

How Cancer Awakens Us

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Editor's Note

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So you, or someone you care about, has cancer?



I, Vijay Bhat, had cancer too. In my case, it was colon cancer, stage 2. I benefited greatly from getting timely modern medical treatment. But my successful surgery for was only the beginning of a journey that changed the way I lived my life. I am now a 10-year survivor. No, I call myself a 10-year cancer *thriver*.

In these 10 years, my wife (and caregiver), Nilima and I have studied and used many complementary and alternative healing approaches for cancer. We have come to realise there is a crying need to support mainstream medical treatments from a psychological, social and spiritual standpoint.

It takes a lot to live through cancer and through our e-book series, we hope to share the empowering lessons, tools and resources that can help you and your family to not only face the challenge, but also to grow from it. We hope you will find it enjoyable and useful ... and that you too, will become a cancer *thriver*.

With all good wishes,

Vijay Bhat

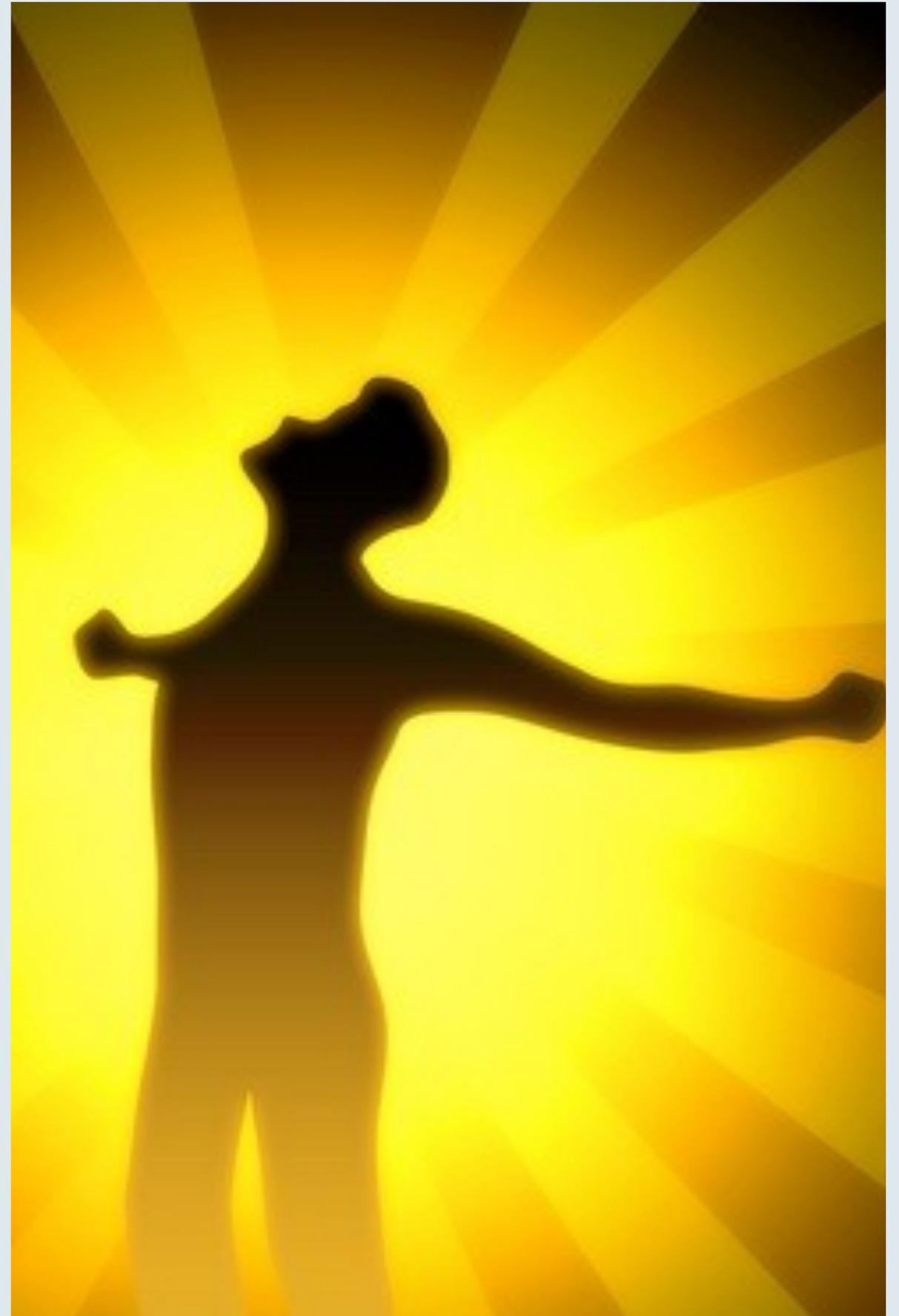
We have designed these e-books so that they are easy to read/ understand ... and also to print and share with those people who may not have access to, or be familiar with computer technology.

