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FINALIST 2019 INTERNATIONAL BOOK AWARDS

My Ticket to Ride

From Cancer to Flourishing



Available at www.PoweredByGenius.com Cristina Whitehawk

Advance Praise for My Ticket to Ride From Cancer to Flourishing

Riveting! Me-Sah, Santa Fe, NM

After reading chapter one, I was drawn in and wanted more.

Barbara Smith, LAc., Jackson, WY

How beautiful is this line in the intro: Gift yourself the advantage of nourishing and strengthening yourself through love! Pamela Usher, Avondale, AZ

Thank you! I am hooked... I plan to be another inspiring story like you! Kelly Cragg Witter, Newark, NY

Read the chapter "Strengthened By Vulnerability" and find that it resonates with me.

I can feel it in my arms. Particularly liked the butterfly analogy. Coral Malpede, Aptos, CA

Other Books by Cristina Whitehawk

Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance

Inspirational Perpetual Calendar

Heart of Courage

Solutions for Undoing What Fear Created

My Ticket to Ride Companion Workbook

My Ticket to Ride From Cancer to Flourishing

Cristina Whitehawk



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Dedication

To those who have been told they have cancer to their families to their friends to their medical teams

It definitely takes a village

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Cristina's Greeting to You

Welcome to the Path of Conscious Living where life is joyous, clear and celebratory

- Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance

What Inspired Me to Write This Book?

I wanted to share with you how love, not hating, guided me through cancer.

I wanted a means for us to connect with regard to the sudden and massive way cancer alters our and our loved one's lives.

I wanted a way in which we could join one another in the preciousness of our living, so we can flourish together in large and small ways-sometimes the smallest being the largest.

I wanted a way for our loving hearts to aid one another in how to be strong stewards of our cancer event.

During my cancer journey, I bumped into places in my life telling me it was time to make significant inner changes. Utilizing the power of forgiveness, which is another way of loving myself, I took steps to end living in any guilt, fear, remorse, or anxiety. Forgiveness served to remind me I couldn't love myself too much, especially when confronting the cancer challenges.

Between the cancer diagnosis and entering the unfamiliar rabbit hole of making major medical choices, I knew I was not to take part in the all too familiar mainstream war-on-cancer verbiage. My conscious choice was to embrace and love the cancer and the journey it created. There was no way for me to become well while using disempowering words or thoughts based on hating, killing, fighting, f@#king, or battling cancer. Conventional cancer approaches encourage us to be warriors. I decided I would be a love warrior.

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

- Gospel of Thomas

Thinking and speaking about the cancer from a place of love allowed me to remain proactive and calm. This kept the cancer from directing my life.

Was I excited about this new unanticipated life occurrence? No.

Was I going to do my best to use the cancer situation as a tool for expanding and growing my life? Yes.

Was it easy? Not at all.

Why Was I Loving Cancer?

As a strong believer in self-responsibility, I acknowledged the impact of how my intentions, thoughts, words, and actions created my life's outcomes. My confidence in using my strong abilities to take charge of designing my life during the cancer situation was of top priority. This is based on my belief that life does not happen to me; life happens for me. I centered on the power of love to heal which kept me focused on hope and strength. It was through the power of love I took charge of this new surprising life turn of events. As I recalled how I had generated fear-based events in the past, I chose not to bring them into my present. I made a conscious decision to have no place at my table for fear and its insidious aim to destroy.

My choice to include love in my cancer toolkit offered benefits that fear could not. Love nourished and strengthened me. This one shift in perspective to view life through the eyes of love created opportunities for me to feel in countless ways even greater love. Fear can never do that.

