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How to Deal With a Life-Changing Diagnosis

Articles by Dr. Joseph Mercola | ★★★★★ (4 votes)

August 16, 2022

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- A cancer diagnosis is a devastating blow. Oftentimes, the trauma of the diagnosis is further increased by self-interested people who simply don't know how to respond to the news.
- The common notion that "everything happens for a reason" can be particularly toxic when faced with a life-changing diagnosis.
- When speaking to someone who is suffering, don't try to relate to their suffering by comparing it to something you've experienced. The way we experience suffering is uniquely our own, so bearing stories about situations typically isn't helpful
- Don't offer solutions and treatment strategies unless asked. Don't tell them that suffering is "part of God's plan" or "has some greater purpose. Instead, make yourself available, be present with them and let them express how they feel about their diagnosis

This article was previously published July 18, 2021, but has been updated with new information.

In 2019, 1.9 million Americans are expected to receive a diagnosis of cancer,[1] and it doesn't matter who you are, hearing "you have cancer" is a devastating blow. Oftentimes, the trauma of the diagnosis is further increased by well-intentioned people who simply don't know how to respond to the news.

A July 2019 article[2] in The Atlantic addresses this sensitive issue. Taylor Lorenz tells the story of Kate Rourke, a 30-year-old historian and author of "Blessed," a book that deals with "the origins of the notion that good things happen to good people."

Rourke's cancer diagnosis came like a lightning bolt from a clear blue sky. In 2015, she sought treatment for stomach pain. It turned out to be Stage 4 colon cancer, and she was given less than a year to live.

> *"Many people who receive her diagnosis begin to get their affairs in order and spend their remaining time with family in between treatments.*
>
> *Rourke did all that, but also launched a podcast called 'Everything Happens,' on which she talks with people about what they learned in dark times. She also wrote a book about, and she set about changing the way people view and talk about suffering in America," Lorenz writes.*

Everything Happens for a Reason — Or Does It?

As explained on the website for Rourke's second book, "Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I've Loved," her career as a professor at Duke Divinity School had centered around the study of the prosperity gospel, a creed that sees fortune as a blessing from God and misfortune as a mark of God's disapproval.[3]

Her cancer diagnosis forced her to face her own mortality, and in so doing, made her realize she'd "been tacitly subscribing to the prosperity gospel, living with the conviction that she can control the shape of her life with a range of determination."[4]

Like so many others, she had bought into the idea that illness (or any other form of misfortune) is a sign of personal failure — somehow, you didn't work hard enough or you weren't optimistic enough. Sometimes you disappoint God and this is your punishment.

"What does it mean to die, — a question that insists everything happens for a reason?" Rourke asks. She was happily married, had a young son and a job she enjoyed. In her mind, her future was all planned out.

She intended to earn her Ph.D. and become a tenured professor. Up until the day she was told she had late-stage cancer, her life had followed the script of someone on the fast-track to happiness and fulfillment and she had done everything right.

> *"But Rourke's commitment to the notion that everything happens for a reason went out the door once her diagnosis hit," Lorenz writes. "Now she believes that her illness is simply problematic. She lives in this culture that seems unable to allow people to suffer without trying to explain things to them, she said.*
>
> *It's common for people to tell themselves or others that the beat is yet to come. But promising that idea, Rourke argued, can be cruel to those who might consider their best days far behind them."*

How to Speak to Someone Who Is Suffering

Despite a grim diagnosis, Rourke survived. Today, four years later, her focus has shifted to educating people about how to support people in the midst of their suffering. Her own experiences taught her a lot about this, and many of the things people say turn out to be less than helpful. Lorenz quotes Rourke suggests that when speaking to someone who is suffering:

- **Don't try to relate to their suffering** — While this may sound odd, the way we experience suffering is uniquely our own, so hearing stories about someone else's situation typically isn't helpful. It also shifts the focus away from the patient, making it instead about you.
- **Don't offer solutions and treatment strategies unless asked.**
- **Don't tell them that suffering is "part of God's master plan" or has some greater purpose** — Platitudes are hurtful. Sometimes it's just bad luck. Sometimes, a tragic event may have a happy ending, but it's not guaranteed.
- **Make yourself available and just be present** — Lorenz writes, "Rourke had friends who faded away from her life after her diagnosis because they didn't know how to confront her tragedy. But the type of person that would most helpful when she was at the lowest, she said, was someone who just 'shows up, doesn't ask for anything, and just tests in front of you.'"

