TIPS TO RENEW OUR MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

FOOT REFLEXOLOGY

LEGAL MATTERS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR STAGE IV

CHERI HAWKINS

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EDITOR’S LETTER

Mindful Joy

DEAR FRIENDS,

In this issue, Molly MacDonald brings up a vital concept; mindfulness. Mindfulness carries over into all aspects of our life, not just financial decisions. Making a conscious choice to receive the many blessings of today is a gift that only we can give to ourselves.

We can also be mindful to bring more laughter and joy into our life every day. Laughter is great medicine, even in turbulent times. It lifts us from darkness and ignites hope once again.

The contributors for this issue have delivered some critical information for healing and thriving. There are a couple of common threads that run throughout each article and story in this issue; perhaps you will find more than these two; we are not helpless and each article provides offerings of self-empowerment that cost little or no money.

This issue includes some easy and effective tips for reflexology, being vulnerable, being mindful, legal matters, advice on getting healing and restorative sleep, managing our emotions, living in the present moment of today and choosing happiness and recalibrating terms of beauty after 37 surgeries are all worthy messages. We hope you will take time to enjoy the organic tea recipes as you read this issue.

Also, here are some bits of news and updates:

BCW is growing. Sharon Henifin is joining the BCW Team as assistant editor and Lindsey Bennett is our new team assistant. We are also adding two new sections to the magazine beginning this summer; For the Newly Diagnosed and More for Stage IV. Lori Lober and Heather Jose will lead the development of the stage IV focus. They have over 30 combined years of thriving beyond stage IV breast cancer.

In 2018, we will offer two Thrivers Cruises. In 2019, we will return to the Caribbean and we are also adding a voyage that will include Rome, Italy. Dates and destinations will be announced soon.

On a personal note, in the fall, I have two books coming out. Inspirations for Breast Cancer Survivors and For Breast Cancer Survivors, 101 Ways to Help Your Doctor Help You. It is my prayer they will make a difference in some way. Also my husband’s book will be completed this year, Help From the Other Side; What Your Chills and Goosebumps Are Telling You.

This is YOUR journey and one journey does not fit all. Be a Thriver! Live it up as much as you can on your terms, in your style and as Bernie Siegel M.D. says, “doing what makes you happy!”

LOOK AT EVERYTHING AS THOUGH YOU WERE SEEING IT EITHER FOR THE FIRST OR LAST TIME. THEN YOUR TIME ON EARTH WILL BE FILLED WITH GLORY. — BETTY SMITH

Publisher and 24 Year Breast Cancer Thriver
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n my early twenties, I found a breast lump. I was terrified. I remember sitting in the waiting area of the women’s health department. It was decorated like a fancy living room, but the examination room was small, sterile, fluorescent-lit, and grim. I was lucky. The doctor was kind, and the test results came back negative.

Even though that was decades ago, I never forgot the experience or the fear I felt. It’s one of the reasons why I’m so passionate to share Chinese reflexology with you. This ancient healing art gave me the power to support my health and healing needs.

WHAT IS CHINESE REFLEXOLOGY?

In a nutshell, it’s foot massage combined with the healing principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine. A cornerstone of Chinese Medicine is the concept of qi or life force energy. This energy flows through meridians in your body much like how blood flows through the blood vessels.

When qi is flowing smoothly and abundantly, your body is healthy and in balance. But if the flow of qi is disrupted, this can manifest into physical problems. That’s because qi is the energy that powers the body’s systems—everything from blood and lymph circulation to breathing air and digesting food.
Energy meridians run through your feet, so you can strengthen and balance your qi by massaging reflexology points on the feet. Different points correspond to different areas of the body. And when a point is sensitive, it means that there is an energy imbalance in its corresponding body part.

From a Chinese Medicine perspective, cancer is the result of longstanding energy blocks. When qi isn’t flowing smoothly, toxins can accumulate and this can lead to abnormal growths in the body. In order to restore health and vitality, it’s essential to clear these blocks and get your qi flowing.

Here are three powerful points to improve the flow of qi through the breasts and chest region.

1. CHINESE REFLEXOLOGY BREAST POINT

This reflexology area is a rectangle that extends about halfway down the top of the foot. The breast point on the left foot corresponds to the left breast, and the right foot is for the right breast.

To massage this area, make a fist and use your knuckles to rub in an up and down motion—toward and away from the toes. Use a firm, but gentle pressure so as not to bruise your foot or irritate the skin. Massage each foot for 30 to 60 seconds.

2. CHINESE REFLEXOLOGY LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE POINT

Your lymphatic system filters toxins and waste, and supports the immune system. The lymphatic drainage point corresponds to the lymph nodes in the breasts and armpits. This point is located in the webbing between the big and second toes, starting at the tip of the webbing and continuing until the point of the “V” formed where the bones of the toes meet.

Use your index finger knuckle to press into the webbing at the base of the toes, and stroke away from the toes until you reach the point of the “V”. Then place your knuckle back at the base of the toes and repeat the stroke. It is important to massage downward only (as marked by the arrow in the diagram), because this follows the flow of lymph in the body. Do 15 to 30 strokes per foot, taking care not to irritate the skin or cause bruising by pressing too hard.

Caution: If you’re pregnant, do not practice Chinese reflexology. If you have a heart condition or compromised immune system, please ask your doctor whether it’s safe for you to practice reflexology.
3. ACUPRESSURE POINT: PERICARDIUM 6

When you’re feeling stressed or fearful, Pericardium 6 is a powerful point to calm the mind. It’s used in acupuncture to treat insomnia, anxiety, and depression. And because the Pericardium meridian runs through the chest and abdomen, this acupressure point is also used to treat chest pain, nausea, and vomiting.

To locate the point, hold your left palm up so that it’s facing you. Pericardium 6 is three finger-widths below the wrist crease between the two tendons of your forearm. Use your thumb to press and hold on the point for 30 to 60 seconds per arm.

TO IMPROVE THE FLOW OF QI

PRACTICE TWICE A WEEK

- **Breast point**: 30 to 60 seconds per foot
- **Lymphatic drainage**: 15 to 30 downward strokes per foot
- **Pericardium 6**: 30 to 60 seconds per arm

It’s important to not over-massage these points because bringing your body back into balance is about taking a balanced approach to healing. For holistic healing, it’s also beneficial to massage more than just a few points, and to release negative emotions held inside your body because they affect the flow of qi.

Discover how to restore balance in your body with my book, Sole Guidance: Ancient Secrets of Chinese Reflexology to Heal the Body, Mind, Heart, and Spirit. It’s a fun and easy way to learn how to practice Chinese reflexology at home.

**HOLLY TSE**

Holly Tse is a holistic healer, teacher, and internationally bestselling author who has been practicing Chinese reflexology since 2004. After astonishingly healing herself from three major health crises, Holly discovered that she could help people heal their bodies and follow their passions. Holly is the founder of ChineseFootReflexology.com, the premier online resource on Chinese reflexology with readers from over 200 countries worldwide.
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A study published by Oxford University in 2013 concluded that a 4-week, 10-session online mindfulness course reduced anxiety by 58%, depression by 57% and stress by 40%. Additionally mindfulness makes us more joyful, improves our memory and sporting performances, increases concentration and even helps one sleep. As breast cancer survivors who struggle with memory issues and sleep, practicing mindfulness is a no brainer and it won’t cost us a dime.