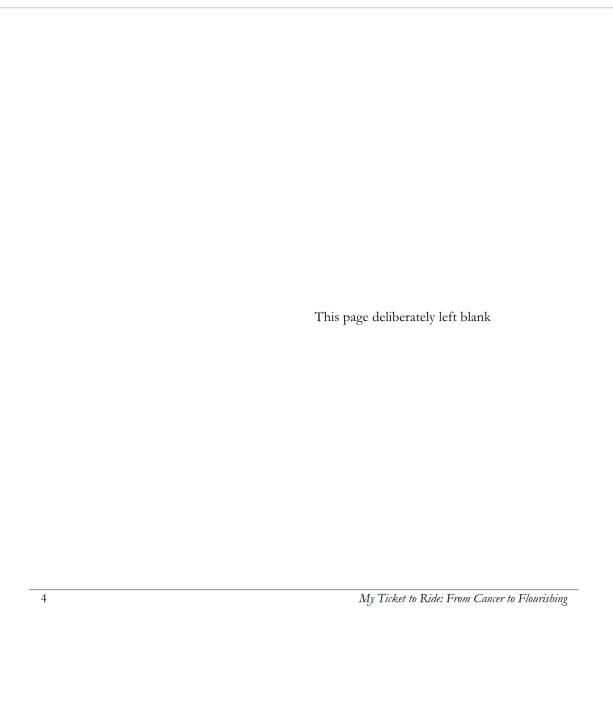
Focusing on the love also supported me in knowing something joyous can come of having cancer even if I should die. Transition from life to death is natural. Even though I wasn't ready to die, death was not my enemy.

While coping with the cancer, I only shared my love tactic with one person. I didn't declare from the rooftops to anyone my approach was to love cancer instead of battling it. Once I was in remission and regaining my strength and vitality, I was then ready to declare from the rooftops how important loving cancer was to my recovery. You now hold this declaration in your hands.

During the throes of the cancer I had many powerful Mystical Moment Previews. I share them in this book to encourage you to be ready to meet and welcome the Unknown and its mysteries as you go through your major life circumstances. Operating from love is necessary to benefit from these communications. The more open to love I was, the more I recognized the whispers and shouting the Unknown did to get my attention. Our hearts communicate with the Unknown in endless ways. I allowed It to speak to me. I did my best to keep my focus on love, so I could listen to what my Higher Self /God Self wished for my life.

Included in My Ticket to Ride: From Cancer to Flourishing is poetry I have written. May it touch you and heal you even in the places you are not aware wanted or required healing. May it also strengthen and sustain you.

As I write this (summer 2018) I am now in remission three years. (Major gratitude dance!) I note in Chapter 19, "Re-Mission, Now the *Real* Journey Begins" to me it is a *re-mission*. My post cancer focus is on re-missioning my life. My job is to stay centered in love in the now, not to focus on the past and not to create a fear-gripped future. In the creating of this book and its companion workbook, *Heart of Courage: Solutions for Undoing What Fear Created*, I remind myself I am alive. By your reading it, you remind yourself you are alive. Let's celebrate that together.



Three Areas of Focus in *My Ticket to Ride*

For every challenge there is a soul-ution. Listen—Accept—Act

- Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance

Our Powerful Mind and Its Effect on our Physical World

My Ticket to Ride: From Cancer to Flourishing is about how I combined standard cancer treatments with deep spiritual awareness. I kept my heart open as best I could and welcomed the divine memos guiding my way.

My body responds to my thoughts, taking orders from my mind. My actions and feelings also influence my body in this mind-over-matter process. Much of the time this takes place below my conscious awareness. For instance, when I had a down day, my thoughts were not uplifting, my body felt lethargic, and I focused on numerous aches and pains. Not looking for more uplifting thoughts, my day became dismal. When I experienced an up day, I was happy and energetic, noticing how everything that day seemed to fall into place like magic.

Because I recognized my thoughts influenced how my body would respond, I did my best to pay attention to them. I was the one to decide if the next thought or next action would create new healthy possibilities or serve as a repeat of my past. It was important for me to harness the power of my mind and to direct my body's ability to focus on wellbeing. I accomplished this by monitoring my thoughts and turning negative thoughts into more positive ones.

There were days when I could not put thoughts together. Other days between chemotherapy treatments I could be more aware of my thoughts and be able to monitor them. I did the best I could. What mattered the most was my intention.

Personal Self Mastery is Important

It is my belief that taking responsibility for all areas of my life leads to personal self-mastery. It was important in my healing to make sure I was in charge of my life as much as possible. I wanted to identify the ways I could take conscious responsibility for my health situation. This entailed my being mindful of how I had created everything that was my life. I concluded I had two choices. I could take responsibility, avoid believing I was a victim of the cancer, and live empowered, or I could blame someone or something for my troubles, which then gave my power away and placed me in the grip of fear.

In our culture, setting up victim/blaming patterns is common. (As an example, notice how the news media is set up to create blaming. You will often hear or read a statement similar to this: "The ______ is attempting to find out who or what is to *blame* for this incident." Pay attention. It will be an eye opener. This is a pattern of someone has to be right and someone has to be wrong. Patterns such as these become part of our belief system.