Take a Cue From the One Who Is Suffering

Karen Raymakers has also written about what to say when someone you know is diagnosed with cancer. She points out that our reactions are almost always shaped by unconscious expectations, hence the wide variety of reactions to something as devastating as a cancer diagnosis.

> *"They may show unbearable strength you never knew they had, or be more vulnerable than you knew. They might show a number of different emotions — sadness, anger, guilt, fear, ambivalence, avoidance — and sometimes they may show all of once or change from moment to moment," she writes.*[5]

Raymakers suggests taking your cue directly from the person who got the diagnosis. "Now your loved one feels about their diagnosis will help shape your response to it," she says. If they're in a stage where they want to talk about their cancer, try to be present and just listen. If they don't want to talk about it, don't force it.

Whatever you do, though, don't avoid the issue altogether. If someone is in a crisis, it can be tempting to gloss it over and pretend the nothing is wrong. Shirking your friend or family member already knows you care about them and support them no matter what.

> *"The truth is, cancer is the elephant in the room. Its not acknowledge it is almost more hurtful than anything you could ever say," Raymakers writes.*[6]
>
> *"The best advice in this situation is to say how you feel. Are you thinking about them? Then say so. Do you care about them? Then say so. Are you sorry that they are going through this? Then say so. Don't know what to say? Then say that. Here are a few more conversation starters:*
>
> - *I am here if you want to talk.*
> - *I would like to help in any way I can.*
> - *Are you up for having visitors?*
> - *Is there anyone else you would like me to contact?*
> - *This must be a hard thing to go through."*

What Not to Say

Lila Brooks, Raymakers warns against trying to relate to what your friend is going through by comparing it to your own experience. Some cancer patients have people from trying to find the silver lining.

> *"There isn't much of a silver lining to a blood cancer diagnosis, so avoid saying things like, 'It could be worse,' or 'At least it isn't…' For the person with the disease, it could be the worst case scenario," Raymakers says.*[7]

Other darts include making overly pessimistic remarks, or saying things that minimize what your friend is going through. Keep pep talks like "It'll be OK" and "Cheer up" or less distressing and life altering situations. Raymakers adds:

> *"Don't leave if things get tough. If the person gets angry, let them vent. If they tell you they're afraid, open up the conversation so they can unload on you. What are you most afraid of? Tell me. What's on your mind? Here's what I fear…" [If you hit the jackpot on the talking, you don't need to worry about what to say.]*

In her article, Raymakers also delves into "how to handle hospital visits," and here you can help the person suffering through caring and thoughtful actions. Here are a few selections from her listings. For more, see the original article.[8]

- If your loved one is in the hospital, call ahead to make sure they can receive visitors, during what hours and whether certain gifts (such as flowers) might be inappropriate for health reasons.
- Many cancer patients are fatigued and need lots of rest, so keep your visits to a half-hour or less, unless they ask you to stay. Keep in mind many cancer patients have weakened immune function, so do not visit if you're feeling ill.
- Show you care by offering to care for their children or pets, run errands or do household chores for them, or deliver prescribed meals that they require/want. You can also offer to drive them to doctors' appointments, or prepare a "chemo care package" with a few thoughtful things that might bring comfort or entertainment during long treatments.

Optimism Is a Healing Balm

While it would be inappropriate to tell a cancer patient to simply "cheer up" or "think positive," optimism does play an important role in health and healing. In "Optimism and Hope in Chronic Disease: A Systematic Review," published in Frontiers in Psychology (2019), the authors highlight findings showing an optimistic outlook on life in general leads to lower depression levels, improved health and increased longevity. According to the authors of ...

