

*'The Boot on the Other Foot'*



An Occupational Therapist's  
Lived Experience of  
Cancer  
in  
their Leadership Journey

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# Leadership lens



# Career overview

## Qualification

Diploma 1981  
Conversion cs '99  
MSc 2012  
NIDMAR 2012  
[Horse riding &  
Pilates Instructor]

## Clinical

Learning Disability  
Older People  
Physical Disability  
Spinal Injuries  
Stroke Rehab  
Neuro Progressive  
& Com Rehab

## Current

Clinical &  
Professional Lead  
for Occupational  
Therapy  
  
Falls lead &  
Healthy Working  
Lives lead

## Research, Higher Ed & Managerial

Lead & Head OT  
Research  
Lecturer  
  
OT Manager (&  
Arts Therapies)  
OT & PT Manager

# Cancer experience

Acute illness  
Diagnosis  
Treatment Plan

Chemotherapy  
Waiting / scans  
Radiotherapy

Narrative

Getting my life back  
All about the Occupation  
Return to work

Recovery & Rehab  
Milestones  
Legacy

**'Let me off!!'**







# What it meant to my leadership

## What matters when acutely ill?

- ▣ Recognising the impact on staff & colleagues of my illness
- ▣ My physical absence
- ▣ Practical issues created
- ▣ My emotional absence (safe place to be for staff)
- ▣ Their concern for me (emotional burden)

## What matters after the acute episode?

- ▣ Re-engagement in discussions & work related issues
- ▣ As is often the case
  - No backfill
- ▣ Operational tasks – off loaded onto team leads
- ▣ Cover for my workload
- ▣ No soft landing on RTW

# Recovery & Rehab

- Cardio respiratory
- Proprioception
- 'Chemo body'
- Flexibility
- Strength
- Stamina
- Balance

Physical &  
Sensory

- Fear & uncertainty
  - Anxiety & anger
  - Confidence
  - Self esteem
  - Self image
  - Self trust
  - Sleep

Emotional

- Self care
- Leisure
- Productivity
- Roles & Routines
- Getting my life back

Occupational

- Memory
- Processing
- Multi-tasking
- 'Chemo brain'
- Concentration

Cognitive

# Getting my life back

## ▣ Milestones

- Avoiding sepsis
- PICC line removed
- No more transfusions
- Temperature taking
- Driving again
- Stopping meds

## ▣ Supports

- Husband family friends
- Staff & colleagues
- Social media & technology
- Nutrition
- Humour
- Promise of HOPE

## ▣ Fears & Frustrations

- Trauma of it all
- The *not* knowing
- Waiting for results
- Impatience
- Night demons

## ▣ Legacy

- Finding the new normal
- Side effects of chemo
  - ▣ Fatigue
  - ▣ Peripheral Neuropathy
- Burden on family/friends
- Insight
- *Rudely interrupted!!*
- *Reaffirmed my passion in all things occupational*

# Its always about the *Occupation*

- ▣ The centrality of occupation
- ▣ Routines & roles
- ▣ Identity
- ▣ Occupational balance
- ▣ Skill development
- ▣ Mastery of new tasks
- ▣ Achievement
- ▣ Self worth
- ▣ Adaptation & flexibility
- ▣ Motivation & Attitude

- ▣ Disruption of former self
- ▣ Pursing a new normal
- ▣ Revise & create new meaning through *occupations*
- ▣ Supportive employer is critical
- ▣ Good work .... is good for your health
- ▣ Return to Work –
  - **Not finished yet!!!**

*Medicine adds days to life*  
*Occupational Therapy adds life to days*

# Leadership experience to date

1. Experiential
2. Learning & development
3. Professional supervision



Change Weavers  
Playing to your  
Strengths  
Myers Briggs TI  
\*Managing  
Transitions  
\*Courage to Manage



1. Knowing yourself first!
2. Adopting 'Eclectic' approach
3. Transformational leadership

# Leadership styles



A word cloud of leadership styles. The words are arranged in a roughly triangular shape, pointing downwards. The colors range from orange to purple. The styles listed are: Authentic, Democratic, Facilitative, Collaborative, Effective, Autocratic, Authoritarian, Compassionate, Charismatic, Innovative, Servant, Transformational, Transactional, Supportive, and Collective.

Authentic  
Democratic  
Facilitative  
Collaborative  
Effective  
Autocratic  
Authoritarian  
Compassionate  
Charismatic  
Innovative  
Servant  
Transformational  
Transactional  
Supportive  
Collective

# Transformational leadership



Bass & Avolio 1990

# So what .....?

## **Personal message:**

Live for today

Self care is vital

Choose the way you  
respond to situation

## **Leadership message:**

Be bold, honest  
courageous and  
kind to yourself  
and others.

*Be transformational*

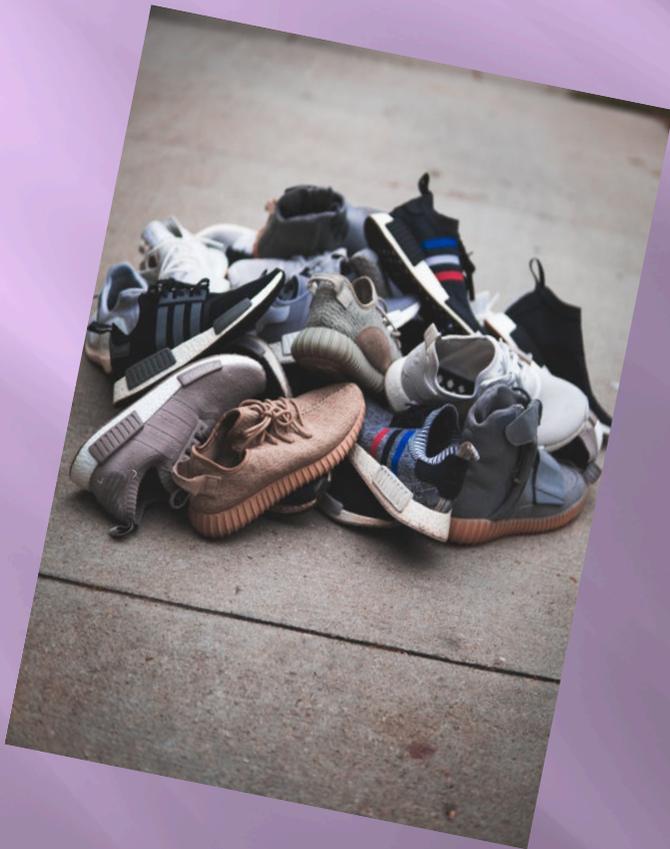
**Speak up & out!**

## **Occupational Therapy message:**

Amazing  
profession

Embed OT into all  
cancer rehab

Increase our  
visibility



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- ▣ Staff & colleagues
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- ▣ Twitter & Facebook
- ▣ SERGOT – Scottish Eastern RCOT

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Thank you for listening to  
my story

Any thing you would like to ask me  
or share?

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