When I noticed myself wanting to blame, I saw it as a gift. It was an immediate signal that I was in fear about something; often not knowing what it was since a lot of feelings can take place below the radar. When this happened, I would take a breath and ask to see what it was about me that created the desire to blame someone or something else. Regardless of whether I perceived the reason behind the need to blame or not, I always said to myself, "I forgive myself for wanting to blame." This cleared the desire to find fault and stopped any perpetuation of further blame and feeling I was a victim. I then felt more relaxed and in charge of my life.

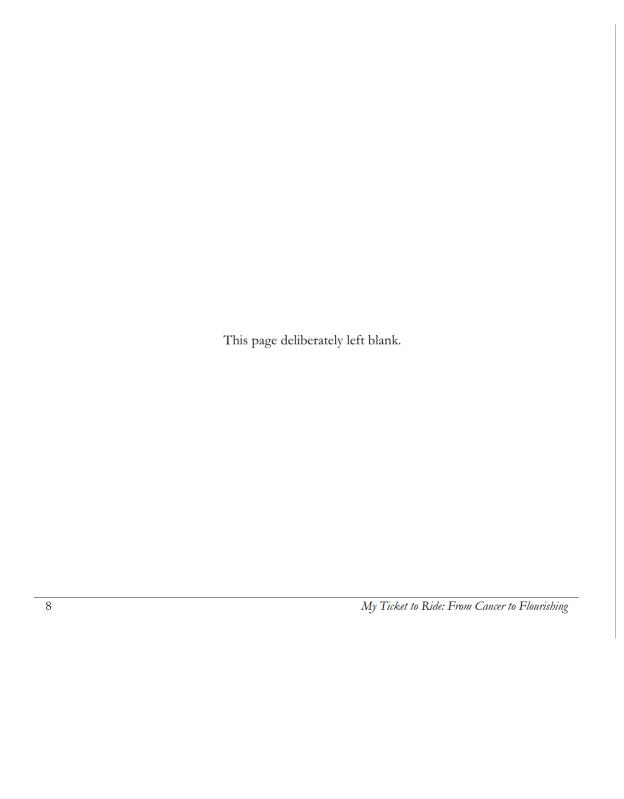
Often our societal view of cancer (and other diseases) focuses on blame, giving the *why* for the language of "killing" cancer. Since I wanted no part of that (it would make me a victim of cancer), I loved the cancer instead of "lashing out" by blaming. This required focused diligence on my part to be aware enough to confront how the cancer blame-and-kill messages could impact my wellbeing. *Love* instead of *kill* was my operative word of choice.

How Divine Intelligence is Always Speaking and Guiding Us

After the cancer diagnosis, compelling "synchronistic" events took place in my life. Chronicled in this book as *Mystical Moment Previews* they were the promise I would be well. They served as guideposts along the way, reassuring me I would be all the better for this experience. Were there times when I doubted this? Oh yeah!

I did my best to have the "ears to hear" and the "eyes to see" so I could stay tuned to the *Mystical Moment Previews*. Doing this helped me to achieve my goal of living a life of vibrant health. Over thirty *Mystical Moment Previews* provided supportive guidance as I embraced my unknown journey.

But... isn't every journey unknown?



Basking in the Sweetness of the Unknown

Basking in the sweetness of the Unknown

calming my heart
calming my thoughts
calming my ever inquisitive self who needs answers

I discover this indulgent self who needs answers is fearful of the Unknown

I welcome this self into the holy chamber of my heart

enveloping it with love

Love of the Unknown

enveloping it with comfort

Comfort of the Unknown

enveloping it with surety

Surety of the Unknown

In great joy I discover that the Great Unknown is where the answers originate

I sit in the Unknown

I be in the Unknown

I create from the Unknown

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1 The Power of Change

Set your well-focused intent to approach your next gate of change effortlessly. gracefully, step through it

- Doorways to Daily Soul Nurturance

When One Door Closes...

"Your CT scan results show a mass. We think it is cancer." It is Wednesday, November 13, 2013, almost midnight. Six hours of waiting in the hospital emergency department and I *finally* had an answer.

Upon hearing the doctor's words, immediately a strong torrent of energy rushed out of my body. It began on the right at my waist, flying across my midsection and exiting out the left side of my body. This took less than a second. Its color was orange. I felt calm as I thought to myself, "There goes Brain Gym[®]," (My profession I loved for the last 25 years.) A huge, soothing sigh of relief washed through me. I felt free.

