

# ***Healing on Higher Ground***

**10 Wisdoms to Tell Your Doctor for**

**Better Health and Care**

**by Renee Sutton and Christopher Paul**

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# *Healing on Higher Ground*

## **10 Wisdoms to Tell Your Doctor for Better Health and Care**

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## Chapter 1

### My Diagnosis:

#### The Medicine Chest IS too Small!

Already on the edge of sanity, I gripped the steering wheel as tightly as I held my thoughts. My shoulders lifted almost to my ears. My heart raced with the pace of the car and second hands of a Timex watch. The adrenaline still crept through my veins from the morning's interruption of business calls. The fear that a simple cure may not be in sight kept the adrenal high alive in my body. I glided between cars and stoplights as the red Nissan Pathfinder rocked back and forth in the same rhythm as my frantic state. I disliked being late.

It was late spring 1992. I was a 31-year old businesswoman in the fast pace of high tech management, yet on my way to a diversion in life. I will learn the results of a series of tests for a suspicious lump in my chest. I could no longer ignore the symptoms that had plagued me for months -- night sweats, a 20-pound weight loss, chronic back pain, bronchial cough and rashes. The fifteen-minute drive to the hospital seemed a lifetime with the task ahead of me in a doctor's office unclear, neither place I wanted to be. I thought, "*Who does?*" I felt like I was late to hear a verdict for a trial that had been in session for years.

Even as my future lay heavily on my mind, I couldn't help but notice the wonder of new life unfolding outside my window. Country suburbs quickly rolled into concrete downtown Nashville. Yet, the air was still perfumed with the smell of warm grass turned green by the sun mixed with the sweet fragrance of white blossoms. They hung abundantly in clumps on the black locust trees. White spidery dandelion seeds floated away from their anchors, swept forward by tiny gusts of air. Like the spring arrival, my favorite time of the year, I embraced the chance for new beginnings. If only it was that easy to change.

Arriving slightly late, I greeted my mother and boyfriend. As my boyfriend of seven years, I was thankful to have him with me. Traveling as a guitar player and vocalist for a new country artist kept him away most of the time. Perhaps this was a blessing, because I couldn't immerse myself in our relationship anyway. I didn't know what our future held together. Love was in our words to each other. However, a cancer verdict seemed to add clarity to our previous decision to not get married. Neither of us was ready for that sort of long-term commitment. Possibly because we have our careers to nurture or maybe fear of failure. Regardless, marriage without sickness is hard enough. We certainly didn't need any complications added to our relationship.

On the way to the waiting room, we walked past an open area crowded with IV stands; drip bags were casually attached to people like gas pumps to cars. The room smelled of medicine: chalky and acidic.

Chris's elegant, aquiline nose scrunched up in disgust. We all quickly glanced away from the sad blank eyes that studied us.

As we waited to see the doctor, I pushed back the emotion of disbelief that this could be happening to me. Instead, I tried to remain true to my childhood nature: strong and positive. Yet the constant chatter in my head soon began like early morning birds on a feeding frenzy.

*Hope I remember everything. I think I read enough on cancer. High risk of damage from treatments. Can't my body heal without destroying it with drugs? I really want to try alternative ways of beating this. I wonder what would work. Where's God's answer? I did pray. I can't hear him. Need answer soon. My choice can make life easy or hard. I hope it's a short path with an easy fix. I really need that answer soon. What if I don't pick the best path? If only I had taken better care of myself. Years of bad choices. I should have reduced my stress levels, ate right, worked less, exercised and slept more. I did some of these things. Sometimes. Just not enough. Why didn't I AVOID preservatives, chemicals, smoking, fertilizers, people ill with viruses? I should have taken time off. GONE to the doctor more often. I did go, what unpleasant places. Felt like a small child, spanked for feeling bad. Conclusions were always the same. To think it took six years and months of antibiotics before a diagnosis. The pain wasn't in my head. Wished it had been...*

The nurse's voice blared from across the waiting room, "Renee Sutton."

I immediately thought, *why couldn't they just say my first name or remember my face?*

Goose bumps rose on my arms as we entered a stark white examination room, large enough to seat just the four of us. Was it the chill of learning my fate or the iciness from the room temperature? Maybe the temperature is purposely set low to offset the heated moments that occur with the delivery of bad news.

The oncologist wore the typical white mid-length technician coat. Observing the formality of his appearance, I wondered what substance he was protecting himself from--cancer? He wasn't there to examine me. I thought to myself, *maybe this is how doctors set themselves apart from their patients.*

He described to us the sequence of events for a yearlong duration of treatment needed for Hodgkin's disease, the lymphatic cancer that had engulfed my chest. The oncologist said, "It calls for chemotherapy and radiation because of the cancer's advanced stage towards the heart and lung."

He then mumbled something about a tumor the size of a grapefruit. *How much reduction would occur with the standard year of chemotherapy with eight intravenous drugs?* He wasn't sure. The radiation to follow would kill any remaining cells and help reduce the size of the tumor.

My thoughts drifted back to four months ago to a visit with my new primary care physician. The tumor was missed in the reading of a previous X-ray. It was a simple mistake, but costly to me. Some of my friends had urged me to sue for such a blatant oversight, but I knew that a lawsuit would not rid me of the

cancer. As the eldest of four children and with parental teachers, I had learned early to be ACCOUNTABLE FOR MY OWN ACTIONS. I hadn't taken care of myself through the years. Now I paid for it.

Still, it was hard to imagine how in less than 10 years I had climbed the ladder to become a manager at a high tech company, advising presidents and executives on how to bring the business into newer paradigms. All the while the seeds of cancer were multiplying in my body. A year to undo the damage seemed like an awfully long time.

