

How to Walk With Someone Down the Road to Wellness

A few weeks ago, a dear writer friend, Rick, happily volunteered to walk with my niece, Andie, at the annual Florida Inspirational Writers Retreat (FIWR).

My niece is an awesome girl—actually, I should say woman, since she is now a junior at University of South Florida, majoring in English. But she has some lifelong **physical disabilities** due to **cerebral palsy** that make it difficult for her to get around—especially stairs like we had to climb to get to the lunch hall and then back down to the meeting room at the FIWR.

Her **eyesight** is extremely limited as well, so that she needs **assistance** finding her way around anywhere new and sorting out written instructions and correspondence, such as the myriad of handouts we encountered at the retreat.

Knowing that I would be tied up running the show (I'm co-director, and the other co-director was ill), Rick graciously volunteered to be Andie's buddy for the retreat, meeting her at the door when she arrived and walking with her throughout the entire day. He made sure she got everywhere she needed to be, and thanks to him, she thoroughly enjoyed herself.

Now, there's something else about Rick you must know. He also voluntarily walks with his sister-in-law during her **battle** against **breast cancer** on the other coast of Florida. That means he travels across the state nearly every weekend to just be there with her and support her in her **wellness journey**.

The way I see it, to walk with someone in this sense, the stronger partner subtly paces himself to the stride of the weaker. And without being condescending in the least, although at times he must actually physically support his friend, most often he simply offers emotional support and guidance. He silently sacrifices his own comfort and needs to cover those

of his companion.

The weaker partner knows she is being looked after and lovingly protected and is therefore able to relax and lean into the caring encirclement of the stronger.

Much like Papa **God** walks with us through our own **wellness** journeys.

Andie will never be “normal,” but she can achieve the state of wellness, as in “It is well with my soul.” Rick’s sister-in-law may not regain complete **physical health** again in this world (although we pray she does), but she can attain wellness. **Spiritual wellness.**

I’ve always loved the words of that wonderful old hymn that were written in the mid-1800s by a man who first lost all his possessions, then his only son to illness. Soon after, all his daughters drowned at sea when their ship capsized as they traveled to Europe to be with him. Yet somehow, after losing everything he once held dear, he was able to pen these incredible words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It’s really a rare and incomparable opportunity for us to walk with someone on their personal wellness journey, to silently **sacrifice** our own **comfort** and needs to cover those of our companion so that they can say in the end, “Whatever my lot ... it is well with my soul.”

I believe Papa God put Rick in my life as an example of walking with someone so that I, too, can aspire to do it in the same way Papa walks with me. I want, more than anything, to be able to say in the end, “It is well ... it is well with my soul.”

Debora M. Coty is the author of 10 books and is a newspaper

columnist, orthopedic occupational therapist and tennis addict. Follow Debora on Twitter @deboracoty.