If you have not heard or not practiced mindfulness, let’s begin with the definition.

Wikipedia describes mindfulness as “the intentional, accepting and non-judgmental focus of one’s attention on the emotions, thoughts and sensations occurring in the present moment.” It is the mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present situation. And it is all done without judgment, helping us to be more accepting of our thoughts, feelings and actions.

As the queen of multi-tasking, being mindful for me is a real challenge. I am the one in the morning, while brushing my teeth, I also perform 40 high knee leg lifts and while warming up my coffee in the microwave, I use the 138 seconds to lift five pound weights.

Mindfulness is being taught to our children in school, in health care settings and even in addiction recovery to lose weight, and for our purposes in this column to control our spending impulses.

As I have said before, so much of the way we use our financial resources is to satisfy something we believe is lacking in our lives. It is critical to know we will never ever be able to fill the void in our lives left by low self-esteem or lack of love by spending. Spending money is a temporary and ultimately poor solution to what really ails us, which is lack of self-love and the belief that we are worthy and are enough.

After we lost all our money and our lifestyle, I constantly worried about money, about how I was going to pay the rent, feed and clothe my children, until I put into practice a daily mantra, “I have everything I need for today. Tomorrow will take care of itself.” I am enough. I have enough, I do not need material possessions to prove myself worth.

For me this came directly from Biblical scripture. I chose to trust what God says.

It is really quite simple, but like all things worth having, it takes practice, which becomes habit and eventually will free us from being held captive by our inner critique.
HERE ARE A FEW FREE, BUT VALUABLE TOOLS:

- **20-minute abundance meditation** called “Feel Joy and Inspiration. Start with 10 minutes a day and use an app. www.insighttimer.com/claireobeid/guided-meditations/abundance-meditation-feel-joy-and-inspiration
- **Take a few breaths before eating**, practicing gratitude for your food.
- **Turn your phone off before a meeting**, so you are fully present.
- **At red lights, don’t check your phone.** Instead look around and take in a deep breath, observing what is in your sight.

While you begin your practice of mindfulness, here are a few more tools in the form of simple but profound questions to help when you are tempted to spend:

- **Do I absolutely need this NOW?** Can this purchase wait until I have saved specifically for this item?
- **Can I afford it without putting it on my credit card** and still be able to cover all my basic monthly expenses?
- **Will this purchase spark joy** for the long term? In a week or month will it no longer bring me joy?
- **Will making this purchase move me closer to my financial goals**, like paying off a credit card, or saving three months of income?
- **Can I live without this?**

These questions are a good start. It can be handy to make a copy and keep in your purse to ask yourself each time if your desired purchase is something that really benefits your life.

Practicing mindfulness so it becomes a habit, like brushing your teeth, is not easy. But this practice, just like you is enough and worth it.

**MOLLY MACDONALD**

Molly MacDonald is an 11 year breast cancer survivor. Diagnosed at a time of job transition and without an income to support life’s most basic expenses, she faced losing her second home to foreclosure, and her car to repossession. When family and friends stopped delivering pans of lasagna in every form imaginable, she found herself standing in line at the local food bank to feed her family. In a place where she was devoid of joy, MacDonald discovered what she now believes is her life purpose. She was to start an organization to help breast cancer survivors unable to work and without an income while undergoing treatment for breast cancer, pay some of their basic non-medical bills. These days, joy comes to MacDonald every single month when she has the privilege of signing her name to tens of thousands of dollars of checks paid to patient’s creditors for housing, transportation, utilities and insurance. To date The Pink Fund has paid out close to $1.9 million in bill payments. To learn more about her work, get or give help, visit, The Pink Fund.org.
When dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis there are many different decisions to make, things that need to be dealt with, and information to learn. Trying to juggle it all can be incredibly overwhelming. Our goal at Triage Cancer is to provide quality information about all types of cancer survivorship issues. Armed with that information, survivors and caregivers can better decide what needs to be handled first and what can wait until later — the very definition of triage. Here are a few tips to help you navigate some of the health insurance and employment issues that can arise after a diagnosis.

Investigate Your Health Insurance Options

Having and keeping health insurance after a cancer diagnosis is critical. You may still need access to follow up cancer care and treatments for long term side effects. Even if you have insurance, comparing your options might lead you to better or less expensive coverage. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) gives people who have had cancer several additional options when it comes to health insurance.

As of January 1, 2014, you have the right to purchase individual health insurance even if you have a pre-existing medical condition, such as breast cancer.

If you get coverage through your employer, the insurance company cannot impose a pre-existing condition exclusion period.

Under the ACA, your state may have added a new way to get Medicaid, if your household income is at or below 138% of the federal poverty level. Visit www.triagecancer.org/medicaid-expansion to check if your state has expanded its Medicaid program.

The ACA also created the State Health Insurance Marketplaces as a new place to find, compare, and buy private health insurance policies.
For more information about the Marketplaces, Medicaid, and other health insurance options that might be available to you, visit www.cancerfinances.org.

COMPARE YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS

Whether you are uninsured, have an individual insurance policy, or coverage from your employer, it is worthwhile to compare your options for health insurance coverage. You may find that some options offer better coverage for lower costs.

There are three things that you want to compare when reviewing your health insurance options: 1) costs; 2) are your providers covered by the plan; and 3) are your prescriptions drugs included on the list of covered drugs.

When comparing prices for different plans, do the math. You don’t want to just look at the cost of the monthly premium. You also want to look at how much the annual deductible is and what the out-of-pocket maximum is on each plan. The out-of-pocket maximum is the most that you will pay out-of-pocket each year for your medical expenses. When you are comparing the maximum annual cost of plans, you multiply the monthly premium times 12, and add that amount to the out-of-pocket maximum amount.

For more information about choosing a health insurance policy, watch our webinar at www.triagecancer.org/choosinginsurance.

KNOW YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE RIGHTS

It is important that you understand your health insurance rights so that you can make educated choices, meet deadlines, and not miss out on opportunities. For example, insurance companies can no longer set lifetime or annual limits on essential health benefits in your policy and they cannot cancel your policy unless they can show that you committed fraud or intentionally lied on your application.

In addition, if an insurance company denies coverage for your medical care, you have the right to complete an internal and external appeals process. In some states, you may have the right to a second medical opinion paid for by your insurance company or to have your insurance company pay for infertility treatments or cover the routine costs of participating in a clinical trial. For more information about your state health insurance protections, contact your state insurance agency.

For more information about health insurance, visit www.triagecancer.org/healthinsurance.

KNOW YOUR EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

You are not required to disclose information about your health to an employer or potential employer. However, if you want to access protections under federal and state fair employment laws (as an employee or a job applicant), then disclosure of some health information may be required. This does not necessarily mean that you have to share your actual diagnosis. For more information about your employment rights, visit www.triagecancer.org/employment.