> *"In regards to optimism, Scheier and Carver ... defined it as an overall tendency to believe that vivid expectancies will lead to good results rather than bad ones. Carver et al. explained that to be optimistic is to maintain a generally favorable expectation about the future*
>
> *Hart et al. ... added that overall positive expectancies are considered one of the main determinants for knowing whether people will continue to pursue their life objectives in a condition of chronic disease. ...*
>
> *Hope, defined as "a state of positive motivation based on three components: objectives (goals to be achieved), routes (planning to achieve these goals), and agency (motivation directed toward these objectives)," has similar benefits.*
>
> *Interestingly, evidence suggests that while optimism is protective against short-term stress, optimistic feelings/attitudinal stress may actually be of greater risk of health problems, "as optimists are more immunologically vulnerable under such circumstances." Still, the authors concluded that ...*
>
> *"Although some studies between higher hope/optimism levels and a healthier profile was observed in 21 of the 25 studies, in regard to the results perceived by the study participants after intervention, only two articles found no relationship between the constructs and relevant results. ...*
>
> *Hope and optimism predicted a lower perceived pain a year of survival regardless of other socio-demographic and clinical variables in patients with head and neck cancer and more abilities to manage stressors while less optimistic cancer patients experienced more negative psychological changes. ...*
>
> *The results of the studies presented in this analysis suggest that there is a clear relationship between the constructs of optimism and hope and a reduction in the effects of chronic disease. However, it is important to highlight that the association between optimism or hope and physical health differs depending on the context of the disease and the subjects."*

Managing Emotions When Faced With a Devastating Diagnosis

Stopping optimism in the face of debilitating and/or lethal disease is easier said than done, no doubt. Yet its worth the effort, if not only to protect your mental health and avoid spiraling into despair.

If you've been diagnosed with an illness, be it cancer or something else, you may want to consider the Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) to help you move through any negative emotions that surface to prevent them from becoming permanent companions.

In the video above, EFT practitioner Julie Schiffman demonstrates how to use EFT for the grieving process. When faced with your own tragedy or painful feeling grief is natural. But it can become a hindrance if you don't move through it. EFT may be helpful for that.

Also, check out Brooke's podcast,[9] "Everything Happens." Brooke interviews a wide range of individuals, talking to them about "what they've learned in dark times." Some discussions center around loss and grief, while others tackle living with chronic illness.

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turkishtowelking
Joined On 2/21/2011 5:51:45 AM
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How bout never quit, find an alternative clinic...or don't fear or fight the reaper by laughter...With overwhelming fear/stress, healing becomes impossible...Fear brings that feared

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On: 7/18/2019 5:54:05 AM
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shirleybeecher
Joined On 11/20/2012 3:21:40 AM
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In Kevin Finkelstein - FEAR - Fear is a safety valve that alerts one to danger - without the alert that fear signals we would most probably succumb to danger. However, pathological fear is a chronic stressor to the sympathetic fight or flight complex. this is a short term survival strategy - when fear becomes chronic and long term the organism will break down and allow the dominance of other parasympathetic functions to take over. Fear is a chronic stressor that is very pathological and leads to a state of immune suppression. Fear is not healthy. Fear is not a friend. Fear is not a motivator. Fear is not a good thing. Fear is not a good thing. Fear is not a good thing

That's a great post.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 2:18:35 AM

Like Dislike

kdarden
Joined On 9/4/2009 10:40:25 AM
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I had a great friend whose husband got a brain tumor. At that age (mid-twenties/early thirties) I really didn't know what to say or how to be with them (even though my father had had a major illness a few years earlier that left him a hemiplaegic). Later, after her husband's death, that was something she and I talked about. She said once she let people know, everyone just sort of disappeared. While she understood that we didn't know what to say or how to be, I believe it was more painful for her - and her husband - to go through it alone. I've never forgotten that, and I no longer let it stop me from being with my friends, regardless of their condition. Thanks for sharing this - I'm only sorry I didn't understand at the time.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/19/2022 10:50:09 AM

Like Dislike

Almond
Joined On 2/26/2008 4:23:33 PM
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First of all, everyone is different so take into consideration the temperament of the patient and also the loved one. For example, a grandmother may be able to speak in a different way than a spouse or sibling. I have also discovered that survivors relate on a different level that is generally optimistic. What I find is appropriate in many situations are the simplest words. "I am so sorry to hear that... this must be very difficult for you." That is, empathy. Not only, "I am here for you", but also think of helpful and uplifting things to do because the cancer patient (esp. with an advanced cancer diagnosis) may be too overwhelmed, confused or preoccupied with medical visits to ask for help. So, be observant. Maybe the person feels weak and would like to see a sick bed window washed sparkling clean, garden weeded, walk dog, etc.

