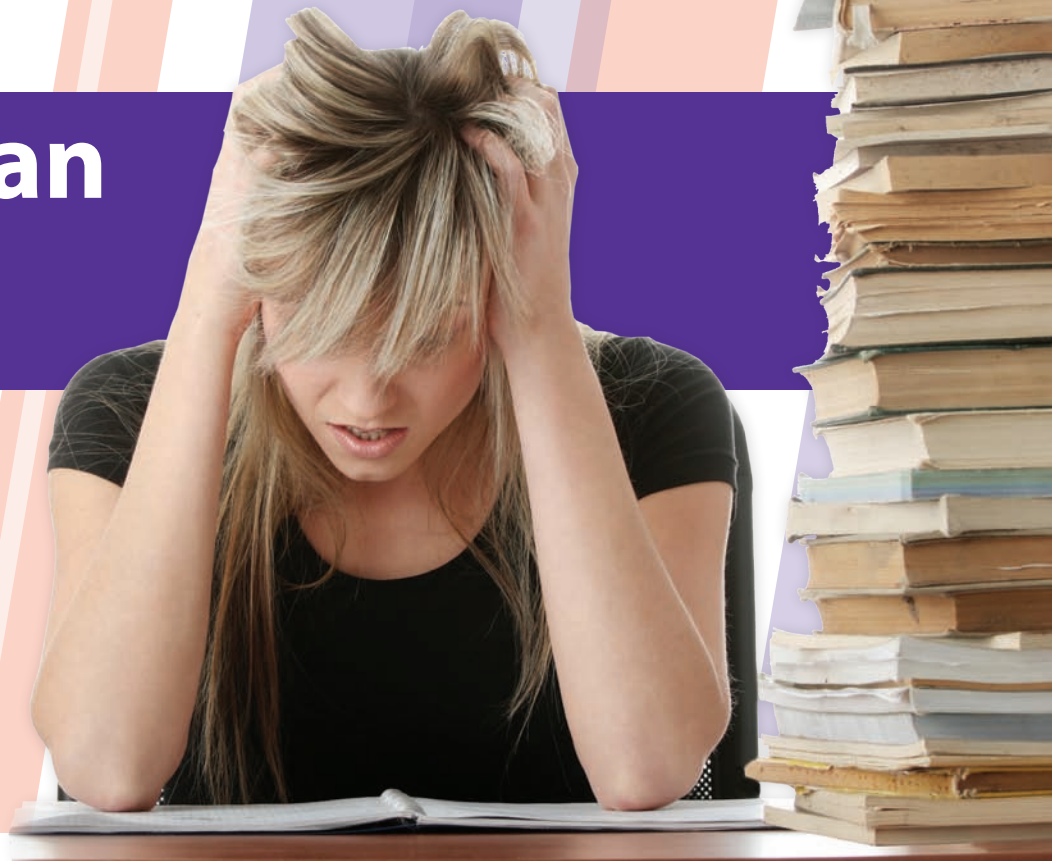


Cancer Can Teach Us

By Cherie Nobbs



Have you ever considered that cancer is here to teach us to be kinder to ourselves and to others? I know it is a radical statement but just consider it for a moment.

The thought came to me as I was discussing a dream I had with my cousin, Kaye. The dream involved an old classmate who had passed away from cancer in her thirties. I had not thought of her in years and was surprised I had seen her in my dream so vividly. I was telling Kaye how her death rocked me, as I was sure she was the girl 'most likely to succeed' and I felt she had died before her time. We rationalised her work here in this lifetime must have been complete and then it hit me...

What if cancer was a vessel that taught us something poignant? What if we were to take heed of the lesson it involved?

We lead such busy, stressful lives we get so caught up in 'surviving' that we sometimes forget to 'live'. Sure, there are other factors involved like trauma, bad lifestyle choices, the prevalent use of petrochemicals in the society we live in...but what if we are meant to 'go back to basics' and live the lives we were once born to excel in?

The culture we have developed forces us to work longer hours, leaving us feeling resentful as we have less time to achieve what is required and to take time out for ourselves and our families. Although our ancestors had less of the labour-saving devices we now possess, they seemed to have more time to enjoy their existence. Cramming more into our day, we get caught on the treadmill of life, unable to step off and enjoy what it has to offer.

