

## Facing the Diagnosis

A CARE PLAN TO EASE THE WAY BY ANDREA NATHANSON RN



**YOU'RE** A 56 YEAR OLD woman with no previous medical issues except for childbirth. At your annual checkup, you mention some unusual symptoms you've been having. Your doctor frowns ever so slightly and orders a battery of tests. He wants them done right away and books a follow-up meeting in two weeks. During the two weeks, you move through each day almost in a daze – going from test to test like a robot, too terrified to think what this all means.

I believe there is a better way to face this type of fear-filled event so that you can be an active participant without the paralyzing anxiety that can affect your healthcare outcomes.

There are four key factors to keep in mind when facing the diagnosis: information, family support, environment and professional help.

**INFORMATION** – Learn about your possible condition, the tests you are having, and proposed treatments for your condition. Knowledge will empower you and protect you. It's readily available from the Internet, from associations, from the library. However, don't overlearn – just get yourself educated.

**FAMILY SUPPORT** – Family is your best source of support but remember that they are also sharing this event/diagnosis with you and they may also need support. Consider dividing up responsibilities among family members. Keep everyone informed as a group and, if care is required, be sure that the caregivers understand to consider your loved ones as well.

**ENVIRONMENT** – Your home is the best place for you and your family to face any changes with your health; however, it may need to be re-structured to accommodate your new reality. Try to approach change as an adventure and with an all-encompassing Feng Shui feel.

**PROFESSIONAL HELP** – Your diagnosis may bring you into contact with different sources of professional support, from therapists to nutritionists to community care workers and specialists. Find someone to help you co-ordinate your care – your “general contractor”, so to speak. This person should help you determine not only who helps you but when help is most needed.

Photo: bigstockphoto.com