

YOUR TURN

My sister Judy builds confidence, one strand at a time

BY BARBARA ANNE KIRSHNER

Hair ... It is our crown. We spend billions of dollars coiffing it.

We have it shaped, colored, highlighted, blown out, straightened, curled, and conditioned.

But what happens when our crowning jewel is threatened?

Too many hear a doctor sympathetically announce, "I'm sorry, but you have cancer."

After that frightening diagnosis is flung into the air, what is the treatment? Many are forced to undergo the next Big-C Word-Chemotherapy.

Chemo's harsh attack is the common choice for killing cancer and keeping it from spreading, but in so doing, it ravages the body and those once-prized locks fall out in clumps.

This shocking side effect of chemo compounds the tragedy of the cancer diagnosis.

What recourse does one have when that cherished mane disappears? Some resort to simple scarves wrapped around the now bare head or big picture hats, but there is another solution; a solution that will build the morale as it resurrects that once bounteous coif.

That's where technicians, like my sister Judy, come into play. She works in hair replacement. Many of the people she sees each day are facing the greatest battle of their lives against the Big-C. These people are starved for a sense of normalcy. They long to look in a mirror and see their former selves before cancer took control of their lives. These valiant warriors reject disappearing until treatment is over. This is a motivating factor in seeking out someone like my sister.

I never thought about my sister's profession. I knew what she did and figured that we both chose people-oriented careers (I am a teacher). But I never really considered what my sister did for the morale of people until I saw how she helped a dear friend of mine who was diagnosed with cancer.

The treatment for my friend was aggressive chemo. She was admitted to the hospital for a week each month and hooked up to constant chemo. This left her depleted of all energy and feeling terribly nauseous. Her hair that she had always been meticulous about started falling out.

Prior to cancer, she had it regularly colored with highlights added. She wore it straight, shoulder-length and for summers added a Brazilian treatment. She lamented



Judy

Photo from Barbara Anne Kirshner

the effects of chemo, particularly the loss of her hair. She told me that she might get a wig, because she wanted to return to work. That's when I suggested she see my sister.

With hope in her heart, she made an appointment at the hair replacement shop where my sister works, *The Riviera* in Syosset. She was greeted by Jack, the owner of the shop. His understanding immediately comforted her. He asked her for a photo so he had some idea of her preferred hairstyle.

When the wig was delivered, my sister went to work on her. The moment my sister replaced the bald head with luscious tresses the emotion set in. My friend dissolved in tears of joy, the first happiness that she had experienced since that dire diagnosis. She was immediately impressed by my sister's gentle nature and care.

My friend's confidence returned with the return of her hair. She went back to work with her upbeat nature intact.

Her emotional transformation made me realize the very special and delicate work my sister does every day with people

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like my friend who long for life before cancer. My sister rebuilds self-esteem; such a priceless gift.

I am thrilled to report that my friend is now cancer free and her natural hair has grown back. She has developed a bond with my sister, thankful for the return of her confidence that came at such a crucial time.

This close-up look has given me a better insight and appreciation for what Judy does every day for countless cancer patients and I'm bursting with pride that she is my sister.

Miller Place resident Barbara Anne Kirshner is a freelance journalist, playwright and author of "Madison Weatherbee —The Different Dachshund."

Horoscopes
of the week**TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21**

Relax and settle down for a few days, Taurus. Take some time to enjoy the people around you and try to travel to some new locales along the way. A little vacation can be helpful.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21

Don't be surprised if some relatively minor details cause a setback in the days ahead, Gemini. Some heightened focus might be in order. Try to zone in.

CANCER – June 22/July 22

Cancer, if you need to confront someone this week, do so tactfully. Remember the adage about catching more flies with honey. You'll find that tactic is handy.

LEO – July 23/Aug 23

Leo, this week could become a tad challenging as strong astrological energies are affecting people's emotions. Maintain your composure at all costs.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

Your organizational skills are about to increase productivity ten-fold this week, Virgo. Don't be afraid to take big chances and even grab the helm on a large project.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, write down new goals, as it seems your emotions have changed over the past several days. This way you can channel your ambitions accordingly.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, this week you dare to go against the grain and make your voice heard. Embrace your self-confidence and don't hesitate to take on a leadership role.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Your presence will be remarkable this week, Sagittarius. You radiate confidence and energy for all to see, and the people around you could be counting on you for leadership.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

It's not possible to transform the people you know with a magic wand or a twinkle of your nose, Capricorn. Let others be who they are and appreciate their individuality.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, if you are feeling a bit neglected and unloved this week, ask your partner for some support. He or she will take the cue and the spark will reignite.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

Some conflicts within the family have you serving as peacemaker, Pisces. Negotiate with others to resolve their differences.

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

It could be that you are very aware of things going on around you this week, Aries. Unfortunately, many of them will be out of your control. Still, keep an open mind.