I shook off the thoughts of discouragement and straightened my suit jacket. I mustered the courage to ASK the oncologist about alternative therapies. I hoped for an answer that would be less invasive and destructive than chemotherapy--maybe even something with a shorter recovery. In 1992, there were only a few books on the market that described the various alternative methods and their risks, including vitamin C and other megavitamins, laetrile (amygdalin extraction from pits of peaches), immune serum protein, chelation therapy, macrobiotics, acupuncture and coffee enemas. Most were experimental, administered somewhere other than Nashville and lacked evidence for stopping cancer. These therapies definitely weren't covered by insurance.

Even so, I wanted to GATHER every piece of information on how to treat cancer--particularly outside of the standard medicine since I was sensitive to chemicals. The oncologist professed to know nothing about alternative cancer treatments. A smirk spread across his so sure face.

"You're going to die if you don't take chemo," he blurted.

Mom gasped as she struggled to maintain composure. "Well then, that just doesn't leave any choice in the matter of what to do," she responded. Mom had taught me to ASK QUESTIONS to any type of doctor and as many questions as possible. On this day, she froze from fear. I suspect she felt forced into the corner of the unknown just as we all do when there is not enough information about a subject.

Chris sat quietly anticipating my response. He shot an alarmed glance at me as I struggled to find the words to counter back. In synchronicity, Chris and my body lifted with strong will and poised for an ATTACK OF MORE QUESTIONS.

The oncologist's choice of words shocked me to quietness. I thought, *how could he be so sure that I would die if I chose another way to heal?* I felt like I was standing on a diving board for the first time, with the entire conventional medical community behind me, ready to push me forward. The doctor explained that other therapies weren't proven. Yet, I knew full well that once I took that dive into chemotherapy, my body could later pay-- in the forms of early menopause, gum disease, immune disorders, breast cancer, leukemia, other cancers or liver damage.

I wanted to live. I believed hopefulness of living was hidden somewhere between the lines of the doctor's death warning. *Was the opposite really true, that if I did take chemo, then I would live?* The word "die"

reverberated in my head like the constant clicking sounds of katydids in the summer, harder to ignore the more it repeats. At that weak moment fear grabbed me like a villain, using the word to convince me of certain failure in healing my body more naturally. I could have used a better form of hope than the oncologist's statement. I was thankful that he didn't throw out any further prognosis, like statistics on recovery. I didn't ask but couldn't help to wonder, how long would I live? Only until diagnosed with cancer, I now understood the death sentence given when acquiring an illness that doctors don't know how to cure. The sentencing became evident in the reactions from others. I could see it in their hesitation or careful choice of words used when they encouraged me or in the simple statement made by a doctor.

I fought the fear back into the depths of my subconscious and decided to keep my thoughts to myself. Chris followed my lead. I stayed calm as a deeper decision developed in my head. I chose to make my own prognosis, with or without the support of the medical community. I desired to step beyond the boundaries of what was accepted as truth about cancer recovery. I realized this first step formed the foundation of my new beginning. I dreamed of the possibilities for a better way to heal and in a much more restorative, comforting environment with positive and openly caring medical support...

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Since the diagnosis of cancer 10 years ago, I have seen this dream unfolding as a new model and customer oriented health care. It is a movement towards an integrative and whole-person approach to healing that includes both alternative, sometimes called complementary, and traditional practices. However, there are other changes occurring that go beyond the holistic approach. In support for better patient care, the new health care model expands to make adjustments in attitude, environment and coordination. However, I extend it further to include more and radical changes in the mindset, patient-physician relationships and governance of health care. My dream transformed into a vision to spread health and hope to everyone. I am doing this through my everyday contact with anyone and by giving business to those health care entities that embrace the changes. I didn't just experience an awakening from my own encounter with cancer but also in the long-term relationship with the medical providers caring for me. Ten years ago I felt lost, unguided and exposed to more unhealthy conditions. I wanted to know how to avoid health problems and risks but felt like my concerns were ignored. As I experience from a patient's set of eyes, aspects of a new health care model are explored throughout the story. Simple WISDOMS used ages ago by doctors help me to show how to spread health and hope in a new and ever changing time.

My quest began, thankfully, by discovering those professionals or institutions that have stepped outside the boundaries of traditional Western medicine to include non-conventional options, like Cancer Treatment Centers of America and Deepak Chopra's Center for Well Being. I use the term alternative to reference anything that is not considered mainstream or standard in the conventional treatment protocols used by medical providers. Some practices have embraced a few alternative modalities but don't address the entire equation of mind, body and spirit in the healing process. Such practices employ qualified and licensed doctors, psychiatrists, nurses, and psychologists; and those gifted to provide spiritual and emotional guidance as chaplains, ministers and volunteer healers. There is a holistic nursing community that has embraced some alternative healing techniques, which are increasingly offered to their patients.

Unfortunately alternative methods are often not explored until the critical juncture, after the standard conventions failed. They are being offered nonetheless. With these out-of-the-box thinkers and risk-takers, the public is today more aware of the possibilities that non-traditional health care options provide to them. The door stays open for those who believe that there is a better way.

