



FINALIST 2019 INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARDS

My Ticket to Ride

From Cancer to Flourishing

*I love this book's
commitment to Love
and not fear.*

Powerful message.

-- CM, Bellingham, WA



Cristina Whitehawk

9 Cancer is a Façade

Remove the masks. Be your Beauty
Be your Soul. Be your Heart

—Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance

Cancer is the Messenger—Please Don't Shoot the Messenger

Cancer is
failed creative fire.

My Ticket to Ride: From Cancer to Flourishing

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Since I knew the cancer was a wake-up call for me, I became curious. What was beneath this façade of cancer? Something was hiding. What was it?

Before Joshua took sick and became hospitalized, I was in resistance and denial about moving forward with my business life. I knew I was to relinquish being a Brain Gym® Consultant/Instructor, yet I ignored the message. I had reached a natural cycle of completion; rather than embrace it, I resisted it. I chose to ignore living the fuller life that was calling me to my next stage of growth and development. Instead of acknowledging that and trusting that a way would be shown if I took a step, any step, forward, I kept asking myself, “How would I do this?” “What is it I want to do?” “Then, because there was no immediate answer, so I thought, I kept telling myself I didn’t know the answer. Instead of affirming, I know, and allowing the new to show itself, I kept repeating “I don’t know” over and over. This further reinforced my belief that I did not know how to move forward. Anxiety grew.

The irony of all this was that, years before this, I had written in my perpetual calendar, *Doormats to Daily Soul Nurturance*, “Within your heart is the place of Knowing, instead of saying I don’t know, remind yourself you do know.” I was definitely not honoring that. I had also written, “When initiating cycles of completion, insist they complete with Grace and Ease.” Evidently, I was not ready to listen to my inner wisdom. When I realized this while going through my healing process, I forgave myself.

When caught in despair,
unknowns can translate into immobility.
– Cristina Whitehawk

Then this life concern of what I should do with my life all went onto the back burner when Joshua was hospitalized. As his weeks in the hospital increased, my anxiety increased—would he be well again? What if he didn’t get better, then what?

After his death, I entered an endless, bottomless hole of immobilizing grief. Sorrow and despair became new life companions, rendering me rudderless. I felt swept out to sea, so far away from my center, that daily living became taxing—grueling—arduous. I did my best to pick up the pieces of my life and business, yet with such a sorrow-filled heart it felt next to impossible. I was in stress over how to run my business without his help. I partnered with another woman to take our Brain Gym skills in another direction. We were hard working in our endeavors, yet little came of it. Once again, I was shown this was no longer my path. Once again, I ignored it, increasing my resistance to change. Caught up in my unknowns, coupled with emotional unease wrapped in grief, I was drained of my vitality and my desire to live. I was living in survival, barely hanging onto life. Now, in looking back, I see I couldn’t let go of what I loved doing, even if I was no longer to do it.

There are current beliefs that the root cause of cancer is anger. I disagree. In my case, it was deeper than anger. I believe that the cancer became activated in my body because I did not acknowledge it was time to change what I was doing in my life, which created feelings of failure, coupled with the despair over Joshua’s death. It had become far too overwhelming for me to want to continue living. What was my purpose? Physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually I felt all used up. I had no more to give. Cancer gave me a good excuse to leave my life.

...the cancer you have is related to your inner depression, hopelessness, or fear.
...it is your hopelessness and pain that makes it impossible for
you to go on.
– Tien-Sheng Hsu, MD

David Servan-Schreiber, MD. PhD, cites a study in his book *Anticancer: A New Way of Life* illustrating the impact of despair on our lives: “Scientists grafted fifty percent of the rats used in the study with cancer cells known to induce a fatal tumor. The rats were divided into three groups.”

Group One was the control group. They were not manipulated in any way.

Group Two received small electric shocks. This group could learn to avoid the shocks by pushing a lever.

Group Three received small electric shocks. No shock avoiding escape mechanism was provided.

The results published in *Science* found: Thirty days after the graft, sixty-three percent of the rats in *Group Two* had rejected the tumor.

Group One showed a fifty-four percent rejection of the tumor.

Group Three showed only twenty-three percent could reject the tumor. “Because they had no means of escape, the despair and hopelessness made it challenging for the rats to reject the tumor.”

Cancer Patient Profile Characteristics

Caroline Myss and C. Norman Shealy, MD in their book *The Creation of Health: The Emotional, Psychological, and Spiritual Responses That Promote Health and Healing*, postulate that people who become ill identify consistently with one or more of the following eight dysfunctional patterns:

- Unresolved or deeply consuming long-running or recent emotional, psychological or spiritual stress
- Disempowering belief systems that override positive belief systems of self-worth and self-esteem
- The inability to give or receive love
- Lack of humor. They don't laugh at the small stuff; not realizing all of it is small stuff
- Decision-making. Taking charge of your life instead of attempting to control life events
- Not taking care of the physical body with nutrition, exercise, etc.
- Loss of meaning and purpose in one's life
- Denying difficulty when it is present. Avoiding discussing it

Congratulations, Cristina! I was right there with their number one listed item. Add not taking charge of making life changes before Joshua's death and I saw how all the other situations on the list fit me. This awareness provided infinite opportunities to use forgiveness to unmask the true me buried deep within hiding behind the cancer façade.

