



— A FOUNDER STORY · IN LOVING MEMORY OF ANN

Why Keep It Together Care *Exists*



Diagnosis was only the beginning.

Written by Dino Rencontre, founder of Keep It Together Care.

This is the story of what came after the diagnosis.

The scans. The waiting. The medicines. The practical load people rarely see.

And how, somewhere in the middle of all of it, I was still trying to be Ann's husband.

It is also the story of why Keep It Together Care exists.





— A REAL MOMENT

Halfway through the tablets

One day I came into the bedroom and found Ann crying.

I asked her what was wrong.

She was halfway through taking her tablets and had forgotten where she had got to.

Had she already taken that tablet, or not?

Do you risk taking another dose, or risk missing one?

That uncertainty was frightening. We never treated guessing as safe.

IF YOU ARE EVER UNSURE ABOUT A DOSE

Do not guess. Check the medicine's instructions, or ask a pharmacist or the clinical team.



— THE BEGINNING

Going back to the beginning

To understand that moment, I need to go back to the beginning.

Ann's journey lasted about 16 months. It did not start with treatment. It started with scans.

Then more imaging of her breast. An extended mammogram — I remember it being uncomfortable, and painful for her. Then contrast dye.

One scan. Waiting. Another result. Another appointment. Another question. Another thing to remember.

I remember being told they had found two tumours, and the whole conversation changing at that point. I remember being reassured that there were different treatment options. I remember being given an estimate of around five to eight years.

Then came the PET scan.

Afterwards, Ann was given instructions because of the radioactive tracer. I remember being told she should stay away from pregnant women and children for a while, and being given instructions about flushing the toilet. Suddenly we were learning rules we had never imagined needing to know.

And then we waited again.

ONE FAMILY'S JOURNEY

These were Ann's scans and the instructions we were given. Not everyone has the same tests, and precautions differ from person to person.



— THE RESULTS

Then we were called in for the results

I remember being told that Ann's breast cancer had spread to her bones.

And then we were sent back out into the waiting room.

We sat down among everybody else.

I was trying to hold it together. Inside, I did not know what to think.

I was trying to understand what we had just been told, what it meant and what would happen next. And at the same time I was looking at Ann, trying to be her husband.

After a while, a nurse noticed us. I remember her realising that we should not be taking in news like that in the waiting room. She took us somewhere private.

Sometimes, after news like that, you do not need another form or another leaflet. You need somewhere private to sit. Somewhere to take in what has just happened.

In that room we were not a medical record. We were a husband and wife trying to understand what had just happened.



THE RESULTS

What happens next

I remember being told that medication would be arranged, and that a nurse would come to see Ann regularly.

I remember asking about radiotherapy. What I remember hearing was that it would not help in Ann's situation at that time.

Later, as things changed, radiotherapy was considered again, and used to help with her symptoms. Care changes over time, and so do the questions you need to ask.

You hear something that changes your life, and then somehow you are still expected to remember what happens next.

FROM THE MEDICAL RECORDS

Ann's medical records show breast cancer that had spread to her bones. Her scans included CT, ultrasound and PET. Treatment started, and changed over time, with repeated appointments, more scans and follow-up. Later, radiotherapy was used to help with symptoms.



— BEHIND THE SCENES

The second job

When Ann was diagnosed, I stopped working.

There were so many appointments, scans, results, phone calls and things to organise that keeping everything together had become a full-time job.

Except it was not nine to five. Caring did not stop at the end of a working day.

For us, it became 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

And underneath all of it, ordinary life was still happening.