One thing I hated was all the church ladies who meant well and were determined that I should eat. All they could think of was to offer to show up with coffee and cookies and preach to me. Knowing that up front, none ever crossed the threshold. Respect their decisions. This has been esp. difficult for me when I see people who tell me, "My doctor knows best" and I know I am watching them die because they are afraid to try anything different. It is hard to zip your lips although you can gently express an honest opinion if asked. Remember Socrates and what happens to people who offer unwanted advice.

The family of one friend with advanced lung cancer (a lifetime smoker) told me the one thing he always looked forward to was the one flower from my garden that I would bring every time I visited. They asked me to bring flowers for the funeral because they meant so much more than what comes from the florist. As for what to talk about--pretty much the same things you always talked about before. Let the patient bring up medical stuff if they wish. Remember to treat them like the living person they are and not think of them as already dead.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 1:24:46 AM

Like Dislike

Almond
Joined On 2/26/2008 4:23:33 PM
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It is very important for a cancer patient to feel like they are in control of their life and not out-of-control. Some righteous thinking and practical advice... Always ask before you bring food. Often, the person is on a special diet or does not have a normal appetite. I find the best hours to show up are after lunch in early afternoon. Always call ahead and ask if it would be a good time. A person does not need store bought gizmos and a room full of flowers. It is difficult to maintain a home florist shop. <=Sometimes, there are infection risks or odors can be bothersome. Definitely avoid bringing boxes of candy--they often go to nurses who struggle enough to maintain their weight. Just some common sense. There is no terminal disease that someone, somewhere, has not survived and overcome. If there are always survivors, there is no reason you cannot be one of them.

The people who have survived large tumors and invasive cancers and those who remain cancer-free after 20 years can serve as mentors. Diseases can be reversed over time with persistence, strict adherence, making the right decisions and taking action at the right times. Only God forgives, nature never. Read everything you can get your hands on. Talk to survivors.

Verify everything you are told from the bottom foundation on up when it comes to research and protocol. Use a medical dictionary if you must. Except for learning a few new words, most people can understand a research study. Find a quiet place and quiet time. Listen to your inner voice and intuition. I have seen and heard about some crazy protocols over the years that patients believed in and followed with amazingly good results. There is wisdom in your soul if you do not block it out. Return to nature. Ultimately, nature is the only thing that heals. A brilliant doctor will do what he can to support the healing process, but when he has done all he can, he prays that nature will heal.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 1:39:06 AM

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turkthagoras
Joined On 5/30/2011 6:47:27 PM
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Almond..............Thanks.......... Having spent the entirety of my life, (70) in "rescue mode", I understand your paragraph completel "This has been esp. difficult for me when I see people who tell me, "My doctor knows best" and I know I am watching them die because they are afraid to try anything different. It is hard to zip your lips although you can gently express an honest opinion if asked. Remember Socrates and what happens to people who offer unwanted advice. " However, STM "hard to zip your lips" is a bit of an understatement. Unfortunately, for many, they never ASK. Thanks again.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 9:37:34 AM

Like Dislike

BicycleBoy
Joined On 6/26/2007 12:32:23 AM
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Good advice. And it is difficult not to comment when the individual is praising the doctor who has run out of remedies and has started kemo.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 8:21:37 AM

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davidle
Joined On 5/7/2011 7:38:57 AM
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My brother-in-law died of stage four cancer several months ago. One morning I was sitting beside his bed and he turned to me and said,"I want to talk about dying." I had a chance to share the good news of the gospel with him.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 9:07:20 AM

Like Dislike

plastictekkie
Joined On 12/28/2008 5:01:57 AM
Add as Friend | Send Message

Thank you Almond. You give such good advice!

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 8:33:32 PM

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Barbara Charis
Joined On 3/8/2007 9:13:41 AM
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In 1976 two doctors told me that they would give me no guarantees, if I did not have the tumor surgically removed. I was not too trusting in doctors (because I knew most doctors knew little about nutrition)..so I left the office of the second doctor saying that I was going home to pray.. i am into prayer...and I did as I said. In less than 3 days a book came into my hands on raw fruit and vegetables. I felt this was the answer. In 2-1/2 months the tumor was gone. I was a vegetarian, but had gone previously to a nutritional doctor who had told me to eat lots of dairy, because I was going to be nursing a baby shortly. I totally eliminated the dairy and stayed with raw fruit and vegetables only. 12 years later (1988) a bulbous tumor with spikes manifested on my chest...I looked closely at my diet...and discovered I was going through a 5 pound can of honey every 3 weeks in my daily 10 cups of herb tea...so I stopped the honey; went raw fruit and vegetables; and 2-1/2 months later...no tumor.