Although the new model bears hope for the future, there are still many barriers to change. New therapies, technologies, medicines, procedures and research on mind-body are constantly coming to light. Yet, there are still not enough therapists and doctors with the in-depth knowledge, training and/or certification to effectively bring this healing to the mass market. Advances are certainly less seen in the local doctor's office. The proactive patient is left with no choice but to take matters in his own hands, or through hearsay, find an alternative medical practitioner. Unfortunately, problems can worsen or new ones emerge because of the untrained or misinformed use of complementary treatments and the lack of coordination between practitioners with their treatments. The growth of the caring business increases as the population becomes larger and ages. This causes stress and low morale among the professionals with the increase of demand and shortage of the trained.

Other barriers are the institutions like the FDA, federal and state governments and health care organizations that help balance and protect society from wrongful intent or the ineffectiveness of some health care solutions. An imbalance can occur through over-governance, which in turn can delay cost and life-saving solutions. They need research and experimentation before releasing solutions to the public. There is not enough testing with alternative options, even though there is much done on the conventional methods. Sometimes alternatives are in medical research but stifled because it's different or the methods are in the early stages of thinking. Many people in the past have sacrificed and incurred much suffering due to lack of knowledge or long delays in releasing solutions. An example is the pain incurred in surgery for generations before anesthesia could be used in the U.S. Legs were amputated to avoid nerve pain and spasms in the paralyzed, which is now calmed with prescription drugs. Governing entities and insurance companies rely on the results of research and testing, which doesn't occur often or fast enough.

Another barrier is the politics and profitability around medical solutions evolved from the treatment of symptoms, which began as early as 460 BC. The diagnosis, prognosis of conditions, currently practiced solutions and stagnant way of thinking form what I call the "medicine chest". A box that implies boundaries. The current "medicine chest" and the hopelessness portrayed when there is no cure prevents patients from using things that work and stifles the general population from allowing the body to heal. At the root of the medicine box is fear in so many realms: fear that profits will not occur, fear that someone won't heal, fear of being unsuccessful, fear of being sued, fear of being wrong. I finally gave fear a name, *The Fearful One*. With the villainous *Fearful One* in the way, we lose sight of the humanitarian vision of caring for those suffering in health. We have lost flexibility in this area to hope and think big with creativity. These two things are needed to break down the barriers for better and more accessible health care options. All of this is my diagnosis of the health care industry.

As the journey unfolds in my story, the appearance of the new model reveals health and hope encountered through a patient's eye and perspective. The first glimpse at better health and care is *having more choices available*, alternative or conventional, experimental, proven or unproven *within an enhanced environment*

*to heal using a new attitude in the patient/provider relationship based on a new way to hope.*

Unless the health care system changes dramatically, ailing people will continue to live in pain and even die-when a new approach could save them from this fate. It is an unjustifiable suffering. What if the real message from the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic prophets' was that the better "hoped for" life is not when we die, but really when we advance to a pure loving interaction? This would be an advancement that requires thinking and responding differently on a solid foundation of faith and trust. Grabbing this new attitude coupled with the reminded goal to end pain and suffering in health just may boost the morale within the health care community and advance us forward. There are other areas in life that advanced humanity by walking through a new window of thought; such as in the search for freedom, the saving of the planet and even in the quest to help people in suffering. We must *hope* for the change and for something better, with a sense of urgency.

If we heal the broken hope found in the majority of sickness and medical practices, reach for the best and all work together, a new health care model for the 21st century can happen faster and hopefully with no negative impact. What do I lose by HOPING THIS HIGHEST THOUGHT? Nothing lost. How would I know for sure that this hope can or can't be achieved? Is it unrealistic to hope for better health care that can heal me faster and from things that are claimed incurable? Not when my expectations are just to have something better.

I return back to the story 10 years ago in 1992 before the integrative health movement took hold. A time when herbs weren't available in supermarkets and drug stores, institutions didn't ask for their patients' healing needs, new drugs were only a thought and when Eastern methods of healing were largely taboo in the southeastern United States...

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My dream of a better way to heal became disrupted by the ringing of words spoken bluntly by an oncologist that I met only twice. Doctors were the wiser was the tradition, and I looked to him for guidance. The road to recovery looked long and disheartening because there were no answers. There was so little support for alternative options. I felt completely alone in my opinion, but pressed on to embrace the change as a means to get control of an uncontrollable situation. By default, I reached to my business skills in communication, team approach and analysis in hope to create a cooperative medical TEAM and to FIND the reasons for cancer. It made sense to use the good business rules in the healing environment. *To do so, would I be shunned as a crazy person?*

After the first oncologist explained the standard medical treatment path, I sought the expertise of a second oncologist, Dr. Gleen. He was a young single man, tall and sturdy like the pictures of Greek gods. He didn't act with a god-like attitude, though. He too was unconvinced of my belief in the promise of non-traditional medicine to heal cancer, but he was open to the possibilities.

Left with no other educated choices, I was off to receive chemotherapy at the "IV filling station" located in Nashville's Saint Thomas hospital. The room hosted color TVs with my favorite soap operas in an

attempt to transport me from the reality of what was happening to my body. The truth of the experience was a row of vinyl loungers within a large cold room painted white and gray. I CREATED A REAL HEALING PLACE at home when I was alone and talked to God. Like my faith in God, I envisioned a complete trust in a different brand of healing.

I PROCEEDED WITH THE DECISION to use conventional medical treatment. I also began natural means of building my body's power to heal itself from cancer and chemotherapy. I read nearly every book available on the immune system and holistic medicine. If I developed a stronger immune system, the authors advised that my body would fight the cancer on its own. I had spent the past three months on antibiotics to fight what was thought to be a bronchial cold. This was a huge sign that my immune system didn't work properly. The chemotherapy was bound to erode it further. The cancer cell type was labeled as lymphocyte deplete, meaning that the immune system already had a problem with producing disease-fighting cells. Why wasn't I informed on how to care for a damaged immune system? It made perfect sense to me to combine the two healing approaches. Books hinted at a root cause for a poor immune system. I ASKED the doctors but they didn't know. There wasn't much known on causes and prevention of poor immunity. I was forced by lack of knowledge to observe my own health situation at a ROOT CAUSE level.