YOU MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS AT WORK

Individuals who have completed cancer treatment, may continue to experience side effects that qualify them for protections and benefits under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or a state fair employment law. Under the ADA, an employee with a disability may be entitled to reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are changes in an employee’s work environment or position, so that the employee can “enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are enjoyed by its other similarly situated employees without disabilities.” Reasonable accommodations can include leave time, job restructuring, telecommuting, additional rest breaks, or changes in the physical work environment.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN), is a government resource that can help you figure out if there are reasonable accommodations that would work for you in your workplace and with the reasonable accommodation process. (www.askjan.org)

YOU MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE TIME OFF WORK

Even after your cancer treatment is completed, you may still experience side effects from treatment or have follow up medical appointments. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), if you have worked for the same employer for a total of 12 months (and during those 12 months worked more than 1,250 hours), and your employer has more than 50 employees (within a 75 mile radius of your work site), you may be eligible to take up to 12 weeks off work. FMLA leave can be used intermittently, meaning that you can take one day off or one week off at a time, for a total of 12 weeks within a twelve month period.

To learn more about any of these topics, please consider joining us for our free monthly webinars. The schedule and registration are available at www.triagecancer.org/webinars. Additionally, we are hosting three Triage Cancer Conferences this year:

• Saturday, May 20 – Oklahoma City, OK
• Saturday, June 10 – Madison, WI
• Saturday, September 23 – Morgantown, WV

These free conferences are open to patients, survivors, caregivers, advocates, and health care professionals: www.triagecancer.org/conferences.

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MONICA FAWZY BRYANT

Monica Fawzy Bryant is a cancer rights attorney, speaker, and author, dedicated to improving access to and availability of quality information on cancer survivorship issues. Monica is the co-founder and Chief Operating Officer for Triage Cancer, a national nonprofit organization connecting people to cancer survivorship information through a national Speakers Bureau, educational events, and online tools.
Everyone knows that sleep and rest are important to good health, but what you may not know is that when you sleep has a profound effect on your health, especially when it comes to your breast health.

Over 5,000 years ago, the traditional system of medicine known as Ayurveda which is still practiced extensively in India and parts of Asia today, described the importance of going to bed by 10:00 p.m. and getting up before 6 a.m. Recent research has confirmed that sleeping during these approximate times does indeed appear to be optimal for your health. And if you routinely violate this “natural law” of the ideal hours for sleep, there can be harmful consequences.

A study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute in 2001 found that nurses who worked the night shift had a 50% increased risk of breast cancer. The longer they worked the night shift, the higher their risk of breast cancer became. The reason is simple. It has to do with the daily normal fluctuations of several hormones, in particular the hormone melatonin. Melatonin is best known as our “sleep” hormone, however it is also extremely powerful at protecting against and fighting breast cancer but only if you go to bed at the proper times and make the room you
are sleeping in as dark as possible by turning out all the lights and pulling the shades.

Scientists have discovered that when it gets dark the pineal gland in our brain produces more melatonin. As this hormone rises, you start to feel sleepy. The moment you fall asleep the level of melatonin goes much higher.

But here’s the catch: Melatonin doesn’t rise very high unless you’ve gone to bed at the proper time and the room you are in is very dark. The darker it is, the higher your melatonin will rise. Any type of light, even a soft night light can keep your melatonin levels from rising very high. Researchers think the strong association between light and melatonin production may be a major explanation as to why breast cancer is more common in industrialized regions where city lights burn all night and why blind women have a 50% lower incidence of breast cancer compared to women who can see.

By following this simple bedtime advice, you will receive the full health benefits, which are profound, of a spike in melatonin that naturally occurs between midnight and 1:00 a.m.

There are several major attributes of melatonin that explain why it so protective against breast cancer.

- Melatonin is a very potent antioxidant. Antioxidants destroy oxygen free radicals that can damage your cells and DNA, damage that can lead to cancer.
- Melatonin slows down the production of estrogen. Estrogen stimulates breast cells causing cell division to speed up. The faster cells divide, the higher the risk of cancer.
- Melatonin prevents the over-production of estrogen, and blocks its stimulatory effects on breast cells.
- Melatonin depresses the effects of two other breast-health threats, a hormone called "prolactin" and a growth factor called "epidermal growth factor" both of which also increase cell division in the breast.
- Melatonin enhances the tumor-fighting power of Vitamin D by making it 20-100 times stronger.

If you have been diagnosed with breast cancer, going to bed early in a dark room is particularly important. Breast cancer tumors in experimental animals exposed to constant light grow seven times faster. If your doctor has recommended that you be treated with chemotherapy, you may want to seriously consider taking supplemental melatonin. Researchers have documented that it can enhance the effectiveness of chemotherapy by increasing the drug’s ability to kill tumors.

In a 1999 study from Italy, researchers found that breast cancer patients treated with chemotherapy lived longer if they were also given supplemental melatonin. In scientific terms, these patients had an increased “one year survival.” That means more women than normally expected were alive at one year following the diagnosis and treatment of their breast cancer. Melatonin supplements given in addition to chemotherapy also cause the size of tumors in women to significantly decrease compared to women just receiving chemotherapy alone.

Melatonin can also provide protection from many of the harmful side effects of chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is commonly toxic to several components in the blood platelets, which have an important role in blood clotting, are particularly vulnerable. Chemotherapy usually reduces the number of
platelets in the blood, thereby increasing the risk of bleeding problems. Melatonin protects the platelets and keeps their numbers up. Researchers found that when melatonin was given to patients on chemotherapy, the number of platelets in their blood remained normal. These patients also had fewer toxic side effects from the drugs, including less damage to their nervous systems and hearts, and fewer mouth ulcers.

All of melatonin's diverse breast cancer fighting skills can be summed up into 3 major effects:

1. It helps prevent the initiation of breast cancer
2. It helps to slow down tumor growth by as much as 70%
3. It helps to prevent metastasis or the spread of tumors to other areas of the body.

The bottom line is that melatonin is a powerful weapon against breast cancer. All you have to do is simply go to bed by 10:00 p.m., pull down the shades, turn off all the lights and begin sleeping well.

Ayurvedic tips for a good night's sleep:
1. Eat three nutritious meals a day. The evening meal should be light and early.
2. Exercise regularly, preferably early in the morning. If you exercise in the late evening, it may keep you up.
3. Go to bed by 10:00 p.m.
4. Eliminate or severely restrict stimulants such as caffeine and alcohol.
5. Wear comfortable clothing to bed.
6. Avoid hot spicy foods at dinner.
7. Do not bring work-related material into the bedroom and turn off the TV.
8. Keep your bedroom dark. If you can’t get it completely dark, wear a comfortable eye mask. It can also be helpful to have your room be quiet and cool.
9. A gentle massage of your hands, feet, and neck before bed can aid relaxation.

