

## CSH Support Corner – Parent & Caregiver Blog December 2022



### Don't forget to give yourself grace this holiday season...

I know this time of year is often when we start reflecting on what the year has brought and where do we hope to see ourselves next year. It can be a difficult time especially when we see our children struggling and the future holds so many unknowns. We as caregivers are often vessels carrying all the hope, good feelings, and comfort for our kids and loved ones, but we cannot give what we don't have. So hear me out: What if instead of worrying about what we really can't control (as much as we want to have control) we take the time out, even if just a brief moment, to be present and acknowledge that despite difficult moments, you have persevered of your own strength and will. Remember to give yourself grace because we cannot fill anyone's water glass from an empty pitcher.

My daughter Isabel, who we call our Izzy Warrior Princess, was diagnosed with a spinal cord tumor in September 2014. She began receiving therapies with Children's Specialized Hospital and chemotherapy in New Brunswick shortly after her diagnosis. I remember somewhere along the line I chose hope rather than despair. That New Year's Eve, after we put Izzy to bed knowing she'd wake up in a couple of hours because that's what babies do, I sat and reflected on the year. I began to cry because it was so hard to know that we had so much more to go on Izzy's chemo journey and because her life wasn't what I had dreamed, but then I started crying even harder when I realized how grateful I was just to know that she was upstairs sleeping peacefully in her crib. And I realized that we made it through those difficult months and we will continue to make it through every difficult month from there on out and for that I was thankful. And here I am, eight years later still moving forward.

This journey we are on as caregivers to our special needs children is one that ebbs and flows almost minute to minute and it's easy to get caught up in the currents and tossed about, but I encourage you to breathe and remember that you matter, your peace matters, and that you've made it another day let alone another year. There are so many ways to find your peace even if just briefly. I enjoy exercise and running, but sometimes I even crochet. Whatever it is, find the small things that bring you joy.

### And if it helps, here is my favorite poem to reflect on by Emily Dickinson:

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all –*

*And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –  
And sore must be the storm –  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm –*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land –  
And on the strangest Sea –  
Yet – never – in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb – of me.*