The poor state of my health made me look at the relationship between stress and immunity. I was caught in the high stress and lucrative business of computers and telecommunications. With little time given to my needs, long dedicated hours had gained me much achievement at work. It didn't pay off for my health.

The bronchial dry cough, rashes, weight loss, and night sweats had prolonged for months and didn't slow me down either. This also should have sent me a clue earlier that something was wrong. I was absorbed with other things. The desire for personal achievement and better pay overrode the need to be health-conscious. The diagnosis of a life threatening illness stopped me like a disconnected phone call. Yet, I still tried to get more done, rushing here and there.

I was caught in the frustration of a desire to change but didn't know how. *Was I addicted to adrenaline, the stress drug, or a workaholic? Did stress cause my immune system to diminish? Could the nurse at work, who led the stress reduction workshops, see the stress problem impacting my health?*

Now weeks since the diagnosis, I sat for my first chemotherapy treatment. The IV attached to a port implanted beneath the skin on my left arm. There were hours in this position to think about the learned behavior of stress. I reflected back on how Mom had accompanied me through sterile hospital halls during an onset of diagnostic ordeals, while she negotiated with the suave land developers from Iran during her free time. Mom, a hard worker since her teens and an expert at multi-tasking, had arrived in Nashville for her real estate deals. She grew up in my birth home of the east Tennessee mountains, but Nashville was our stomping ground for most of my life. She was the first woman in the 60's to enter a male world of real estate. She was my female model for high achievement. A life filled with constant churn with four children and her own businesses, I guess I learned a high tolerance for stress and change.

During my reflections, several insights emerged on the affect of long term stress and its culprit. Right away they had informed me of a large tumor but diagnosis couldn't be confirmed. This had landed me quickly into an unsuccessful needle biopsy with a punctured lung as the outcome. Then the weekend in a surgical biopsy left me with a tumor still inside of my chest but uncovered my allergic reactions. The XRAY dyes had formed dark lines and circles on the skin over each kidney and across my arms. It basically burned the body from the inside out. The burnt veins remained evident. This had been my first awareness of sensitivities to drugs and dyes, a sign the immune system was weak. I had taken four instances of different dye tests. Each time, I had incurred high fevers and delirium. My concerns were voiced repeatedly. It was the last CT Scan in the hospital where the doctors and technicians finally accepted that I was sensitive to dyes.

Recuperation from diagnostic procedures at my townhouse in southeast Nashville had kept me pseudo sedated while waiting days for results. Not knowing the diagnosis didn't help my psyche; continuing to work did. My feeling had been that a weekend off for surgery was already too much to ask of myself. A few more days during the week were too much more to ask. I had worked at home, my compromise to taking sick time and a means to still accomplish a pile of work. The quiet time during treatment helped me to realize that my drive to succeed was warped, and must be a ROOT CAUSE to my current stress levels and a poor immune system.

Getting past diagnosis was a big step and led me into weekly rituals of IV's and checkups. The treatments forced me to sleep most the day, but I poured through reading material when awake. By nature, my analytical mind GATHERED as much information as possible about the disease, the body and holistic approaches. My philosophy was that better decisions are made with more information in your hands. So I SEARCHED FOR ANSWERS. I had applied this principle for years in business, so why not in my own health?

I read about statistics for death, reoccurrence and the potential for long-term side effects of chemotherapy. It crossed my mind that too much information might not be a good thing. There was no separation of good or unhelpful facts. An unproductive, I felt, forecast formed by those who believe it or not. Once active in the mind, it wonders on to more negative thinking and fear. *How could prognosis be separated from a right to know about a disease or condition?* Releasing the prognosis from my mind was going to require psychotherapy in itself!

My energy waned with each treatment and my knowledge grew about the disease. I found myself in short depressions, which fell as easy as pulling a heavy dark blanket over my head. A fog covered my eyes. With the physical pain, the mind surfaced the prognosis. Thoughts churned on the negative. I doubted my ability to succeed. The *Fearful One* emerged again to use the statistics to convince me of failure in healing. However, a simple prayer evoked the higher wisdom to overpower the *Fearful One*. *Lord, I choose love, the better way. Fill me with love and grace. Thank you for the healing that I may not see or feel right now.* I didn't stay long in the depression. Of course, the anti-depressants, which the oncologist insisted upon, helped me to not sink deep into a crater. The little red round pills allowed me to have more upbeat times than down. Saved by the doctor and a higher power.

I continued the quest to learn. I read, questioned and analyzed the possible medical reasons behind the cancer and how to heal naturally. There were several influential books that guided me to many answers and more questions. Most significantly Bernie Siegel's books: *Love, Medicine, & Miracles* and *Peace and Love & Healing* brought me awareness of the power of love and will. More paths opened as I pursued the mind over matter and energy techniques described in books such as *Minding the Body and Mending the Mind*, *The Relaxation Response* and Alexander Lowen's *Bioenergetics*. I recalled the positive and inspirational messages that I read as a teenager. The books by Joni Eareckson, a quadriplegic who found peace and joy through a life-altering event, and Norman Vincent Peale gave me faith that something good would come out of the cancer experience. I sensed it would take more than a spiritual healing for my unique soul.