Stress can definitely interfere with your sleep. So practicing an effective stress reducing technique such as Transcendental Meditation, Qi Gong, or yoga can be very beneficial. For example, a study of 69 men and women over 60 who had sleep problems were divided into three groups: The first group participated in an hour of yoga practices six days a week; the second group took an Ayurvedic herbal tonic and the third made no change to their routine. The groups were then followed for six months. Overall, those in the yoga group experienced the best improvement in sleep.

Relaxation is the key. Doing something as simple as taking long deep easy breaths, and letting your mind and body settle down when you first go to bed can do wonders.

Here are a few more slumber suggestions:

1. Avoid alcohol. Alcohol interferes with melatonin levels. It may help you fall asleep, but it can also cause you to wake up in the middle of the night.
2. Listen to soothing music in bed. According to a 2005 study conducted by Marion Good Ph.D., R.N. at Case Western Reserve University, listening to soothing music for 45 minutes in bed improved subjects sleep quality by an average of 35% over three weeks.
3. Take a warm bath in the evening. Several studies show that a warm bath one or two hours before going to bed can help you to fall asleep. For instance, a 1999 study published in the European Journal of Applied Physiology found that a ten minute evening bath helps the elderly to sleep better.
4. Avoid EMFs (Electromagnetic Fields). EMFs can disrupt the flow of melatonin. You can significantly reduce the amount of EMFs in your bedroom by shutting off your cell phone, Wifi, and any other electrical devices in or near the room where you sleep. Also, use a battery operated alarm clock instead of an electrically powered clock radio.
5. Create a bedroom that is soothing. Feng shui experts say that you should paint your bedroom in warm flesh tones, tan, gold or chocolate colors to create a nurturing, peaceful ambiance.

Avoid bright colors as they are stimulating, especially yellow. Studies show that bright yellow increases feelings of irritation and aggression. Keep your bedroom neat and free of clutter. Clutter is also known to increase agitation.

There are a number of supplements that can help your slumber, particularly melatonin and 5-HTP, the minerals calcium and magnesium, vitamin B12, and the amino acids taurine: and L-tryptophan.

There are also quite a few herbs that have a relaxing effect and can help to gently lure you to the land of ZZZs. You might try one of the following: Valarian, passion flower, hops, Kava kava, skullcap, lemon balm and Chamomile tea are just a few that have been proven by research to be soothing.

If you have trouble sleeping, consider these gentle, natural approaches presented above rather than using pharmaceutical medications which can disrupt the full medicine available in sleep. Always use herbs and supplements appropriately and in moderation. You may also want to create a ritual that is most relaxing for you, one that best prepares you to ease into this extraordinarily powerful, health-promoting, sublime activity.

You may discover that soothing music, warm baths with lavender and chamomile, gentle massages, perhaps reading an uplifting book or hearing the calming voice of a book on tape or simply being in quiet meditation or prayer consistently and magically lulls you to sleep. Find what works for you. Make it a nightly ritual or habit so that your mind/body will learn to anticipate this glorious restorative state and will quickly and effortlessly drop into its pool of healing tranquility.
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SIPPING CHOCOLATE

DARK CHOCOLATE + ORANGE

1 cup whole milk
1 tablespoon Rishi Masala Chai Loose Leaf Tea
1/2 tsp honey
1/2 tsp orange zest
2 oz dark chocolate, chopped

WHITE CHOCOLATE + CHILI

1 cup whole milk
1 tablespoon Rishi Masala Chai Loose Leaf Tea
1/2 tsp maple syrup
Dash +/- chili powder
2 oz white chocolate, chopped

Heat milk in a small saucepan over medium-low for 5 minutes; do not let milk boil. Add remaining ingredients, stirring with a whisk until the chocolate has melted. Continue to heat for 10 minutes while stirring occasionally. Strain & discard solids. Divide into 2 cups; serve with pretzel rods & whipped cream.

Rishi Test Kitchen Recipes

TURMERIC PUNCH

2 ounces Turmeric Ginger Chai Concentrate
2 ounces watermelon juice
2 ounces apple juice
2 ounces pear nectar

Stir ingredients in a 16 oz glass filled with ice.

TURMERIC CHAI CHIA

2 ounces coconut water-soaked chia seeds*
2 ounces Turmeric Ginger Chai Concentrate, chilled
2 ounces apricot nectar, chilled
2 ounces coconut water, chilled

Combine all ingredients.

*TCombine 10 oz. coconut water and 1 Tbsp chia seeds in a 16 oz. mason jar. Shake vigorously to combine. Store in refrigerator overnight. Shake well before reserving 2 oz. for this preparation; store remaining in refrigerator for future use.
TROPICAL TURMERIC SMOOTHIE

3 ounces Turmeric Ginger Chai Concentrate, chilled
1 small (1 cup) frozen banana
4 ounces unsweetened coconut milk
2-3 small ice cubes

Blend until smooth.

COCOA MINT HOT CHOCOLATE

1 tablespoon Cocoa Mint Herbal Tea
1 cup milk
2 tbsp unsweetened organic cocoa powder
1/4 tsp natural vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
1-2 tbsp sugar

Combine 1 tablespoon Cocoa Mint Herbal Tea and 1 cup milk to a small saucepan. Heat to a simmer for 5-10 minutes. Do not let milk boil. Stir in 2 tablespoons unsweetened organic cocoa powder, 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract, and pinch of salt. Add 1-2 tablespoons sugar (to taste). When sugar has dissolved, strain into serving mug. Garnish with whipped cream and dusting of cocoa powder.

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What I noticed from this was that it seemed uncomfortable for her, and yet for me, it was a beautiful thing to help someone at this deep level of intimacy. Why, then, do we consider being vulnerable a weakness?

For as long as I can remember, “vulnerability” was a dirty word. Most feared in the dating world, certainly a wrong move in the workplace, and way too scary in intimacy, we’ve grown comfortable behind our self-built walls. But how do you have intimacy without vulnerability? I believe that being vulnerable opens us up to receiving, and one cannot exist without the other.

Giving this more thought, I realized that when I see this openness in others it’s heartwarming, almost endearing, and a much deeper connection is made. But if I myself feel exposed, I’m suddenly uncomfortable and I become unwilling to receive support from others. There is a disconnect that happens when we live from this place of fear.

The more aware I become, the more I recognize different moments in my life where I have chosen to go it alone, not daring to appear weak. But to what gain? The only thing I come away with is a void that carries over into all aspects of my life. Now don’t get me wrong, achieving and accomplishing things on your own can be very rewarding and at times something to be proud of, but I have found that living so disconnected is no longer acceptable for me.

It’s taken me some time to come to the conclusion that being vulnerable and open to receiving isn’t going to kill me. In fact, I’m becoming much more willing to put myself in this position. The more I do it, the better it feels.

And so, ladies, I encourage you to try this: let your guard down. Remove your armor, put down your shields, and wave your white flag. Surrender to experiencing a deeper level of connection to yourself and those around you. Trust me, it’s worthy of the risk.