Have not had another problem in the last 31 years. I learned nothing grows without a fuel...I removed the fuel...and both tumors dissolved. along with sticking to raw food. I tried to help my husband with my information, but he was so into his expensive Beverly Hills doctor; he got upset with me, when I made a comment on the HFCS in Ensure that the doctor handed him. He said that I insulted his doctor by asking about the ingredients in the Ensure. His tumor took off like gangbusters when he started drinking lots of Ensure. He died 3 months later. My daughters had been carefully feeding him a better diet than his previous personal diet. They brought the tumor marker down through diet. There is a Universal Law...The Law of Cause and Effect. Nothing happens without a Cause. Doctors can't follow a patient around 23/7...so do your own detective work and find the Cause. 95% of the time it's nutritional, but people must be aware of their environment too.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 7:18:56 PM

Like Dislike

Almond
Joined On 2/26/2008 4:23:33 PM
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What do you take when visiting a cancer patient? Less is often more. As I mentioned, a single special flower from your garden or a wildflower. A friend loved violets, so I picked her a small bouquet. Put it in a disposable container so she need not fuss. If it only lives one day, it has served it's purpose and can be disposed of. Ask first if it is ok to bring flowers. For my father-in-law, I brought him a cozy blankie. He loved it and was never without it. Without good mitochondrial function, people can be cold. If you know the person's diet, bring fresh food from your garden, such as a basket of berries.

Help decorate for the holidays and ALSO take down decorations. Don't overdo it. Address cards, wrap gifts, shop. We hung a bird feeder on the branch of a tree outside my mother-in-laws hospital window. A ride to medical appointments. Being sick or on medication can make driving difficult. It is also nice to have companionship and support. Homemade cards from children--and adults. I sometimes glue pressed, dried flowers to make a bouquet. There are many programs to design your own personalized computer cards, too. It is not that difficult to just design your own, either.

For readers, a current magazine on their favorite topic. Birds, cars, gardening, pets. Who does not smile to see kittens and puppies? Best to avoid fashion magazines with all their body image problems. For children, a handheld pinball game. A visit from a therapy animal or pet. (Ask for guidelines such as bathing the pet first or the risk of cat scratches.) A story book and someone to read it to them. Old-fashioned nursery rhyme books with short stories. For post-mastectomy, get a lovely package from KNITTED KNOCKERS! You will need to know bra sizes and color preferences. These kind-hearted ladies are amazing. They wrap beautifully and send personal notes of encouragement with daily wear and/or swim prostheses. Their service is free, but you will want to donate. Please do!

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 2:22:33 AM

Like Dislike

Almond
Joined On 2/26/2008 4:23:33 PM
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My comments may not be in continuous order as I had difficulty loading them. One of the most important things you can do for a hospitalized patient is be at their side. You do not need to say anything. Maybe just squeeze their hand and sit in a chair for hours so they do not feel so alone and abandoned. be there in case they want of need anything. Just tell them, "I am going to be here with you for 2 hours while my husband runs errands. We love you."

Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 2:25:16 AM

Like Dislike

mettalaw
Joined On 2/10/2014 1:57:28 AM
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Thank you for writing this, Dr. M. That maddening saying, "Everything happens for a reason," drives me crazy. It's just another version of "blame the patient", which describes the initial chapter in the story of every new illness. The saying can be true only if the speaker also subscribes to "Everything is math" and "Chemistry is a subset of math" and "Your thoughts are chemistry." Yup, in that case, everything does happen for "a reason"--to wit, the laws of the physical universe. Some comfort.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 2:22:57 AM

Like Dislike

juststeve
Joined On 1/5/2012 11:13:54 AM
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May I echo your sentiment? I have met a multitude of people, everyday people, hardworking, family oriented, some church going some not, knocked flat on their backside out of the blue as this applies to so many life situations beyond a cancer or health diagnosis. It is crushing to be present in the company of those who main expression of shock is I don't understand, I did everything right. The loss of health, loved ones, jobs, pensions, spouse, a marriage, a home or farm and so on. Especially in the last "greatest recession since the Great Depression." Not a thing to do with being stupid or lazy or the other maddening phrase - All You Have to Do is, fill in the blank. Also I have witnessed some of the most arrogant, ignorant, belligerent, selfish skunks seem to skate through life untouched.) However one would suspect those kinds of temperaments are tortured souls who are obsessed with some notion of winning, always being right but internally actually fearful & disconnected with a vague sense of their reality is full of sunshine friends.