I gathered documentation to start my own case study using alternative means. I tried new things. I controlled variables by changing one thing or another at different stages and observed the changes. The oncologists were right. There was not much information available on alternative methods. I found and used what was on the market or in clinical trials, always with a prayer first for guidance on the choices. Silent words mentioned in my thoughts with eyes wide-open with intent. Done in crowds or even in the middle of a conversation with an individual. *Lord, please direct me to the next thing my body, mind or soul needs.* Many times I said the prayer right at the verge of choosing something new to try.

I ate a daily regimen of raw foods, supplements, juices and herbs. Attendance to healing conferences occurred frequently. I altered my entire lifestyle by using SOLUTIONS FOUND IN MY SEARCH to increase will power, spiritual faith and physical wellness. My oncologist acknowledged my quest as I told him each new experiment. It was unfortunate he didn't have at his fingertips more information on these other ways.

I learned tricks from other cancer patients. In one case, a co-worker recommended taking all 23 free-form amino acids to replenish the body with proteins, which help rebuild the cells and tissue killed by chemotherapy. The proteins worked. My scalp grew back into stubs. The new hair growth remained even as chemotherapy continued. My teeth and nails stayed healthy and strong.

Another patient shared her use of visualization. I turned my lymphocytes, the immune system's disease fighting cells, into the popular video game of PACMAN. I visualized them racing through my body to devour the cancerous cells. I felt like I lived on a cliff, dangerously treading on the loose rocks of my progress. I thought like a scientist and lived on faith not yet solid.

Seven months slipped by quickly as green, black, orange and red drugs pumped into my veins. Each color produced a different effect. Immediately after a chemotherapy session, my body sunk into a deep fatigue. It took every ounce of effort to raise my placid limbs. I felt as if my insides were swimming in a pool of thick metallic paint, tainting everything that I ate. A chemical prescription was all the medical field could offer. I grew weaker and more reliant on God's strength. The spiritual energy somehow still coursed through my system. I was thankful that I already knew how to get spiritual support. I wondered. *What do those who don't know do?*

I spent most days lying on a bed beneath a wide window without curtains. The sunshine soaked through the body to warm my bones, like a heat lamp. Sometimes I rested and prayed there the entire day. Peace felt like invisible arms around me. Prior, I hadn't know the feeling of the miracle of grace. In the midst of pain, quietness with God brought a different kind of joy, a huge burst of happiness in the middle of the chest and abdomen. Time passed more quickly in this golden light of energy. After each occurrence I prayed. *Thank you, God, for your dose of medicine.*

Alternative means to heal came in many different forms. Humor and mind power were key for me to withstand the months of chemotherapy. I mixed laughter and pleasure at every opportunity. I decided to have fun with the whole concept of being hairless, after many years with natural wavy brunette hair that flowed over my breasts. In the large cold treatment room, I humored the nurses with jokes about my hair loss. At first the nurses didn't know how to respond. When I laughed they did too. It broke the ice. It was no big deal, since I had always wanted to be a blonde. I tried auburn and red hair colors too, which added some new excitement to my romantic life with Chris.

Tired of wigs, I formed a preference for hats, which boosted my confidence and gave me a sense of class. I acquired 50 hats over time; white, blue, gray, red, casual and dressy. I had a hat for every business suit. I continued to dress up--even though I was with mostly nurses, doctors and strangers. I let myself believe that I caught the attention of others because of the hats and not from missing hair or walking at a turtle's pace. I sported makeup, using different colors of eye shadow to match my attire. I kept my humor up and a positive attitude through most of it all. I used many positive mind approaches throughout treatment, knowledge gained from the mind over matter and spiritual books. Between hats, makeup, and dressing up my psyche was lifted. I felt good about myself, which gave me a positive attitude.

I formed different work goals to keep my mind active and away from the *Fearful One*. The goals gave me hope and a sense of accomplishment. I wove in work at home in between rest and treatments. I was a perfect candidate to trial the work-at-home concept, with new modem technology available in the early '90s. On good weeks when I felt strong, I invited my staff to work at my home. On occasion, a venture to the office kept my presence alive. I received encouragement from co-workers, regardless of the hidden truth of whether they really believed I would live long in life. Their true emotions masked by a forced smile or in the initial pause to find the right words to say. Regardless, the positive approach elevated my hopefulness. My work hours decreased over the months, but the tasks revived my mind and gave me daily goals.

Within months, a 105-pound physically fit woman gained 30 pounds from steroids, another one of those nasty chemicals used in treatments. The weight addition inspired me to move my body as much as I could. On bad days, I crawled down the flight of steps to retrieve a meal from the "Steak-Out" delivery guy. Sometimes my goal was simply to walk to the mailbox or brush my hair. These had become forms of exercise and were important to maintain some kind of movement in my limbs as I lay for weeks in the bed. On good days, Chris took me to the park for a slow stroll.

I now lived each day as if it were my last, in appreciation of everything. I listened to each word spoken and sniffed every smell, including the unpleasant ones. However, fear emerged deep from my

unconscious: the fear of living a short life. Staying positive, fuzzy thoughts still lurked deep inside of me. *Was this the last time to savor the closeness of friends, family, Chris? Will there be more seasons to see? Is there someone that can help me with these defeating notions?* I want to live a long life.

It was December 1992 with more treatments to go. The weakness and anemia was so intense that I couldn't continue the chemotherapy. Threats of hospital stays and blood transfusions lurked in the horizon. My intuition said to stop the drugs. I did.