Lack of spiritual alignment is where disease begins...
I believe diseases begin when we disregard the messages of
the heart and deny what gives us happiness.

— *Caroline Sutherland*

Lawrence LeShan, PhD, author of *Cancer as a Turning Point*, adds to this cancer patient profile information with his discoveries about 19th century doctors. In his research he found doctors, who didn't have all the medical tools we have now, knew that great emotional loss and despair occurred before the first signs of cancer. To them, cancer was more than a local body problem. They were aware two centuries ago, without the studies we have now, that emotional loss was mostly likely what activated cancer. I certainly fit that picture.

Dr. Servan-Schreiber quoted above, shared a story about veterinarian Ian Gawler, mentioned in Chapter 7, “The Power of Authentic Choice.” Diagnosed with osteosarcoma of the leg, Dr. Gawler had his leg amputated to the hip. A year of conventional treatment couldn't stop the tumor growth. Cancer spread to his hips and thorax creating visible deformities. His oncologist informed him he had no more than two to four weeks to live. Gawler began meditating one hour at a time, three to four times a day, along with a strict diet. After several months, the cancer and their bone deformities vanished. Years later Gawler, age 68 at this writing, attributes it to living his life in inner calm, not despair.

Reading about Dr. Gawler after my surgery confirmed for me that I had made the right choice in loving the cancer. It was important for me to create the serenity and peace my body required in order to heal itself. In as many ways as I could, using as many modalities as I could, I was intent on turning my ship around. Having my ship consumed by cancer was not an option. All the different modalities I used messaged love to my body-mind-spirit. (See Chapter 22. “Modalities I Used on My Path to Flourishing.”)

Redirecting My Life

I once read that who you are going to be determines what you are going to do. And what you are going to do determines who you are going to be. Cancer offered me a chance to dig deep. Who did I want to be? What did I want to do? It was time to initiate the necessary changes so hope, not grief, and despair directed my life. A major life makeover if you will. It was time to follow through on reinventing my life.

Now, over five years since Joshua’s death, I still find pockets of me to reclaim from the sorrow and sadness. A major part of my grieving and cancer healing process is writing this book. As I decided to author this book, the next books made themselves known as I wrote about in Chapter 3, “Down the Before-Cancer-Surgery Rabbit Hole.” I celebrated my choice to live instead of succumbing to the cancer. I now knew who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. Do I still grieve? Of course I do. I also want to live a full and love-filled life and am doing my best to do so.

Once I set out onto my new path of healing and wholeness, my top priority was to ferret out, as much as possible, as many of the patterns of dis-ease stored away in my emotional, psychological, and spiritual storehouses. I no longer wanted them directing my life.

I am fortunate to be skilled in powerful self-introspective processes that I applied to tackle the denial and resistance hidden behind the façade of cancer. I relied on the process of forgiveness to dissolve them. Like Russian stacking dolls, one façade after another melted away each time I discovered life-limiting patterns and forgave myself. One outgrown belief system after another, one old point of reference after another evaporated. As each “doll” showed itself, I used forgiveness to disengage from its hold over me. Many dolls surfaced. Forgiveness dissolved them all.

I forgave myself for not acknowledging the signs when it was time to change my work direction the year before Joshua’s medical situation.

I forgave myself for believing that all the stories behind the cancer were real.

I forgave myself for believing the possibility that cancer could conceivably be permanent. This was fear talking.

Acknowledging I was living with cancer at the time did not mean I had to accept it as a permanent situation.

I forgave myself for the attachments I had to the façades that were cloaking my ability to live a life of vibrant wellbeing.

I forgave myself again and again. Forgiveness kept me out of self-pity and ushered me into moving into my new life.

From what are you hiding?
From whom are you hiding?
Why?
What purpose is it serving?
Strengthen yourself by disclosing yourself.
Hide no more.
— *Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance*

Medical intuitive and author Caroline Myss PhD, *Defy Gravity: Healing Beyond the Bounds of Reason*, reminds us to pay attention: “Regardless of what the cause of stress is in one’s life, once the problem is unearthed, it demands attention. Attention means choice and choice means change. ... [the body-mind-spirit connection] is the area that requires the most attention to re-educate because a person must learn to relate to his or her thoughts, emotions and imagination as power tools that have the force to rebuild the body.”

I made my choice. I was ready to live.

Thank You Cancer

Receiving the cancer diagnosis six months after Joshua's death was a powerful wake up call. I decided wanting to bring my life to an end did not align with my heart's messages of love, joy, and celebration of life. I had a loving family I didn't want to leave behind. I thanked the cancer. It had provided me with a golden opportunity to redirect my life.

Illness is a reset button.

– *Bernie Siegel, MD*

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