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Fear

Dear Speakeasy:

The most afraid I have ever been was when my son was diagnosed with and then treated for cancer. It's taken a long time to come back from that place. This month marks the one-year anniversary of his last chemotherapy: next month, he heads off to college, confident and aware of life in ways few other young people are. He has emerged strong and resilient, with a sense of humor and balance that is remarkable and awe-inspiring.

And I have emerged afraid.

I am not as afraid as I was, but fear tinges everything I do, think, decide. I feel stronger and more confident than I did a year ago, but not more than I did a decade ago. I do not believe I will ever feel as strong and confident as I did when I was twenty, after I had left home with the belief that because I had escaped, I was unscathed, and before I made a family of my own, believing that my fierceness would be enough to protect us.

It is left to me now to sit with this fear, to learn how to nurture myself the way I learned to nurture my son.

—Judy Fort Brenneman
Fort Collins, CO