Dr. Gleen accepted my decision. He was full of energy but listened to my every word. On each detail, he siphoned information from me. His brain churned before speaking. At each monthly visit, he responded this way. It had actually become a pleasure to see him, sharing his own life events. Pulling his chair close to me, he discussed the next course in treatment. "Radiation was the next step for your stage," he said. "The tumor is smaller, but radiation will need to occur across a large area on your chest. What do you think about doing this?"

I was impressed that he asked my opinion. All through the treatments, Dr. Gleen behaved with the utmost sincerity for my care. He also supported my experimentation with non-standard practices. When I told him about my weekly massages, he had told me to do whatever makes me feel good. He would often rattle off from memory the list of supplements and foods that I ate. His caring attitude was exposed after the first treatment when he called me at home in the evening. He had asked how I was doing. Granted it probably was protocol to do so when giving such strong drugs, but the gesture and interested tone of his voice made me feel important to the world.

Our dialogue always occurred in a casual back and forth manner, building on each other's questions and responses. As we saw each other during the course of many months, our conversations revealed that he was a man of faith. I wasn't afraid to answer him openly. "I prayed about whether to do radiation, and the Lord said to leave it for you to decide. What do *you* think?"

Dr. Gleen delayed a moment, almost as if he first said a silent prayer. "We can try waiting to see if the tumor stays subsided. Let's not do radiation."

This was good news to me. My body couldn't take any more hits. I also knew the long-term effects of radiation poison to any organ in the path of the emitted ray. Heart, lungs, throat, thymus and thyroid glands would be at risk. The night sweats subsided, the six-year chronic back pain diminished and the cough stopped. My spirits lifted with a feeling of accomplishment. As another month ticked away, I felt renewed strength. My short-term hopes were fulfilled: immediate fixes and a quick passage of time.

The past nine months seemed to have flown swiftly. Into the time where seeds from the past spring were sprouting green needles beneath dead piles of tree foliage. It felt like just yesterday when the seedlings had fallen. Graced daily by love from God and others, the expedient passing of time was also a gift to me. Answers that I needed had come from God. I learned that the answers aren't always what are expected. At the onset, I had hoped for a quick passage of time. I had formed expectations around this as a shorter

duration of time to treat cancer. Whereas, what I really received was a *feeling* that time passed quickly. This was a greater blessing than expected, because the time included joy, found in grace.

Now mid January 1993, one month after receiving my final chemotherapy session, I was assigned a new project and working full-time again. I tried to catch up so that I could be reinstated onto the list of managers ready for acceleration into higher chains of command. My work hours returned to just below my usual norm of a year ago: 10 hours a day, six days a week. The adrenaline high returned with an even sweeter revenge. I quickly regained my habit of running to the fax, to the vending machine, to meetings and to airplanes. I was exhausted and suffered a return of skin rashes. I was still determined to succeed at work and finish every deadline.

Before long, I underwent a gallium scan, a dye test to show whether the body is fighting a disease. The test results revealed a new area of concern in my chest. The *Fearful One* reappeared in February 1993 to confirm suspicions of something deeper, not solved, not cured. *What more could I reach for in the form of hope, when all I had for hope now was faith that I can be cured?* From the beginning, no one promised me a remission. A cure from the medical community was out of the question. *Why hadn't the alternative immune boosters and chemotherapy been enough to rid of this cancer?* I ASKED, SEARCHED and searched some more both on my own and with the doctor to find the solution. I thought I had reached the top of the mountain, seeing all the answers to recovery. For now, I needed to find another hope to pull me through this next event. It seemed that the next best offer of hope was radiation. This was not enough for my expectations as I treaded beyond the false summit.

\* \* \* \*

"Ask and it will be given to you,

seek and you will find;

knock and the door will be opened to you."

Jesus in Matthew 7:7

**Seven Years Later in September 2000**

## Chapter 2

### False Summit

#### Is there One Cure for a Condition?

The air smelled of heated pines as the sun baked against the green needles. The sunlight glared in my eyes as I looked straight up another thousand feet. Chris' voice crackled across the walkie-talkie. "I'm here, but it's a false summit. I'm going on unless you want me to wait." Chris' physique and endurance was that of a mountain lion. His legs of steel lean with fine muscle definition, shown by a walking gait that bounced across the rocky path. Fortunately, he usually slowed his pace to stay with me, but not this time. Our lives evolved around the same forces of adrenaline: my work and his exercise. His choice of daily physical exertion consisted of at least a four-mile run or an eight-mile bicycle ride. He only rested one day a week. He was the epitome of health and rarely experienced illness.

On this day, he desired to reach the top quickly. Nevertheless, throughout the past seven years, Chris and others proved unrelenting in support, despite the many roadblocks in my climb to better health. He was resolute in his belief that I was going to be all right, and that I would soon be back to my fit self. He was the shot of endurance needed to keep climbing the incline to healthiness. This uphill battle is real in all types of illness and injuries. Healing seems slow and sometimes with two steps backward. This happens because recovery is occurring. It takes a lot of energy to heal. Some days I feel great. I think that I have arrived. Then another health hurdle reveals itself to say that your not there yet. I now rest assured that the deep healing is occurring.

Between heavy breaths I cackled back, "Go on, I gotta rest."

"You don't have far," he replied, urging me on. "I can see the next peak. It must be the top."

I decided to rest on the ground against a fallen tree. I massaged my lower back along the sciatic nerve moving down my right leg to my foot. The labored hike up a "fourteener" thrust me into memories of how far I had come in recovering from radiation treatments and other ailments over the past seven years. Every hike, no matter when or where, allowed an opportunity for a snapshot review of my life. I was thankful for the ability to be active in my life.