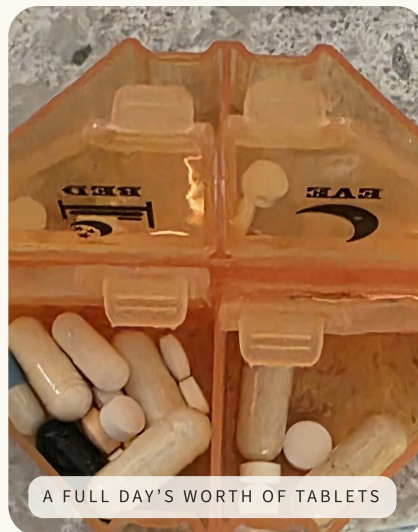
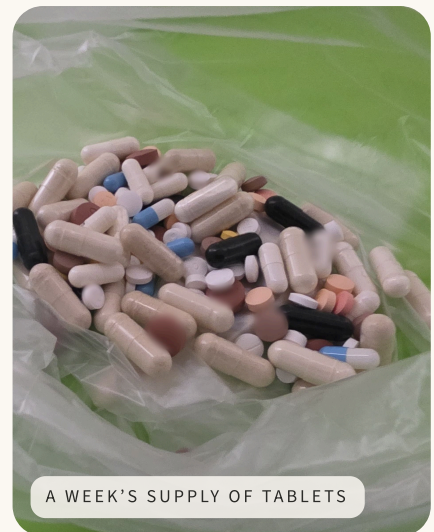
OUR EXPERIENCE

This was what happened for us. Not every carer has to stop working, and every family's situation is different.



DOCUMENTARY

What keeping everything together looked like



ABOUT THESE PHOTOGRAPHS

These photographs show one family's lived experience of managing serious illness. They illustrate the scale of the practical organisation involved. They are not a treatment plan or medical recommendation.



DOCUMENTARY

Across 16 months



Across those 16 months, this gives a sense of the medicines and supplies we found ourselves managing.

ABOUT THIS PHOTOGRAPH

Medicines and supplies gathered over time. Not everything shown was taken at once, or every day.

And this was only the medicines.



ALONGSIDE THE MEDICINES

Everything else

Around the medicines, everything else kept moving.

Appointments and scans. Results, and waiting for them. Treatment. Hospital visits and stays. Food and drink. Equipment, and getting around. Travel. Prescriptions and supplies. Paperwork, phone calls, and keeping the family updated.

Food became something else I found myself thinking about all the time. There were days when Ann simply was not hungry. I would make her a shake, and she could drink it slowly, a little at a time. I was always wondering whether she had managed something, what she might fancy, and whether there was another way to make eating a little easier for her.

And underneath it all: home, bills — and the things we still wanted to do together.

Somewhere in the middle of all of this, I was still Ann's husband.

I was not trying to become a care manager. I was trying to be there for Ann, while somehow keeping all of this together.



— HOW TO HELP

If someone you know is going through this

Now you have seen some of what may be happening behind the scenes, this is where practical help can make a real difference.

“Let me know if you need anything” is kind. But it can put the organising straight back onto the family. Something specific is easier to say yes to:

“I can take you to Tuesday’s appointment.”

“I’m doing a food shop. What can I bring?”

“I can collect the prescription.”

“I can walk the dog this afternoon.”

“I can update the family, if you want me to.”

“I can sit with you for a while.”

Not everyone wants the same help, so ask, and follow their lead. Keep inviting them to ordinary things, without pressure. And check on the carer, as well as the person who is ill.

THE PRACTICAL SIDE, NOT THE MEDICAL SIDE

Medical decisions stay with the person and their clinical team.



— WHY KEEP IT TOGETHER CARE EXISTS

“Why hasn’t somebody put this together?”

That question kept coming back to me, all the way through Ann’s journey.

The next family should not always have to begin with a blank sheet of paper.

I could not change Ann’s diagnosis. I could not take the cancer away. But the practical side should not have to be this difficult for the next family.

A growing library of free practical resources is available now, with more being built around the journey — for appointments, medicines, treatment days, travel and the practical administration after a death.

The KITC Care Companion is being developed to bring that practical support together in one place. Check the website for its current availability.

“I don’t have to keep all of this in my head anymore.”

Keep It Together Care exists to make a practical difference to one million people caring for someone who is seriously ill. That means one million people genuinely helped — not downloads, clicks or views.

Helping you manage the practical side of serious illness, so there is still space for life.



— IN LOVING MEMORY

Ann Rencontre

Still helping people



Ann was generous and loving, and she was always helping. She cared about people.

She volunteered in a hospice shop. She loved elephants, and she loved sparkles.

“Tomorrow’s never guaranteed. So when you can, make today count.”

DINO, FOUNDER

If what I learned can make things easier for someone else, then Ann is still doing what she always did. Helping people.