—Jan Ping

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TIPS TO BRING BALANCE AND PEACE INTO YOUR LIFE
Fresh air, sunshine and walking barefoot on grass, dirt and sand

Walking barefoot especially in nature has many health benefits. Besides giving us a natural mini foot reflexology treatment, it strengthens our ankles and calves. Walking barefoot helps clear our thoughts, and it grounds us so that chaos and needless clutter doesn’t take up unnecessary space in our mind. Fresh air is invigorating and sunshine replenishes our vitamin D levels and lifts our spirits.

To maintain a positive attitude or if you suffer from depression or overwhelm, take a few minutes to walk barefoot in your yard or nearby park. If you live near a beach, enjoy a short walk with some sand in between your toes. Both a short jaunt with girlfriends to giggle with or a solo stroll to clear your mind provide opportunity to clear ourselves of negative energy and to refresh your soul.

Laughter is good for the soul and the body

Add belly laughs to your daily life. Laughter benefits us psychologically but also physically. Laughter boosts our immune system, circulatory system and releases healthy endorphins.

Laughter brings us relief, even if it is relief for the moment. It can shift our perspective if we let it, and helps release built up stress.

Be the instigator of healthy laughter, not laughter that makes fun in unkind ways of yourself or another, but laughter that lifts and changes the mood of a room to a lighter energy.

Norman Cousins used ten minutes of belly laughter to relieve pain from his chronic illness. He used laughter not only for pain relief but to help heal his illness. His book, Anatomy of an Illness has become a classic.

Deeper breathing

Many breast cancer survivors are shallow breathers, and perhaps are not even aware of it. Getting ample oxygen to our cells is vital for our overall health and healing needs. The many benefits of deep breathing include support for the lymphatic system, help to eliminate toxins from the body, healthy cell rejuvenation, and increased energy levels. Deep breathing also aids in deeper and healthier sleep.

One deep breathing exercise begins by breathing through the nose and holding for a count of ten (about ten seconds) and exhaling through the mouth in a swift whooshing sound.

Consciously do this practice and increase your hold time if you can up to twenty counts and exhaling to a swift count of ten. Each time, breathe as deeply as you can to expand your lungs.

This helps release feelings of stress, overwhelm and helplessness and brings our focus back to the present moment.

Balance stance

Trauma can knock us out of balance not only emotionally, spiritually and physically, but oftentimes also creates massive invasive disruption to our normal everyday life.

Try this simple balance position to help restore balance back to your state of being. It is best done barefoot and on non slippery floors. Stand on one foot for as long as you can. It’s okay if at first you feel wobbly. Now close your eyes and change feet. If you feel like you are losing your balance as you switch feet with your eyes closed, don’t be alarmed or frustrated. Stand on the other foot for 30 seconds or as long as you can with your eyes closed. First on one foot for a minimum of 30 seconds, then the another foot for a minimum of 30 seconds.

It doesn’t matter which foot you begin with. What does matter is to keep practicing this balancing position a few times throughout the day and in 10 to 15 days, you will have helped strengthen your vestibular system which helps to heal one’s balance on a core level. This is a simple activity to do every day throughout one’s life.
Fuel and refresh

Eat some whole vegetables and fruits every day. Whenever possible, choose organic. Drink the purest and freshest water available to you. The quality of our input does impact the quality of our being.

Do your homework about supplements and herbs. There are both highly valuable information about nutritional ingredients as well as low quality without proven results being taunted. Find trusted brands and continue to read labels.

Take time to enjoy your food and please resist, resist, resist processed and fast foods for the sake of your body’s healing needs.

Be the observer

We can learn a lot about ourselves by observing others. Whether it’s at the airport, a shopping mall, at work or on social media, actions and words give glimpses into what is really going on with our emotional triggers and unhealed pain.

Pretend you have a perfect seat perched high above you with full vision of what you thinking, saying and doing. Pay attention without judgment of the times you witness joy, happiness, and laughter. Give some attention of when you are being critical of yourself or of others, when you lash out at others, or when you feel defeated or overwhelmed before you even begin a project or when you see these qualities in others.

Remembering you are not judging or justifying, you are merely watching and taking notes. This gives each of us the higher viewpoint for ourselves so that we can adjust any behaviors or actions in our life that are presenting themselves for review and modification.

When we see behaviors in others that catch our attention, we can ask ourselves, “do I do that?” This observation can help each of us to see when we can add more joy, happiness and laughter, or whatever quality of life we want more of, even through troubled times.

Know your coping mechanisms

Do you know what your coping go-to tool is when you are frustrated, angry, upset, confused or lost? For my husband, he spends time in nature or goes fishing. Both of these always refreshes him and you can actually see the relief on his face when he walks through the day.

For me, I pray and meditate, and take time for silence. But one day I recognized that I also pace when I am looking for answers. Oddly, this back and forth pacing shakes off the confusion and anxiety and the search engine of my mind goes to work seeking a resolution to the situation.

One of my coping tools is to phone a friend, someone I trust and who has similar values. Sometimes I vent for the purpose of sorting everything out looking for the best answer.

One of my favorite coping tools is to sleep on it. As I close my eyes, I pray for clarity and answers.

Shopping therapy, alcohol or sugar are not exactly healthy vices to cope or to make a new empowered decision. Become mindful of what your coping go-to tool is so when life throws you a curve, you can step back, adjust and come from a place of empowerment verses knee-jerk responses and make the best decision for your well-being.

Life is a balance of holding on and letting go.

Practice forgiveness

You practice forgiveness for two reasons:

“To let others know that you no longer wish to be in a state of hostility with them and to free yourself from the self-defeating energy of resentment.” — Wayne Dyer

Send love in some form to those you feel have wronged you and notice how much better you feel. — Wayne Dyer
Know your Priorities

If someone were to ask what are your top five priorities since being diagnosed with breast cancer, would you being able to easily name them? The important things in our life get shifted after diagnosis to what is really truly important to us.

When we are clear what our priorities in life are, it makes all decisions much easier. If it isn’t on the list of priorities, we can choose not to try to fit any new invitation into our already busy life.

As an example, if a woman’s new priorities after diagnosis are to fully focus on her healing needs, her family, and her spiritual or religious life, then taking on more responsibilities doesn’t make the cut and we can give ourselves permission to say no when we mean no. An appropriate response can be as simple as “Thank you for thinking of me for this opportunity, but my priorities for the next several months are my health and my family; perhaps next time.”

People are most apt to accept our boundaries when we ourselves respect and honor our own boundaries.

Life is all about balance. You don't always need to be getting stuff done. Sometimes it's perfectly okay, and absolutely necessary, to shut down, kick back and do nothing. — Lori Deschene

Who's your tribe?

A sense of belonging is a universal need for the human spirit. Yet after diagnosis, many of us do not feel that our family and friends understand our pain or know what to say or how to say it. Let’s face it, it’s new territory for them too. But having someone who understands what we are going through is more than comforting, it can be life saving.

It is okay to give ourselves permission to spend less time with people who are controlling, negative or unhealthy and to seek new relationships that understand, encourage, inspire and uplift us.

