

No foregone conclusion

There was a tiny mouse in my house one day. He ran over my bare feet while I sat typing on my computer. I felt the little paws on my toes. I looked down in time to see this really adorable and disgusting mouse jump in response to my scream. He disappeared as quickly as he came. Later that night, I saw another baby mouse, and another. My dog hid in another room. By the end of the week, I was no longer jumping at the sight of the mice. Sure, I put socks on. And of course, I set traps. But I no longer reacted. It was as if it were no big deal.

When I was in graduate school in Maryland, I moved into a nice apartment with a few other students. It was a great place except for one thing: cockroaches. I saw one or two scurry across the kitchen floor one morning when I grabbed the box of Cheerios. I yelled and jumped up on a chair. Then, I saw a whole family of them dancing around the kitchen when I got up late at night for ice cream. They are horrid. How was it that I was living with cockroaches? Yes, I cleaned up the corners of the kitchen. And of course, I called an exterminator. Oddly enough – and it's hard to believe this is possible – but I got used to them. I never liked them, but I got accustomed to the fact that they lived in the building and that spray as I might, they weren't going away. (Although I left Maryland altogether after one semester.)

For better or for worse, we get desensitized to things we experience regularly.

After recently getting news of two friends with the diagnosis of cancer in one week, and one of those friends dying today, I need to say this. No matter how often I hear of someone I know getting cancer I will not become inured to it.

I will not say, "Another case of cancer?" and carry on with my day.

I will not think, "If we live long enough, it will be all of us ..." and turn back to the newspaper.

I will not wonder, "Who next?" as if it's a foregone conclusion.

As if. As if it has to be this way. As if it doesn't



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make me angry each and every time. It makes me furious. I refuse to accept this.

For better or for worse, we get desensitized to things we experience regularly. I say it's for worse. Let's not let the word "cancer" become everyday. Let's not accept that that cancer is the leading cause of death in Minnesota and second leading cause of death (just slightly behind heart disease) in the United States. Some expect it to be the leading cause of death worldwide this year. Let's keep fighting – any way we can – to find cures and effective treatments.

My energies have been on the organizational front raising money for the American Cancer Society through Relay For Life. Relay For Life helps fight cancer through prevention, education and research dollars. Eden Prairie's Relay is July 16-17 at the Central Middle School (www.eprrelay.org). What matters to me is that we keep fighting.

I'll accept all the baby mice and ugly cockroaches that come my way, if only cancer can become rare and unusual.

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