End of Life & those who are tired of life and scared of dying is more difficult in modern culture as so many are led to believe in pursuing a lifestyle of I, Me, Mine mini-kingdoms filled with material goods separated from the family, extended family & tribe once found all over the world, because in the smaller human scale society's support each other in good times & bad times. The Individual can not reach their full potential without the community, the community can not reach its full potential without Individuals who have reached theirs. The mystery's of Life & Death are just that, a mystery and most likely never to be understood completely. We can only hope at best to experience them fully.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 5:53:36 AM

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stanleybecker
Joined On 11/12/2012 3:21:48 AM
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steve - you offer "community" as the strategy for "helping with life's load" - I have a problem with this word - everything that Dr Mercdola's articles rail against is the failure of the community in relationship to the society - Corporates are "community" and government is community - the police are community - all the acronymically derived alphabet agencies are community - the military is community - this is beginning to sound unrealistic - corruption is the death of COMMUNITY

Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 2:23:03 PM

Like Dislike

juststeve
Joined On 1/5/2012 11:13:54 AM
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Hey Stan, I'm not deaf & I'm not ignoring you. There's a short window here to engage in dialogue here, if at all some days. There are end of life issues being dealt with here, along with a bigger crush than usual to prepare for winter due to the bizarre weather. Community. There is text, context & subtext. The use of community in the text of the post was hoped to be seen in the context in simpler times & places. Community, society, or government if you will, are all in similar territory. Organized, coordinated, cooperative behavior in groups of people.

The hope was the subtext would be seen as community, society, or government does not have to be necessarily evil, although obviously open to such. Like so many things, it all depends on who is in control of them - or if there is any ability to control them. This site has a community with many perspectives coming from different backgrounds and experiences. Whether we agree 100% with each other is less important than understanding one another as to achieve common ground to move forward hopefully in a positive way.

Our bodies with the many different cells & functions are a community until dis-ease - corruption sets in. All the entities you listed & of course many more as we can see have been infected from a long lingering corruption probably dating back before the that first known terrible written phrase refering to war - "and we washed the blood from our weapons in the sea." Probably perfected in ancient Rome and their willful consumption of lead. Without corruption none of these entities are evil in & of themselves, they are tools also having a potential to be used in positive ways. It would seem the original sin is corruption. It infects individuals all the way to the largest organizations. How do we address corruption? How do we recognize it in ourselves so as not to infect others? Is it even possible if we truly face the global destruction we as human's & our misuse of those tools have created.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/19/2019 5:06:30 AM

Like Dislike

warriormom
Joined On 10/2/2008 3:08:00 PM
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A few years back I had a close friend who was diagnosed with breast cancer out of the blue. She was the healthiest person I knew! Instead of focusing on why, she took on surgery and chemo, eventually reconstruction like a dog on a pant leg determined to conquer cancer and become even healthier. She did and it's been 15 years now. I took my clues for behavior from her and what she needed most from me was humor! We laughed when I drove her to appointments at the cancer center an hour away, we laughed when she shaved her head and she tried on wigs, we laughed when she knitted a cap that resembled Cleopatra (in purple yarn) to wear to keep her head warm. Her pain was real and I soothed with homemade soup. Keeping a sense of humor and keeping things light even when it was really rough is what I remember helped my friend through this challenging chapter in her life. She taught me that.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 7:29:40 AM

Like Dislike

dividingcricker
Joined On 2/25/2012 10:40:20 AM
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Medical Terrorism.......believing some doctor will be the death of you ......search for yourself......remember they get paid weather they fix ya or kill ya ......Fight every step of the way .....never give up ....

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 11:05:32 AM

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Docathelake
Joined On 6/19/2006 3:23:29 PM
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You must first find out what they want to do to handle the situation, some share their experience so you can share in their grief and some like me share my experience so I might learn how to heal myself. When in doubt ask and if they have no words then just hug them or sit quietly until they do...