We have different tribes for different needs, and some of our mutually rewarding relationships are both our family and our friends. After diagnosis, it is not uncommon but actually healthy for breast cancer survivors to add new people to our existing circles or to add new circles of friends and support to our life. The size of our tribe doesn’t matter as long as we know it is a healthy tribe in attitude and support.

There are thousands and thousands of breast cancer survivors in the world. Remember what you are seeking is also seeking you.

Flex your joy muscle every day

Trauma can quickly rob us of our joy if we are not mindful of this possibility. Joy is not usually our prevalent energy when anything life shattering occurs. Trauma and shock can weaken or destroy our joy muscle. But this raises the question how can we be joyful and is it even healthy to consider joy when facing the possibility of death? For someone to jump with joy when diagnosed with breast cancer might be more than concerning. But the energy of joy is our birthright and can help us when facing the life depleting energy of breast cancer. Finding ways to be more joyful can feel like fl exing a muscle that has gone dormant after tragedy, loss, sorrow and trauma.

Sometimes we have forgotten what make us joyful, and there is no time like the present to do something that brings you some joy. Doing just one thing daily that brings you joy works like priming the pump on a well, once you get the joy activated on some level, the easier it becomes to experience joy every day, and to experience joy without guilt.

Dr. Bernie Siegel learned from cancer patients that we live longer and have a higher quality of life when we habitually do things that bring us joy and happiness. Joy and happiness are healing tools that can be used lavishly to help bring balance into our lives.
One important thing to remember is you’re still the same person during it.

You’re stripped down to near zero.

But it seems that most people come out at the other end feeling more like themselves than ever before, I’m eager more than ever to do what I did.

"I want to do everything."

— Kylie Minogue
In 2013 I was diagnosed with lupus. It took me two years to get my lupus somewhat under control through trying different medicines. Although I still have flare ups from time to time I was finally starting to feel a little more normal again when I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

In May of 2015 I went to my family doctor because I felt a lump and was having some nipple discharge with crusting. My doctor was unable to feel any lumps and could not produce any discharge. He ended up giving me a script for a mammogram but due to some other unexpected family medical issues I was dealing with, I ended up putting it to the side for the time being feeling like it was no big deal because the doctor didn't seem concerned.

About six months later, in October of 2015 I went to my plastic surgeon for a consult for a breast reduction. I mentioned the lump and the discharge and he too couldn't feel anything. He told me all was well and he'd see me at my reduction surgery. Something was nagging at me though and I finally decided to have the mammogram done. On October 16, 2015 I went to our local breast care center for my routine mammogram. They proceeded to tell me they wanted to do a sonogram which then lead to a biopsy. I pretty much knew that day but received the official diagnosis on October 21, 2015. I was diagnosed stage 2A IDC, DCIS, ER/PR-, HER2 +++, Paget's Disease, lymph node involvement with lymph evasion. I had a bilateral mastectomy with reconstruction, four rounds of AC, six rounds of Taxol, six rounds of Taxotere, four rounds of Herceptin and Perjeta plus one full year of Herceptin. I declined radiation therapy because of the lupus and mixed connective tissue disease.

My family is a huge component of my ongoing healing process. I also surround myself with breast cancer friends who have traveled the same road. Becoming active within the community and in awareness activities included two fashion shows we not only therapeutic but became a way to give back. I also found various support groups that were very helpful as I progressed through my treatments.

The most challenging aspect is still the emotional rollercoaster. The highs and lows are extreme. The anger and tears can come from out of the blue. I ended up increasing my antidepressant and adding an anti-anxiety medication for those times when things were too overwhelming. I also found that keeping my hands and mind busy helps as well. It could be reading, drawing, crocheting or any other activity that helped me occupy my time. Since my diagnosis I have added Yoga and meditation. This helps keep my mind clear and helps with my anxiety. Yoga is great for many reasons but the stretching just feels great. It is easy and low impact so I don't have to worry about the discs in my neck and back. I also enjoy doing Yoga outside in nature.

There are three things that I would have done differently. First, I would have listened to my gut sooner. If you think there is something wrong, get it checked and rechecked right away. Just because two doctors didn't feel or see my issues obviously didn't mean that I was wrong. Second, I would have gone for a second opinion much sooner than I did. I think everyone should make an appointment for a second opinion as soon as they find out they have cancer. Third, I wish I would have listened to myself and not had reconstruction. I am in the process of having them removed at this time. I'm currently waiting for approval from my insurance company. I don't find them comfortable because of my lupus, it just flairs my autoimmune issues.

Thoughts of cancer consume my every waking moments. Thoughts of it spreading and it causing my death cause me anxiety every single day!! I see the world continue to go on around me while I am paralyzed by fear. I believe they call it PTSD. My body makes a large amount of fat necrosis and scar tissue. It is near impossible to determine what the lumps and bumps are without imaging. As you all know, that just causes more anxiety. To break the cycle of anxiety, I decompress
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by simple things such as taking a car ride, crying if I want or spending time by myself while my children are in school. Acupuncture, aromatherapy and massage therapy also help with my anxiety. I am the type of person who will research until I feel satisfied. I want to know the good, the bad and the ugly so that I can have as much information as possible so I make the best decision. I have learned not to be afraid to switch doctors or speak up if I am not yet sure about my treatment plan. It's my body and I do have a say in the matter.

My husband and I will be married 20 years in May but we've been together 25 years. We have six children that range in ages from 8 to 21. We have three biological children and we have three children we adopted from China. I love watching my children play in their sports.

My husband and I volunteer for an amazing organization called David's Refuge. They provide a place of respite free of charge for parents and guardians who care for children with special needs or life threatening medical conditions. It allows them the much needed time to rest, reflect and recharge from the stress of full-time caregiving. It helps me feel better when I help others.
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KEYNOTE SPEAKER  Lillie D. Shockney, RN., BS., MAS, ONN-CG
University Distinguished Service Professor of Breast Cancer  |  Administrative Director, the Johns Hopkins Breast Center
Director, Cancer Survivorship Programs at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins
Professor, JHU School of Medicine, Depts of Surgery and Oncology  |  Co-founder, Johns Hopkins Medicine Managing Cancer at Work

A two-time breast cancer survivor and the heart and soul of the Johns Hopkins Breast Center, Lillie Shockney is a tough, funny woman who knows too well what her patients face. Be prepared to laugh and cry as Lillie shares her compassion, wisdom and humor at this special event.
We live in a nation of procrastination. We're so busy looking out for what's next that we don’t take the time to enjoy the “now”. Tomorrow, we’ll find the time to relax. Next year we’ll take that dream vacation. Eventually, we’ll retire and really enjoy life. We all do it- each one of us unaware of the beauty of today and the fragility of tomorrow and I’m no exception. Even after I had been treated for stage 1 breast cancer at the age of 26 and a stage 3C recurrence by 31, I’d still stepped over a thousand todays cocksure of a guaranteed tomorrow.

I was a healthy 32 year old in the best shape of my life planning a future, a family with my husband Zac when a routine PET scan revealed the worst news imaginable. “We found breast cancer in your bones,” said my oncologist over the phone. “Bones,” I replied, tasting the word, half question, half statement. The next phrase I could find trickled from my lips in a plea, “I’m going to die?” “We’ll do our best to get you into a good remission, but I don’t think you’ll make it to 90.”

