**Chapter 3**

**INTRODUCING CAN DO**

During treatment, I chose to make my chemo journey a public one on Facebook and on my personal blog (<http://cathicoridan.com>). From the beginning, I made a commitment to myself, my husband Ned, my family and to God that my approach and attitude would be as completely **CAN DO** as possible. Before treatment, during those eight years when cancer was my daily companion, the non-cancer parts of my life contained more twists and turns than a long-weekend Law and Order marathon. For some days and months of those years, the cancer and the challenges of my work and life got me down – and I was overwhelmed and angry and felt stuck and defeated. For many months in 2006 and 2007, I was completely burned out. But, gradually along the way I came to terms with the leukemia and my life, and increasingly adopted a new approach focused on both possibilities and gratitude – an approach I call **CAN DO**.

**CAN DO** is so very easy and extremely hard at the same time. At its core are what I call:

**The Three Questions**

1. **What can I do? –** this keeps the focus on the positive and what can happen, and off the negative and what is or could be going wrong
2. **If not that, then what else can I do? –** it sets up for a Plan B, whether it is needed or not, and keeps the positive juices flowing
3. **And, just because I can, do I?** – hey, not everything possible is practical, healthy, a good idea, or right

These three simple little questions can be asked in just about any life situation, not just when the road of life is full of pot holes, crises and chaos. I try to ask these questions every day as I set goals and manage my grant writing and consulting business. Like with most things in life, I find that these questions are far easier to access at the crises and chaos points if I have been asking them along the way. The questions help me keep my balance, priorities and focus – and an attitude of gratitude – in an ever-changing world. They have come in handy recently as we had to replace the HVAC system, the water main and my work computer, all of which were “unplanned for capital expenses” that popped up in a three month period of time.

**Disclaimer:** **CAN DO** does not make life into a nirvana. It is not filled with smiley faces and Precious Moments figurines. Life is life: hard and messy and uneven. I still yell at Ned and at telemarketers and get (very) crazed in DC traffic. I have some not so great days when all I want is to win the lottery and not have to try so hard. But, I do know that through the **CAN DO** lens of gratitude, my life is less stressful, less harsh and more meaningful. I am less apt to forget or lose sight of the fact that I genuinely believe that the good outweighs the bad. I am more balanced in my approach to all aspects of my life, and more easily able to see life from other people’s perspectives and learn from their experiences. It is not as hard to regain my perspective when I lose it, and to find and return to my “happy place” in a shorter time.

I am a strong believer in the power of stories. Stories open us up to understanding life, its mystery and its lessons more dynamically. It is in that spirit that I share my story as a way to introduce **CAN DO**.