We live in an instant, disposable, 'expecting perfection' society these days, so our food is pre-prepared for us, using chemicals and additives. Fruits, vegetables and livestock are continually doused with sprays, and genetically and hormonally modified so crops are perfect in colour and shape. They lack the nutrients and taste we once enjoyed. The same is true of the meat we purchase from most sources, where even the finished product is 'treated' to make it look more appealing.

It is a known fact that cancer lives in all of us at all times. Our bodies process these cells every day, but sometimes, for whatever reason, are unable to perform this effectively. The more I think about

it, the more I am convinced that we are meant to learn something from the onset of cancer. We are obviously slow learners, or we would have 'got it' by now.

We are more self-centred, more 'me' orientated than most generations before us and I believe this has contributed to our lack of vision. Thinking we are ten-feet-tall and bulletproof, most of us do not believe we will contract cancer or any other serious illness as that only happens to weaker personality types. However, if you think seriously of all the people you have known with cancer, you will realise it is non-discriminate. Cancer does not care if you are rich or poor, old or young, male or female, live a healthy lifestyle or not.

The sense of family and community we once shared is not as common as it once was. This is also to our detriment - both in terms of our health and spirituality, as well as feeling connected to others on the planet. The respect we held for individuals, their belongings, partners and even their

lives is no longer as common as it once was. Some of us feel incredible envy for what others possess and the lack in our own lives as we have become more materialistic in our thinking.

We seek an instant 'fixer-upper', which is why options like surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy have seemed like a godsend. We do not have to consider the reasons why cancer has been contracted or look deeper into our psyche to discover how we attracted it. We can opt for the medical model and get on with our lives. Unfortunately, even if it does work, sometimes it is only a temporary measure and perhaps not the lifestyle changing force it is meant to be.

For those of us that have changed the way we live or perceive things since coming into contact with cancer or other serious illnesses, we have learnt something valuable. However, it is unfortunate most of us will wait until we are given a life threatening diagnosis before we attempt to do anything about it.

Those who have been cured have usually found they have changed in some way, whether it is through lifestyle choices or how stress affects them. Sometimes, going the orthodox way has

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The onset of cancer cannot be treated as a textbook illness where one treatment cures all - especially as everyone's makeup is so different and we respond and react in diverse ways. What works for one person is not going to be true for the soul of another, so dealing with cancer is not something you can generalise. From my own experience, I know you need to find what works for you, sometimes with many bouts of trial and error. There are so many spiritual and alternative paths you can go down before you find the correct one for you. It is an inner knowing that will bring you to the crossroads and help you choose the direction best travelled by you.

A vital part of a journey involves those standing beside cancer. If you have not been touched by cancer, but you know others who have, how did you react? Were you still the same person you were with this person, or were you more or less of a friend or loved one than you were prior to the diagnosis? This is part of the lesson, too. We need to bring about a change in the way we respond and support others during their journey. With support and love, they too can find their way home to themselves. This is what humanity is all about. It is not just about donating regularly to your favourite charity; it is love for our fellow travellers through the life journey. I read once there is only love and fear, so to achieve what our spirits long for, reach out with love and make the world a better place to exist. It is important we start thinking about the lives we lead and how we live it right now, without delay. ❖

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Cherie Nobbs wrote 'Cancer Journey Handbook for Travellers, Carers and Friends' after her husband, Butch, passed away at the end of his predominantly medically treated cancer journey. She would like others to embrace life and those who are going through cancer. www.cnbe1.com

resulted in a clean bill of health but you discover these people now have a different perspective on life. They do not take it for granted and they certainly have not slipped back into their old ways of living and thinking.

Cancer is a multi-dimensional health obstacle we can turn into a spiritual opportunity to address the 'what', 'where' and 'how' of our life. It is not about finding a cure; it is about finding the reason why it has challenged us. The cancer journey is a personalised trip with many stops on the way, including destinations like repressed emotions, unhappiness and the reasons why we believe the poor lifestyle choices we make are true for our being.

Do not wait for the onset of cancer or the diagnosis of any other serious illness to re-evaluate the priorities in your life. Take some time to answer these questions and see if you are travelling your true path.

• Write down the top five things in your life (in order) that you direct most of your attention to;

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

• How many hours a week do you work? ____ hours • How many hours of good, quality time do you spend with your family? ____ hours

• Do you ever feel pressure in trying to juggle family and work life? Yes No Unsure

• Do you ever feel like you take things for granted in your life? Yes No Unsure

If yes, what are they? _____

• Is there anything you could change or incorporate into your life to make you feel more connected?

• Now list your top five priorities in your life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

• What steps will you take to better focus on them?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____