

## ***The Wellness Journey***

In the early spring of 2003 cancer was found in a swollen lymph node in my neck, my tonsils were removed and biopsies were done in my throat and surrounding areas. The biopsies came back negative for my throat, tongue and nasal pharynx. However, my right tonsil and a small spot on my right cheek did indeed have squamous cell carcinoma, a type of skin cancer. They're gone now, removed, dissected and floating in a jar somewhere.

At first I planned to take the standard radiation treatment for the microscopic cancer cells that might be left in the lymph nodes and tissue around the surgery. Radiation, while offering greater survival percentages in the short term, has significant risks of it's own. In my case, those risks were these – major immune system dysfunction, loss of saliva glands, loss of teeth and bone density, pain, and minor cosmetic and voice issues. Unfortunately, squamous cell carcinoma, like other cancers, has a nasty habit of coming back in multiple other places in the body. If I agreed to radiation for maximum protection of my throat, I risked greatly reducing my ability to fight off this cancer in other areas later on. After much research and many conversations, I put radiation on hold and began exploring holistic alternatives.

As a result of my studies I came to view cancer not as a disease, but as a symptom of a body that is out of balance. I've learned that cancer is caused by one of three risk factor groups. The first one, genetics, we can't change but we can and must compensate for it (more on that later). The second, environmental factors, remains a growing challenge. Our air, water, and food supply is corrupted with toxins, known carcinogens, genetically modified foods, and daily emersion at home and work with a deadly mix of industrial chemicals automotive exhausts, and VOC's from paint, carpet, and the myriad of synthetic material in our habitat. Again, beyond working for change in environmental law and actively seeking out and removing the threats we are able to specifically identify, we can only change a certain amount of this exposure. The third, lifestyle, is where you can really make a difference and even compensate somewhat for the other two. Lifestyle includes the four major cancer risk reducing behaviors - diet, stress, exercise, and attitude. There are hundreds of cancer research breakthroughs in these areas.

In contrast, for decades there have been no major breakthroughs in the three traditional methods to fight cancer - surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. One after another reports show cancer patients who after radiation or chemotherapy or both, become sickly and unable to ward off cancer in other areas of the body. Many of these patients ultimately succumb to a combination of chemo poisoning, radiation stress, and major body organ and immune function failure. To me, radiation and chemotherapy should be sought only after one has done everything possible to support the body's own systems for cleansing and protecting us the way nature intended. In most of us the internal cleansing processes that offer natural

protection for all disease have been depleted or completely shut down by years of cooked, nutritionally empty food and stressful, sedentary, spiritually empty lives!

After much contemplation, weighing the risks and talking to friends and loved ones, here's how I responded to my cancer diagnosis.

## ***DIET***

We all know that cooking destroys the live enzymes and many of the nutrients in raw food. These enzymes are not available in ANY cooked food OR pasteurized juices. A raw food diet is based on the fact that these essential, vital, living enzymes provide the pancreas, blood, and lymph system with the material needed to cleanse free radicals, the errant cells that ultimately develop into cancer. This is a normal function for a body that has a strong immune and pancreatic function. It seems that most of us are suffering from a weakened immune and pancreatic function. Eating exclusively raw food is a great way of compensating for the genetic, environmental or lifestyle effects of a depleted immune system and jumpstarting these functions back into service for optimum health.

Many private foundations and cancer therapy centers are revamping their nutritional programs to include massive amounts of raw juice and huge quantities of raw, leafy green veggies. By cutting out sweets, cooked food, and excess protein, fats and carbs, cancer has greatly reduced cell resources with which to grow. By substituting fresh, unpasteurized juice, raw vegetables, fruits and nuts in place of cooked, animal based meals and store bought juice drinks and junk food, our bodies regain the ability to cleanse and prevent cancer and other diseases. Previously weak immune cells will surround and consume free radicals with a vengeance. Even those with so-called 'genetic imprint' or hereditary predisposition for various types of cancer have shown miraculous healing and remission.

In response to this new knowledge and understanding, I became a raw foodist. I added whole grains and soy products because they have their own proven cancer fighting properties. Other than that, I ate exclusively raw food and juice for a full year. I felt energized and healthy. I lost weight. Most importantly, I completely changed my attitude about what goes in my mouth as food. Even after years as a vegetarian, I was amazed at how little truly nutritious food I was actually getting. I flooded my body with the original nutrients designed specifically for our ancient DNA by thousands of generations of evolution and millions of years of co-existing with nature's own raw and perfect food. Not surprisingly my body loved it!