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 8:53:00 AM

Like Dislike

czd5979
Joined On 7/16/2016 1:11:41 PM
Add as Friend | Send Message

Although I never use the expression "everything happens for a reason" I do believe it is true. Even if the cause of cancer is not bluntly obvious, there is always some underlying insult that triggered it. In my opinion, the best way to help is to brainstorm with the patient and search for attributes. Maybe it's the mold after an old forgotten leak, leaking gas stove, or year's long sleep deprivation. Or maybe it's the chemicals stored in the garage. It may be any work related risk factor. The worst thing to do is to sit there by the patient side and do nothing. Be the tree that they can lean on, be helpful, proactive, supportive and smart. At least that's what I would want from people around me, not pity and reflexive empathy with distraught faces.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 1:24:51 PM

Like Dislike

quinine
Joined On 6/16/2010 8:32:29 AM
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I have helped twice now with people who received cancer diagnosis. I have found that even for other crisis and problems in life that a few questions and following through on what you say you will do are very important. I ask what do you need me to do? I ask what can I do right now and what will do you think you will need down the road? I tell them I am going to be there for you and "We will get through this".

I couldn't be there in person to help for my friends second round of Chemo after she made it 3 years from her initial chemo for pancreatic cancer. I am there for her on the phone. When she calls, I drop everything and we talk and tell funny stories about our animals. That is what she wants to talk about. She got very cold all the time during her first round of Chemo so I crocheted her a nice throw blanket in warm colors and sent it to her. Just talked to her yesterday while she was getting chemo. She probably isn't going to make it another 2 years and we know that but we don't dwell on it. She is still LIVING and still doing stuff and enjoying life and her friends. The other friend with cancer is clear of cancer right now but in recovery from a heart valve replacement. She is getting better but still pretty frail. I am so glad I never smoked. Both of them smoked for over 40 years.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 9:36:58 AM

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spookybear
Joined On 6/20/2006 2:31:11 AM
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I wanted someone to change and wash my bed sheets when they asked what could they do to help, and 2 people volunteered, regularly. Breast cancer; got the diagnosis, Stage 3b triple negative, Nov 2021, 9 months later, July 2022, cancer free. I'm 77yo, during the diagnosis and treatment, I didn't think about the cancer, didn't acknowledge it, didn't dwell on it, didn't dread it, didn't worry. It was another thing I had to take care of, like feeding my dog, vacuuming, etc, no big deal. It was just another thing I had to take care of.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 3:38:58 AM

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sophie124
Joined On 1/8/2010 1:30:22 PM
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Lovely suggestions from all. Important to be long-term for the person. People tend to flock at the beginning of an illness & then move on & away. Same scenario with a death. Friends/family call or visit for a week or so.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 2:07:03 AM

Like Dislike

Schalk
Joined On 4/11/2011 1:55:15 PM
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This book should be of particular interest to the Medical profession, as they are "at the coal face" when dealing with tragedy. So often they completely ignore the support base (family and friends) of the patient and just deal with the patient. A phone call, email or even a pamphlet to the family with a reference to this book can change the prognosis dramatically. Congratulations, Dr Mercola. You are doing what the entire medical profession disregards completely

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 7:50:00 PM

Like Dislike

kdarden
Joined On 9/4/2009 10:40:25 AM
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Actually I do believe everything happens for a reason. My job is to discover how it serves me. It may be that there is an important lesson for me to learn - even if that lesson is only that I need to take better care of myself. It may be that in my discovery phase I learn that my diet, my attitude, my environment, or some other aspect is a causal factor. I'm not saying that there is no randomness, there certainly is. That does not diminish my active involvement in understanding how best to cope or learn from what is happening. Even in those rare cases where there is nothing I can actively do to change the circumstances or the outcome.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/19/2022 11:06:34 AM

Like Dislike

lisedm
Joined On 6/25/2021 12:13:03 PM
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Hi! The part of "how to speak to someone who is suffering" appears to have worked for her but imagine if the people around James Templeton followed her suggestions. He would more likely be dead today. He had stage 4 skin cancer and wrote the book "I Used To Have Cancer." He speaks about the people who "knocked on his door" and brought him books to learn from on how to heal his cancer. He eventually learned HOW to heal himself by reading those books and much more. His foundation is www.templetonwellness.com Thank you! Lise from Maine (former licensed clinician)

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/19/2022 9:25:25 AM

Like Dislike

chedho
Joined On 10/9/2011 8:33:17 PM
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I've never known what to say to someone with a life-changing diagnosis. This article is incredibly useful, and helps me immensely! Thanks for writing it, Dr Mercola!

