wrong place!). I remember my father being frustrated and discouraged many times. However, we would go to the junk yard and get that needed part (as well as my father spending time with his junkyard buddies talking cars), and that last bolt we would get off one way or another, and we would finally find that wrench to remove the oil filter. So, as I was working on my snow blower, replacing the discharge chute (from which the snow is thrown from the machine), the last bolt to be removed was frozen. I was trying desperately to get that bolt off without breaking it. I was cold, my hands were frozen, and I was alone. As I gave it one good jolt, the wrench slipped and I went bounding backwards toppling over the garbage cans and falling on my backside, hurting mostly my pride, but scraping my knuckles as well. I busted the bolt as well. As I was about to send that wrench on a trip to the corner of the garage (I still had not cleaned it yet so I would never have found it), I remembered my dad and our days in the garage, his frustrations, discouragements, and disappointments and instead of being frustrated and angry (really mad) I sat there and smiled, laughed to

myself and had a great reminiscence in my head with my father and brother with memories of those Saturday mornings. How would I have known that those mornings, with the broken cars, lost tools, and trips to the junk yard would be such bonding times? SO, as I sat there on the cold hard garage floor, with my knuckles bleeding, and that wrench in my hand with the broken bolt, I had found the silver lining to that dark cloud. Breaking that bolt falling backwards, and scraping my knuckles was such a dark cloud at that time. However, the memories it brought back of those Saturdays with my father (who has since past), was wonderful. It made me feel warm inside, and I forgot about the pain in my hands, the cold in my body, and that broken bolt. No matter what, at that moment I knew that this broken bolt was a godsend. It had brought back a memory that was wonderful and lightened my load, took that heavy lift off me and allowed me to look at the rest of the day with enjoyment and adventure. I can always remember my father at the end of those Saturdays when we would finally get that part back in the car and it worked like a charm, the satisfaction on his face. As we all go through life and we have these moments of difficulty, we must realize that there is always a silver lining within these moments. There is always a bright side to the situation. We only need to be shown the way for it to be revealed to us, but also for this silver lining, this bright side, to be embraced, accepted, and believed in. When that computer goes awry, or schedules get messed up, or our car breaks down, or whatever, as we are working through the situation we must all look for that silver lining, that bright side, that glass of lemonade. For it is there, we only need to find it, believe in it, and it will work its magic. So, as we go through this holiday season, and we can't find a parking spot at the mall, or your credit card for some reason won't work and there are 12 people behind you waiting in line, or you have written a whole article and when you go to hit save, it disappears....Always look on the bright side (of life), you may find that parking spot was away from anyone who will scratch your car, and it will give you more steps on your fit bit, or the store you were having difficulty in getting your credit card to work brought more cashiers to the front making everyone's checkout go faster, or you will have to write the whole article over, and have double the fun doing it!!! So whatever life brings to you, with its many difficulties, there is always a bright side. And if all else fails, just start singing..Always look on the briiiiiight side of life, do do, do do, do do do do do do.. Always look on the riiiiiiight side of life, do do,do do, do do do do.... And that is what is happening in my corner of the room.

Michael Constantine, MD