Breast cancer in my bones meant I now had metastatic breast cancer (MBC), Stage IV. Medicine as we know it today calls this incurable. All euphemisms for the terrifying reality, terminal at 32. Unlike the last two diagnoses,
there would be no cure, no idyllic world after cancer. The tomorrows I had so blissfully expected were now in peril. I'd later learn that 30% of all early staggers become metastatic, sometimes decades later. The literature that lauded early detection as our best hope of beating breast cancer had lied.

It would eventually take my life. The thought of having to LIVE with cancer, share my body with this interloper, was unfathomable. If I couldn’t have a life without cancer, then I would simply refuse to live at all. That’s when I had myself committed to a psychiatric hospital.

It was there that I began to let the light in and through group therapy and getting a much needed break from social media; I began to share my story. While I saw my metastatic progression as a failure, others saw it as an overture of living graciously in the face of adversity. I began to mentor my peers and found another source of joy; helping others. My memory began to sharpen and within weeks, I was beginning to help others locate the joy that was always present, just not perceived in their lives. I developed relationships and laughed, REALLY laughed for the first time in four months. The words of a good friend, Max, the first woman I had met with MBC were a frequent rumination. “Not today, Kelli”, Max would say. She didn’t dispute that MBC may one day take my life, but today was NOT that day. Today had to be lived, savored, enjoyed. So that’s what I set out to do.

Across town in Springdale Lisa and Patrick Quinn were surrounded by joy. They had settled into a beautiful new home when a then 36-year-old Lisa decided to take a year off from a 13-year teaching career to focus on what she loved the most; being mom to Cooper 6 and Karis 3. The real estate market was strong bolstering Patrick’s agency and everything seemed nearly perfect for the handsome couple, that is, until Lisa felt a small, painful lump deep under her right breast. The next morning a biopsy confirmed breast cancer that had spread to at least three lymph nodes. The community rallied in support of Lisa, many reaching out to pray with her. The impact she’d had as their favorite 5th grade teacher was palpable in the tremendous outpouring of love. This was a woman who lost her voice cheering at high school football games every Friday night no matter the weather, a loyal friend who maintained close ties with her middle school classmates, a beautiful semi-Southern native Springdale daughter who bled Razorback Red. There was no history of breast cancer in her family. Lisa was the last person you’d think would get cancer.

Ever the optimist, she readied herself for impending chemotherapy and a double mastectomy, even holding a “Bye, Bye Boobies” party at one of her favorite restaurants. On the day she was scheduled to begin chemotherapy, she sat down with her then oncologist. A chill rushed through the small waiting room inside the oncology center, a sort of cemetery kiss vowing grave news to follow. “I don’t like your PET scan” he’d say with the same inflection you’d talk about what you had for breakfast. It had shown 4 bone lesions catapulting Lisa into stage IV. Metastatic right out of the gate. There would be no hope for permanent remission and no chance for a cure. The news devastated the Quinns who sought a second
opinion in Chicago.

Lisa’s heart broke not for her, but for her children. Her hope was in their future and her ability to watch them grow. Her joy was in the aptly named Karis Joy and Cooper Brookes and being that she carried the BRCA2 mutation, their tomorrows could also come with a cancer diagnosis. This mobilized both Lisa and Patrick to begin researching the disease and cutting edge treatment options. Lisa would eventually choose a new local oncologist who I had switched to shortly after my MBC diagnosis. But this is not how Lisa and my paths would cross.

We’d seek support in an online Facebook forum for MBC thrivers under 40. As Lisa scrolled through the group, she clicked on names to see if anyone lived nearby. She was amazed to find that Kelli Parker not only lived 20 minutes north of Springdale, but that she also had an idea the Quinns wanted to be a part of.

As I began to help connect others with similar breast cancer stories, I found Metavivor, the only breast cancer non-profit created by MBC patients. (and Breast Cancer Wellness Magazine’s recipient of the 2016 Non-Profit of the Year). I immediately identified with their mission of making MBC a chronic, livable condition with a good quality-of-life. Every cent they raise funds life-extending research for MBC treatment. This wasn’t a hyped or pinkwashed mission, but a realistic, hope-filled one that we all believed would take us places. See, Lisa and Patrick had also found Metavivor and were equally enthusiastic about becoming a part of the organization.

I envisioned a way to raise money for Metavivor. Something like a gala. A ball. A masquerade ball...no, a METSquerade Ball! I had an idea but not the means or connections to make it a reality. Patrick and Lisa had the missing links to bring the METSquerade to life.

Lisa and I met in late 2015 and became fast friends, friends who would visit every day, friends that know each other’s pain like few else. Our families would converge, her gracious mother Marcia even embracing me as a second daughter. We’d soon vacation together, planning the METSquerade amid discussing our fears for the future, our children, our husbands. We’d also begin to advocate together attending and eventually leading assemblies in Washington DC for MBC Awareness Day and the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium. We’d rally around each other, a love of travel, and a genuine desire to make more tomorrows possible for MBC patients.

We set a date for the first Annual Northwest Arkansas METSquerade on April 30th, 2016. Unlike big non-profits with bigger bankrolls, we had no blank check with which to approach the venue. Lisa and Patrick bravely financed the event on a credit card, only taking reimbursement when funds started to pour in. The community once again rallied, this time, around US, each gobsmacked to learn the truth about breast cancer, early detection, and how little funds from pink ribbon juggernauts go to people who are dying. That night, we wrote METAvivor a check for $90,000. At press time, we go into the 2nd Annual METSquerade having raised another $167,000, $75,000 from the METAribbon.
challenge where MBC friends from across the US share their story and ask for donations. METAvivor would announce the Parker-Quinn Research Grant in our honor and recognizing Patrick’s talent for fundraising, Metavivor would name him to the Board of Directors. Lisa would spread the word about MBC speaking around town and I’d grow a Facebook support group with more than of 6,500 followers, many MBC patients.

Both Lisa and I have lived a lot of todays since our MBC diagnosis. Some have been joyous, many have been hard, but we continue to strive for balance and gratitude for the time we’ve been afforded. Each day is a gift and a reminder of just how much work we still have to do. The MBC life isn’t a life we would have envisioned for ourselves, but it’s a life that brought us together and a life that has allowed us the opportunity to make a difference for others. We’ve learned that happiness is not in another place but this place, it’s not in another hour but this very hour, this minute, one precious moment at a time.

To register for the METSquerade Ball or to make a donation, visit nwamets.org.
I've undergone 37 surgeries in less than seven years. Yet I remain grateful to be alive and thriving in my own way and on my own terms.

I CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY IN THIS MOMENT. THIS MOMENT IS MY LIFE.
A s a child I survived years of sexual, physical and mental abuse. Living with these traumatic wounds for twenty years resulted in a worrisome, self-doubting and deeply stressed out woman. I hid these secrets for over two decades. Then finally my painful past was exposed and the truth came out; I was married and had given birth to three children with one on the way. I struggled with abandonment by my mother and yearned for my life to be different.

