

*It Doesn't Have to be about Fighting*  
Judy Gordon

**EXCERPT**

I chose an uncommon way to cope with the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. I wasn't a warrior, as many cancer patients and survivors describe themselves. I didn't see cancer as something to wage a battle against. But surrender might be too strong a word to describe what I did. "Going with the flow" is more accurate.

To begin with, I fell apart. The conventional "stay positive" wisdom didn't work for me. I couldn't fight my way through. I wasn't any good as a fighter. My oncologist told me that patients who fall apart are more likely to rebuild their lives better once they are through the rough treatments. Did she say that just to give me validation and encouragement, or was it truly her experience? As I reflected in my journal, "If you don't experience your emotional response in the moment, you will experience it at some future time."

Falling apart was what I needed to do for myself, but it was hard on others, at least in the beginning. I couldn't be Judy-as-usual. As I went through the process of giving in to my fears, I became unpredictable. Suddenly, I was no longer positive nor upbeat nor optimistic. I had no "go-for-it spirit" even though I was constantly reading and hearing that a go-for-it spirit was a requirement. I was showing a different side that was a creation of the experience, and I needed to be authentic to that creation.