Whoa! I just received a knock-your-socks-off cancer diagnosis and I felt free and relieved? This response to the diagnosis marked the beginning of many signs pointing the way to my becoming well. Yes, the *Mystical Moment Previews*, mentioned in "Three Areas of Focus," had begun. I encountered them throughout the entire cancer process. They ushered me through the many forthcoming uncomfortable days and months. I welcomed them as way-showers, pointing me beyond cancer, beyond survival to wellbeing.

Although I didn't know that night what type of cancer it was, the diagnosis didn't frighten me. Unsettling? Definitely! Yet, I did not believe it to be a death sentence. I knew more people survived cancer than died from it.

David Servan-Schreiber, MD. PhD writes in *Anticancer: A New Way of Life:* "Cancer lies dormant in all of us. Like all living organisms our bodies are making defective cells all the time. That's how tumors are born. But our bodies are also equipped with a number of mechanisms that detect and keep such cells in check. In the West, one person in four will die of cancer but three in four will not."

To me, the cancer diagnosis served as an immediate notice to change the direction of my life. As I laid on the gurney, I embraced the change, whatever it was, and said yes to it.

How Did I Get Myself to the Point of Cancer?

For more than twenty-five years, I taught Educational Kinesiology's Brain Gym® 101, Vision Circles® and Switched-On Selling™ courses. I loved every minute of it. Then something changed. About a year and a half before the cancer diagnosis, I began to feel burned out. I began noticing my teaching business was not like it had been in the past. Successful class enrollment lowered, the number of private clients became fewer, and sustaining my decreasing business momentum took greater effort. It became wearying and frustrating. Deep down, I knew it was a sign to move on from Brain Gym and take my life in new directions. Change pounded on my door. I chose to turn a deaf ear to it all and barred the door shut.

Whenever I did think about making new life choices, I wondered, "What would I do?" Instead of addressing the question and allowing the answer to surface, I became fearful and chose to ignore it. I did not want to acknowledge the nagging feelings and thoughts bubbling beneath the surface, so I continued on with my life as it was, turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to this insistent call for change. I pressed on doing the same thing that no longer worked for me. I doubled up and put forth even more effort. As cognizant as I was that I was resisting needed change, my action choice was to bury my head in the sand.

Did the cancer diagnosis surprise me? Yes and no. It had never been anything I gave thought to. I had family and friends who died of cancer. I had my physical health challenges over the years, yet cancer never occupied my mind. In that way, it did surprise me.

The way in which it didn't surprise me was how in my personal life I chose to be oblivious to living with elevated stress. It didn't seem at the time that the stress level was high. In retrospect I wasn't taking enough time for me. Besides, wasn't it normal to live with stress when you lived a busy life? I fulfilled many roles; wife, mother of adult children, grandmother, friend, facilitator, counselor, and businesswoman. I came across as wise, loving, compassionate, and laid back. And I was all that. I led an engaging, full, and rewarding life doing what I loved to do. Why change that?

I had re-invented myself numerous times before. In fact, Brain Gym had been my last re-inventing. As I have mentioned, I adored Brain Gym. I loved teaching it. I loved all the people I knew worldwide because of it. I loved my private clients and the amazing changes Brain Gym brought about in their lives. I loved how it helped me grow and expand as a human being.

I could not bear to look at the energy I imagined was necessary to make whatever the needed change would entail. Initiating alterations to my life felt like an overwhelming tsunami threatening to pull me under. After almost a year of denying this knock on the door to change my life's focus my life took a radical turn. There was a much bigger family concern that took precedence. Making the changes necessary to reinvent myself? They now had to wait.

The Straw That Broke My Camel's Back

My son Joshua had a liver transplant in 2007 at age 33. In March 2013, Joshua admitted himself to the hospital under emergency conditions. Doctors told him the duct that moved the bile from his liver to his small intestine had become blocked. He underwent surgery and a stent was placed into the duct. All was well. Several days after the surgery I entered his hospital room to find him prepped for kidney dialysis. The stent no longer worked. His kidneys began to shut down. For six weeks from the middle of March to the end of April I drove to the hospital two or more times each day. Constant unexpected medical situations cropped up. Joshua, with input from his family, had to make immediate decisions about procedures that involved crucial timing. These urgent nerve-racking days were continuous. Most nights I dozed in a chair next to him. During all this, I was doing my best to keep my diminishing business running.