At 14,433 feet Mount Elbert, near the little town of Leadville, Colorado, is the second highest peak in the contiguous United States. The climb was a challenge that some parts of my body weren't quite ready to accept. Fortunately, I had learned from a seventy-year-old mentor a way to rid of ailments myself, using Therapeutic Touch. The energy massage technique worked like Advil to eliminate the pain. I visualized

the Lord's LOVE coming into the top of my head like a light. Then I traveled it down to each part of my body, replenishing my energy along the way. I focused directly on the injured area and formed a picture of it in a healthy state. The visualization worked every time when I never doubted the healed state. The energy work relieved the pain from my leg. The desire to reach the top of the highest mountain that I have ever attempted overrode any doubt.

With the pain gone, I enjoyed the scenery and the chance to reflect. I had come far in my learnings by asking myself why the one cure approach didn't work. I finally realized that we are humans, constantly driven by egos in response to choices, decisions that are influenced by the interaction with others or from fear. The analogy of garbage applies appropriately to root causes and cures to health problems. Quickly and early in life humans collect a lot of garbage or problems from our own choices or passed on by others. Most times the trash bags can't be thrown out because it's not recognized as garbage. The trash can be different things and melds together as it rots on top of another item, even changing appearance. Sometimes it takes more than one way to learn the same thing. Because so much is interrelated, it takes much to undo much done. With the many human inventions present in the world and the different life interactions, so many things can happen. *With all of this, how could there be one cure for a specific condition?*

Just as the brain absorbs so much in the neuro pathways, so does our bodies and soul absorb through the energy force surrounding the body. Some is good and some is not so good. This means that all of the interrelated aspects, mind, body and spirit must be addressed in healing. God made an intelligent and complex species. No wonder scientists and researchers have yet figured out all of the bodies inter-workings and responses to stimuli. I was destined to learn, sometimes the hard way, just like everyone else.

Curing and preventing the return of cancer in my body was like peeling an onion. Shedding and exposing layers, each an opportunity for a lesson or a problem to be solved. Each experience bringing tears. Then if cooked long enough, a sweet reward of rejuvenated healing occurs. In my own path to recovery I had discovered that there was not one cure-all but a combination of solutions. All had worked together and across time, as I became ready to hear the solution or guided to it. I applied integrated solutions to each problem then, and continue to do so. My philosophy became MODERATION IN EVERYTHING—from food and drink to activities and beliefs. *I talked about this often with Chris. Did he really understand my daily struggle to live in moderation? Did he understand the many layers within myself? It appeared he had no layers to uncover.* I chuckled with a seasoned grin at how Chris plowed ahead of me enthusiastically, as he neared the top. I profoundly experienced in 1993 that just when you think you know it all, something else pops up in the horizon that teaches a new learning in life.

Books not doctors led me to obtain help for any unhealthy mind issues. I had found a psychotherapist that used energy with our talks. This type of mind therapy had become my salvation to find a balance and understand the behaviors that got me into a pattern of poor health. It had taken many sessions to uncover the real culprit to the reoccurrence of cancer, which led to radiation treatments. From an early age, I had programmed myself to think that I needed to accomplish everything by age 31, after which life would then end. To complicate matters, due to various reasons I had released my will to die months prior to the

x-ray showing a grapefruit size tumor. X-rays, which were taken at the time of making a death wish and then again during the cancer diagnosis, proved that the lack of will power accelerates death. The tumor had tripled in size in less than a 3-month timeframe.

My psychotherapist applied a bio-energetic technique to help me become more in tune with my emotions and realize my martyr tendencies. He would press on my acupressure points along the meridians as I spoke of traumatic events or emotions. He had trained me in breathing and physical exercises that allowed energy and breath to return to the parts of the body that had been shut down for many years. For me these areas were the heart and lung, which are tied to the emotions of love, fear and life force. My energy deficiencies caused that area of the body to stop functioning normally, which in turn fueled carcinogens or a virus to latch on and grow.

Carcinogens come from many different sources, but are usually conquered by healthy immune systems. In my case, my immune system had broken down from work stress. Pressure derived from my desire for more, which really was from a deeply rooted desire to be accepted. During the initial ascent of the mountain, I thought about these old perfectionist habits and the accompanying emotions. Ones I still struggle to tame. Since the cancer had returned so soon after chemotherapy, radiation was the only next solution offered by Dr. Gleen. Cobalt radiation seared my chest on a daily dose for a month. However, I combined it with my inner strength and the powers of visualization to kill the cancerous cells.

The real turning point in healing had been the change in my will to live past 31. I began to see the future and myself in a different light. I visualized a 90-year-old lady rocking on the country porch of a white Victorian cottage, with Chris in the rocker beside me.

Through continued work in psychotherapy and energy work, each suppressed and regressed emotion had come forth and was addressed. All along Chris and others had assured me that I wasn't going to die. I finally became free of dying thoughts and my heart had opened up to a new and rewarding level in my relationship with Chris. It was obvious that the mind, emotions and energy levels played a big part in healing at the root of an illness. I had wished for doctors to guide me to the root causes for letting a condition occur in my body. Books had guided me instead.

Recovery at a deeper level where they begin can apply to any condition. There are many gifted healers who can help such as holistic nurses, massage therapists, doctors of holistic medicine. Now at 39 years old, I was free of cancer and proof that I had made the right changes and decisions going forward.