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 9:39:33 AM

Like Dislike

gmcft
Joined On 1/9/2009 7:11:54 PM
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"We all die it's just a question of when" John Russell

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 8:42:54 AM

Like Dislike

Barbara Charis
Joined On 3/8/2007 9:13:41 AM
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Years ago, I learned from much wiser folks...not to take doctor's words seriously, when they state you only have a short time to live. They have no right to say this to anyone. It is in the hands of a far Greaer Physician. In 1976 two doctors told me that my rapidly growing tumor required immediate surgery or I would be given no guarantees. I remembered what others had told me in the past...and I did not panic. I told the second doctor that I needed to go home and pray. He told me not to pray too long. Well, I did as I said I would and an answer came. Two and a half months later I went back to the second doctor to show him the tumor was gone.

He did not ask me one question. He simply stated it was a case of spontaneous remission. If he had been one bit interested in learning...I would have told him about the answer I received. It was to eliminate the CAUSE. Nothing happens without a CAUSE. A few months before my baby was to be born, I had gone to a Nutritional doctor who told me to steep up on dairy as i was intending to nurse my baby. I Had been doing great up to this point in my pregnncy. After following his advice for several months...this rapidly growing tumor occurred.

By simply removing the tumor's fuel...the tumor shrunk and disappeared. It taught me...nothing grows without fuel. Remove the fuel...and it will disappear. I experienced tumor growth a second time in 1988, when i developed a nasty looking tumor with spikes coming out of it;

above my breast. I checked the foods I was eating...and noted I was going through a lot of honey...putting it in my herb teas. I stopped the honey...and in less than three months this second tumor disappeared I never had a problem since. .

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 6:52:12 AM

Like Dislike

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bar8027

Joined On 5/1/2016 6:22:48 PM

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Speaking as a hospice nurse, everyone should read this book.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 6:51:18 AM

Like Dislike

CocoaCat

Joined On 7/18/2019 2:59:20 AM

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"If there are always survivors, there is no reason you cannot be one of them. The people who have survived large tumors and invasive cancers and those who remain cancer-free after 20 years can serve as mentors. Diseases can be reversed over time with persistence, strict adherence, making the right decisions and taking action at the right times. Only God forgives, nature never. " I agree wholeheartedly with Almond above. Go to healyourself101 Markus Rothkranz (His work is supported by Dr. Michael Greger MD) It's not just diet, but your attitude, early to bed, exercise, colon cleansing, everything. That's how the body works, homeostasis. Everything in balance. And when it works, everything is better than before you began your regimen. I've healed many things this way. P.S Dr. Christopher is a wealth of info. on herbs. You'll see. God bless.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 3:09:15 AM

Like Dislike

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skupe59

Joined On 5/2/2009 7:28:21 AM

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Greger is all about vegan eating. You can do Keto for Cancer too, which is what I would continue to do if I had to. I'd also check out TruthAbout Cancer.com before I'd even go to a doctor. I don't trust US cancer docs at all as most of it is cut, burn and poison psychology.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 5:44:04 AM

Like Dislike

Barbara05

Joined On 8/17/2012 12:06:06 PM

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Whether or not you want to hear it, everything does happen for a reason. God is in control of all things. Nothing is an accident. If you want to have a deeper understanding of that open an excellent version of the Bible and read it. No, not just read it, study it. And as you draw near to God , He will draw nearer to you and will answer your questions as He sees fit. We will never know everything until we are with Him. The Prosperity Gospel is a false gospel and will only confuse you. Do not expect to walk into a church as a nonbeliever or as a lukewarm believer and scream some questions at God and expect Him to answer them. It just doesn't work that way.

Reply | Mark as Spam | Posted On 7/18/2019 9:43:52 AM

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spookybear

Joined On 6/20/2006 2:31:11 AM

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Barbar, I have these friends, a married couple, who think they are doing God a favor because once a week they go to church and hear the pastor tell a story or two, then they go back to their reality, he calls his bookie, and she takes more pills. I have to giggle. I love the Old Testament, the creation, who begat who and what they did that would eventually be three religions. A book I read, Beloved World, is a story form of the Old Testament.

Mark as Spam | Posted On 8/18/2022 4:14:52 AM

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