On May 4, 2013, at age 39, Joshua died.

Grief! It was deep and heart numbing; so raw, so fathomless. It immobilized me. I wanted the feelings of brokenness and desolation to make sense, which was not possible. Homeostasis didn't exist. I stumbled and groped my way through deep and dark times.

Our bodies respond to the stories we tell them. When Joshua died, I told my body (unconsciously) that I didn't want to live anymore. My body heard this and proceeded to make the story become true. It is my belief the sorrow from Joshua's passing was the straw that broke my camel's back.

He was my baby, my cherished son. He was my business' "right arm." He also handled all the techie aspects of my company. I plummeted into extreme overwhelm as I attempted to get myself, and my business back on track.

I didn't know how to make beautiful flyers when I needed them. I didn't know how to deal with making changes to my website. Every day I lived the grief, missing our day-to-day contact. Our daily touching base to discuss business details—gone. Our daily joking and loving light-hearted banter—gone. The feelings of being adrift were massive, crushing, and overwhelming. A large piece of my life was missing.

As I lived with the strong emotions of his death, I was willing to feel them, yet did not want them to overtake my life. The grief from his death inflamed my stress to even higher levels. It created congestion. There was emotional congestion, mental congestion, physical congestion, and spiritual congestion. I spent my days crying while feeling lost and hopeless. The grief had capsized me.

I sent mixed signals to myself. It was joyous for me to celebrate my son's new place of being as he was no longer ill and suffering. Yet, my missing his physical presence was tremendous. In much the same way as I focused on loving the cancer, as you will read in further chapters, I embraced the grief with love, so it could begin to teach and heal me.

The startling abruptness of the cancer wake-up call signaled to me the life I was living continued to be out of balance. In retrospect, besides living in grief, I was attempting to keep a business going in a direction in which I was to no longer involve myself, thus adding unneeded stress to my life. My adrenal system became over-extended and it felt as if it was having a "nervous breakdown." This was also true for my mental and emotional states.

Did My Grief-Based Stress Trigger Cancer?

In the weeks after receiving the cancer diagnosis, I reflected. Did the dormant cancer cells detect the stress-related hormones rampaging through my body? If so, did that signal the cells to begin their aggressive multiplying process? Were those powerful stress-related hormones the food on which the cancer cells fed? I can't say for sure. At deep inner levels, I knew for me, the grief and stress were the major precipitants.

David Bennett, author of *Cancer for Two: Conquering a Cancer Together* quotes Gabriel Kune, MD Emeritus Professor of Surgery, University of Melbourne: "The stress does not cause the cancer, but it can trigger something, perhaps through change in the immunity, that results in the multiplication of a few cancer cells in a situation that is more than the body can cope with. Alternatively, it might cause a pre-malignant tumour to change into a malignant tumour."

My physically, mentally, and emotionally depleted body had nothing more to give. That night in the hospital, my body, my mind, and my spirit said, "Enough!" My son, and now, my beloved profession were gone. It was time for me to create new life-affirming stories.

After the emergency department doctor's cancer pronouncement, I telephoned my husband and daughter who were waiting to hear about the scan outcome. It was challenging and painful for me to be the bearer of such news. With a saddened heart, I listened to their shocked responses.

Still on the gurney, the hospital's cancer floor beckoned me for two days of further testing. Rolling through the hospital's labyrinthine corridors, many unknowns grabbed for my attention.

No question about it, learning I had cancer yanked my head out of the deep sands of denial. A drastic life turning point had now developed.

Next: My Ticket to Ride

Health Inspirational Memoir Mind-Body-Spirit Personal Growth

A Stage IIIC Peritoneal/Ovarian Cancer diagnosis propelled Whitehawk on an intense journey of walking her talk, and walking her walk of her 40+ years of personal growth work.

Hope

30+ Mystical Moment Previews guided the author to remission.

Power Perspective

Why Whitehawk chose to love the cancer instead of hating, fighting, or killing it.

Inspiring

Self-forgiveness was her most powerful healing tool.

Enlightening

How Whitehawk incorporated a body-mind-spirit approach with bio-medical approaches to bring about recovery and wellness.

Poetry

Each chapter is preceded by Whitehawk's inspirational poetry.



Finding the beauty in a difficult journey

-- Kayla Danae Ortiz Las Cruces, NM