## ***STRESS***

Many researchers are beginning to focus on stress as a primary risk factor. It turns out that even small amounts of stress really deplete the immune system, the very system that is supposed to protect us from disease. We invite stress into our lives with busy schedules, media induced fear, and high expectations for material and financial goals, and do little to reduce its damaging effects to our body and to our

health. Stress damages other primary body systems as well including the heart and brain etc. Stress kills!

I learned to say no. No new projects, no packed schedules, no rushing around; Just less work, more music, water, fun, a supportive community of alternative culture, friends and family. Letting go is hard, especially for over-achievers. I am often asked to help out with community events and activist projects. But when you realize the life or death potential of adding that stress back in to your life, it becomes less and less an effort to let go and more of a real pleasure to watch the things you used to worry about just drift away. The funny part is, the very things you worried about happening, rarely do. The hot tub and hot bath soak has become essential to letting go and has become part of my daily regimen. I find myself soaking away the cares and worries I used to carry around with me in the comforting glow of candlelight and the therapeutic aromas of incense and essential oils.

My yoga and meditation practice has become even more essential. I deepened my practice by creating a daily yoga space in my home and by adding a devotional affirmation to each asana that filled my heart with aspiration, joy, and surrender. I visualize each cell healing and responding to Divine love.

Exercise also played a huge role in stress reduction.

## ***EXERCISE***

Research on exercise shows that it reduces stress and releases endorphins into our blood stream, which in turn triggers our mood, usually toward the positive or euphoric. It also fine-tunes the body so that waste systems are not impaired and old cells and useless body fats get flushed out making room for new, healthy, lean, cellular growth. Exercise helps to create a new body day by day. Its affect on overall health is well documented and disputed by none. Its effect on cancer is tied to the way it reduces stress and increases all body metabolism, helping the body to surround and consume mutant cells. Combined with a raw food diet, it can have an amazing transformation over one's health.

Realizing that hatha yoga was not enough by itself, I began to swim daily. I noticed a huge difference in my health almost immediately! Swimming has always been my exercise of choice. I just like being in the water whether it's swimming, surfing, sailing, or soaking. I use a swim leash, tie myself off to the pool hand rail, and just swim uninterrupted for up to 30 minutes a day. Afterwards I rest for a few minutes in the warm Florida sun, visualizing it as the pure radiant love of the cosmos.

## ***ATTITUDE***

Attitude ties it all together. It is related to everything you do, and alters the color and feel of every event that occurs in your conscious and unconscious space. A negative, critical, and bitter attitude breeds stress and ultimately opens the body to

disease. Positive, calm, nonjudgmental thoughts are healing and bring peace and rest to the body.

My challenge was and is, finding a way to encounter the corrupt world of corporate culture and its relentless drain on humanity, while remaining unattached to it all emotionally. I have spent years lecturing to anyone who would listen about social injustice and the suffering of people, animals, and the environment at the hands of our multinational, global corporate icons. I have worked on any number of activist projects and with countless groups to generate change in the way things work. When I first connected the media, the politicians, and the military/industrial complex with the huge cash reserves of corporate culture and big business, I wanted to scream it out loud. And for years I did.

Again, learning to let go, I found yoga and meditation a powerful way to reduce stress and develop less stressful mental patterns and non-attachment to the ups and downs of the material world around us. My years with yoga is teaching me how to be in this world but remain patient with all I see. I still believe in working for change, but often I find the change most needed has turned out to be within. I'm consciously moving inward, especially now that I really understand how my old attitudes affected my health. Creating and keeping positive thoughts, exploring the inner life, and making stress free lifestyle choices like yoga, meditation, and saying no to crazy schedules, negative people, and fearful thoughts has slowly turned my life around.

I trusted these life changes as a way to fight cancer, holistically and in a way that honors my beliefs in a relaxed life, a life with spiritual purpose, and a diet of natural foods. My doctors warned me about the risks. Without radiation I was given two years to live. To date, I have passed that milestone with PET scans that can find no trace of cancer in my body. My doctor calls this a 'miracle'. I call it 'The Wellness Journey'. Speaking of risks, fear is also something I have to remember daily to replace with faith and wisdom. I will never say 'I'm cured', instead I say 'I'm curing'. I know that being cured, is an everyday discipline, not a single milestone. Meanwhile I'm pulling together the best of the world of conventional medicine AND my own intuitive divine wisdom and the many resources available in the holistic health movement. Together, they give me the opportunity to become a healthier and more divinely inspired person, seeking always to manifest peace and loving-kindness.

Each of us has access to that deep wisdom within that speaks to us about our health and the way we are embracing or denying our own wellness journey. It is my sincere wish that you begin now to encounter this wisdom and listen to it's gentle but persistent voice, calling you home to wellness, health, and peace.

Many Blessings,

Jerry Jackson