In 2009 I was diagnosed with stage 3c breast cancer at age 46. Before my diagnosis I was training for a marathon, eating healthy and raising my children. When the doctor told me I had breast cancer, I went into complete shock and denial. After a second opinion from a renowned clinic in Arizona I entered the world of cancer dialogue with my oncologists and surgeons. Breast cancer forced me to make decisions and choices I didn’t want to make and the unwanted opinions of other people made it difficult sometimes to be completely clear with my own thoughts.

Too much of society wants to define women by our outer beauty. It’s no surprise after a bi-lateral mastectomy, loss of hair and a year later my uterus being removed, I fell into a deep depression wondering how this could happen to me. Would I ever be ‘normal’ again? How would my husband react? This caused me to ask “What is a woman’s worth?”

I soon realized my value has nothing to do with my breasts, if they are big or small, if my hair is long or short, or what my dress size is. All women are all born with infinite worth and destined for greatness; we just need to recognize this, embrace it and then share it with other people who need hope.

During treatments I decided to take charge of my life, my thoughts and feelings. I was very sick so I began by recognizing there were many things I could not control. I then concentrated on what I could control which began foremost with my attitude.

On days that I hugged the toilet, I always took a picture of my grandson Recker and one of the Eiffel Tower. Just this small intentional act brought a smile to my face. For hours I sat on the cold tiled floor of our bathroom hovering over the toilet but I was always thinking about holding our new sweet grandson in my arms or looking forward to visiting Paris for the first time with my husband. This brought me great joy and gave me reason to keep going forward.

Learning to set aside my doubts and beliefs about my perceived insignificance started a transformation that would take years to evolve into. There were days I had to close my eyes and physically say out loud “I can do this. Trust in the Lord. This is just a small bump in the road.” Despite all the noises of the world I had to believe through all of this that I could still create a beautiful life for myself, one that I could later look over my shoulder at with amazement, wonder and gratitude that I got through it all.

I blogged everyday, giving full details of what was happening to my body and mind. I began to cultivate relationships with other women and a couple men who were enduring breast cancer and how we managed its horrid side effects.

While blogging I gained courage. I began speaking out boldly about breast cancer from my perspective and how these experiences empowered me. As a woman I finally had found my voice and continued sharing my thoughts and feelings with other patients. This helped me to see love in a world I thought wasvoid of empathy. Everyday I pushed my limits far beyond what I thought I could handle by allowing happiness to enter my soul. It finally felt good to delight in small things I’d taken for granted. I noticed the beautiful mountains after a rainfall,
flowers were more brilliant in color and compassion for people became very important to me.

I awoke one morning and simply decided to share happiness for 365 days. For the next year everyday when I left my home I forgot about my problems and concentrated on helping someone else. Some acts were as simple as opening a door or helping a young mother struggling at the grocery store with her children. On days when I could not leave the house, I wrote thank you notes or called friends who needed a listening ear. I quickly discovered if everyone gave acts of kindness everyday, we would all be part of what is good and right in the world. From my view it was a magnificent place to live.

My life began to stabilize and I was feeling extremely blessed with incredibly loving and caring doctors, surgeons, nursing staff and technicians. I couldn’t have asked for a more supportive circle of friends and family who unconditionally loved me through every loop of the roller coaster we were riding.

Little did we know it was about to get severely more intense.

My inner ear began to drain and it was so painful that it couldn’t be ignored. After meeting with an otolaryngology specialist, it was determined a mastoid in my ear canal needed to be removed. He suggested this surgery to be scheduled as soon as possible.

I was once again entering the operating room. The tumor was removed but it never healed; infection killed the nerve that controlled the right side of my face. After several more lengthy surgeries I was told my face would never be the same again; my smile is gone, my eye doesn’t blink and the entire right side of my face and head are numb. I once again felt my femininity and worthiness were compromised.

I had a hard time looking at people knowing I was never going to be physically beautiful again. I had taken my smile and eyes for granted. I was thrown back to a lack of confidence and became very withdrawn from my family. This brought me to my knees once again begging and pleading for grace. In those solemn moments I often felt lonely, but never alone because I knew God was listening.

With time I’ve recognized all the distractions and challenges as a chance to learn new ways of listening with my heart and smiling with my eyes and discovering I am strong even when I don’t fully feel it at the moment. I take time for the things in my life that really matter and I never ever give up. I still do my happy acts everyday; they have now become a part of my daily routine. Through all the turmoil I gave happiness a chance to find me and I embrace it.

I’ve undergone 37 surgeries in less than seven years yet I remain grateful to be alive and thriving in my own way and on my own terms.

We will all be presented with challenges and opportunities to excel in life, opportunities to grow through our struggles, chances to make a significant difference in the world and remain humble. It’s okay to cry hard, to be silly and laugh at ourselves. When these opportunities come we should take them—yes, there will be pain but if we keep our heart open, there is also beauty all around us. Every moment of my life I listen closely and hear whisperings of hope.

We don’t need anyone else to lighten up our world, there is joy in discovering we can do that for ourselves. Just because our miracle doesn’t quite look like the Plan A we expected, that does not mean it isn’t the miracle we’ve been waiting for.

Joy, peace and happiness can be found in any circumstance; be brave enough to make small changes in life one day at a time.

Monya’s book, _I CAN-CER VIVE_ can be purchased on her website at www.monyawilliams.com
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BREASTCANCERWELLNESS.ORG 43
Breast cancer has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Once a relatively rare disease, it now affects 2 to 3 million American women. What can we do to protect ourselves? Christine Horner, M.D., has the prescription: Eat healthy foods, add a good dose of certain supplements, get the rest and exercise we need, and avoid things that are bad for our bodies. We each have a Warrior Goddess in us, and it’s time to set her free.

A pioneer who pushed through federal and state legislation ensuring that breast reconstruction after a mastectomy would be paid for by insurance companies, Dr. Horner lost her own mother to breast cancer. She decided then that her mother’s death would not be in vain.

Using the metaphor of the Warrior Goddess, this book explains what Ayurveda, an ancient system of healing, describes as our “inner healing intelligence.” It also explores the various foods and supplements that enable women to prevent and successfully fight breast cancer, as they claim the healthy body that should be theirs. Dr. Horner has added research from more than 500 studies to the updated third edition of her award-winning book, as well as information on risk and the BRCA1 gene mutation (the genetic condition Angelina Jolie was found to have), and a new chapter on “The Spiritual Journey of Breast Cancer.” In it, she describes why cancer is a wake-up call, a time-out in which women can turn inward to evaluate their lives with the intent to restore good health and learn how to receive, trust, and surrender as they cultivate their relationship with their intuition and a higher power.

The final part of Waking the Warrior Goddess presents Dr. Horner’s Thirty-Step Program for reclaiming health and defeating breast cancer. In addition, this book includes an extensive, newly updated resources section for obtaining the particular nutrients and products that our bodies need to become and stay strong and healthy.

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