While I continued to rest against the log, I thought of how LOVE is the most important and successful ingredient for every interaction in any circumstance. I recalled the last conversation with Dr. Gleen before we left Nashville for Colorado to a Rocky Mountain home, one that some only dream of when listening to the melodies of John Denver. Dr. Gleen's last question had been on the whereabouts of Chris. For eight years, he had inquired of Chris at every visit that he wasn't there. This and other inquiries from Dr. Gleen showed he understood the importance of LOVE and relationships needed around a person during a traumatic time. I finally asked him why he had always presented that question.

Dr. Gleen had responded hesitantly, "Almost every time a woman gets cancer, the man leaves."

He had been impressed that Chris remained faithfully at my side, even marrying me four years after the diagnosis. Once I had opened my heart through psychotherapy, I established a new hope for marriage. This hope carried me through a number of cancer treatment-induced ailments: first shingles, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, then menopause. I had handled these conditions through a mix of conventional and complementary means, while my marriage pushed me to a deeper love and healing. A realization came to me. *Love is the best medicine. The way to live. The basis for interaction with everyone at any time in any field. How wonderful God has provided so many different ways to show and experience love. In energy medicine. Prayer. A smile. Caring words. Inventions. Medicines. Plants. Animals. The earth. Through people. Chris...*

A couple approaching the bend above interrupted my reminiscing of Chris' love and my progress. The man called out, "Is your husband the guy with slightly long hair and 'bout five foot seven?"

I drew a yes slowly out of my mouth, wondering what might be up.

He replied: "His radio couldn't reach you. He said to tell you that you have only an hour to the top."

I thanked him and left my resting spot, determined to keep going. We started the hike at six in the morning. Chris would have been at the top in less than four hours if not for me. When we separated, he kept the distance close enough between us to talk across the radios, probably with the intent to keep me moving.

Now at 14,000 feet and seven hours into the climb, each breath shortened. My head throbbed in search of oxygen and water. It reminded me of the difficulty I had breathing after a month of daily radiation treatments to a five-inch by five-inch square across the chest. The radiologist said my lungs were forever damaged, and I would always have shortness of breath. I remember thinking, "I'll show them otherwise." I took slow walks every day, which eventually worked up to a two-mile run. Maybe the doctor was playing with my will power, which is risky if I had given in to his power of suggestion. Now I was climbing mountains—big ones. My hopes again realized because the belabored breaths were from the lack of oxygen at the high altitude.

I trudged past the false summit feeling taller from the achievement. I recalled a particular conversation with Dr. Gleen where we discussed the course that would be needed if radiation didn't stop the cancer. He conveyed another recurrence as a growing vengeful tumor, in which I would then require a bone marrow transplant. Just as I avoided blood transfusion during chemotherapy, I stopped my mind from allowing the body to think the worst. Seven years later I was still alive—without the need for blood transfusions or bone marrow transplants. My hair was once again flowing across my chest and darker than before. I was in love and excited about a new job in a new office located at the foot of the Rockies. There were no remnants of cancer, which I felt was due to the preventative measures I had taken over time. Deep down, I knew that a path taken never ends where you think it might end. God knows. I longed

for his guidance to stand out more clearly for those other learnings that I quest to know. My long-range hope was to reach the 10-year milestone without cancer. I had three years to go.

At the top, Chris and I lounged in the spectacular views that stretched farther than we could even see. There was nothing but a blue sky awaiting a white puffy cloud. We hugged each other in the forceful wind exhilarated by the accomplishment of our first fourteener and 52 more to go.

Throughout the following workweek, I took a moment to remember the eventful journey upward, but the stress of work deadlines and preparations for the visit of Chris's family watered down the mountain high. As I found myself working late, my mind drifted while driving home. The road to our house wound right then left into the canyon, sometimes curving at 40-degree angles, reaching a final destination of 7500 feet. As I turned onto the dirt road leading to our house, a deer sprung out in front of my car and dropped to the ground upon impact. I immediately jumped out of the car and extended my arms towards the young shaking animal, with deep heartfelt desire for it to be okay. I felt the same shock as if I would have hit a crawling baby. The deer raised up and cantered to the nearby field. It stopped, turned around and looked back as if to say, "I'm all right." The experience made the stress of my day seem small, and I sensed a need to slow down.

The next day the sun rose with a promise of a clear, bright Sunday, the kind where downtown Denver high rises and outlying suburbs are distinctly visible on the horizon across the valley below our house. We all woke early to busy ourselves with the chores of laying new carpet. Chris had planned to finish by noon, so that we could take his family on a tour of the continental divide, a 30-minute drive west. As we were near completion, Chris decided to take a bike ride.

The canyons where we lived were a cyclist's haven, twisting through gigantic boulders and steep, curving roads. His typical eight-mile route down Lee Hill Road, across Old Stage Coach, up Left Hand Canyon and around the other side of Lee Hill led back to our winding dirt road, a one-hour loop. Chris once told me the ride allowed him to connect to the greater power of God. It was his means to de-stress and sometimes come up with ideas for his music. After he was overdue by more than an hour, I began to worry. I tossed the car keys to Chris's brother Brian, who offered to hunt him down. His arm moved in a confident and calm gesture towards the keys, catching them mid-air.

Just five minutes later he returned with Chris' bike. I stood at the 5x10 window in the living room, looking out over the same view of Denver. Only now, the scenic view was marred by a red and white helicopter with the words "Flight for Life". I felt I could reach out and touch it, as if it was suspended in time. Reality set in when Brian dashed through the door and proclaimed, " Chris is on the way to the hospital. He was in an accident."

Love always protects,  
always trust, always hopes,  
always perseveres. Love never fails  
Love is the most important of them all.

Disciple Paul in Corinthians

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