In this particular e-book 'How Cancer Awakens Us', we show you how serious illness can serve as a 'wake-up' call.

And we propose a new and empowering way to look at your cancer experience and to transform it into a journey of personal growth.

How Cancer Awakens

Like most people, my cancer diagnosis too brought with it shock, despair and fear about the future. Nilima and I were fortunate that we chose to approach it with some measure of positivity and hope. Because of our openness to the wealth of information around us, we went on to gain new insights and perspectives on how cancer can be transcended.



We are convinced that illness in general, can serve to shake our deeply held assumptions, re-orient our lives towards wholeness and prod us to grow as human beings.

On 21st Dec 2001, shortly after my 40th birthday, I had surgery to remove two cancerous tumours from my colon. Instead of treating the cancer episode as a taboo or withdrawing into a shell, I chose to reach out to family and friends around the world (almost 500 of them) through email. This correspondence became a regular feature, where we wrote in detail about my journey of recovery and asked for love and support. We benefited enormously through the prayers and good wishes we received.

The pain and suffering of the cancer experience also became an opportunity to count our blessings, to be authentic about our feelings/emotions and in time, to frame a new positive vocabulary around cancer instead of simply believing in and being overwhelmed by the current limiting and somewhat defeatist mindset.

After surgery, we were given the choice of whether to take preventive chemotherapy or not. We decided against it, choosing instead to pursue a holistic approach: positive thinking, complementary therapies, a planned diet and exercise program and carefully chosen lifestyle changes.

In this process, our extensive research on holistic and integrated therapies from around the world led us to certain insights and perspectives about illness and healing, which can greatly benefit others and which we intend to share here.

As cancer thrivers for 9 years, Nilima and I have also developed a structured program to help people recovering from cancer and other serious illnesses. We deliver this through intensive week-long retreats, shorter group workshops and well as a 3-month individual program that includes 1-on-1 therapies and counseling work.

To sum up, we firmly believe that the world's struggle with cancer is not due to a lack of resources or effort but because of certain limiting beliefs and assumptions that we collectively hold.

Through CancerAwakens.com and our eBook series, we wish to propose a fundamentally different perspective.

Notes & Reflections

Survivor or Thriver: Who Do You Want To Be?

Cancer is a deadly disease and its statistics are chilling. On a worldwide basis

- 1 in 4 people will get cancer.
- Among those who get it, more than 50% will die within 5 years.
- Over 6 million people die of cancer, every year.



But these ‘statistics’ don’t tell us about the ‘survivors’: those who have crossed the 5-year mark, who are considered ‘cured’ by Western medicine. In percentage terms, they may be small but in absolute terms, they are significant.

Thrivers And Their Qualities

And then there is an even smaller group, who we call the ‘thrivers’. Not only have they beaten the statistical odds, they have turned their cancer experience into a springboard for transformative growth.

What qualities differentiate these ‘thrivers’ from others?

- They take charge of their own lives (and their future)
- They focus on ‘quality’ of life, rather than ‘quantity’
- They find a fundamentally new and purposeful life-direction
- They offer their experience and learnings in service of others

Henry Relfield is a cancer expert and writer. In **one of his articles**, he says:

“Cancer can be a door to greater health and life-affirming well being. While it is not the easiest way to discover additional meaning and joy in life, the cancer experience can certainly take us there, if we allow it to. The willingness to let this disease transform us, so that we honor and cherish life even

more fully makes us more than ‘survivors’ – it turns us into ‘thrivers’.”

I’d rather be a Thriver. What about you?

It’s been almost a decade since my cancer surgery. And ever since that day, I never quite liked the word, “survivor”. It implies that I have just about escaped from something larger and more powerful than myself. It diminishes the human spirit. So I prefer to call myself a “thriver”.

Anecdotes of Hope, Empowerment and Change

Over these 9 years, we many more people like me – people who have gone through cancer’s lowest lows, and yet have treated cancer as a learning and a growth experience.

In a **series of Cancer Thriver profiles** on Cancer Awakens, we have shared stories of people who saw cancer as a “life opportunity” instead of a “death sentence”. It is the choice thrivers make ... and the choice that makes thrivers.

Notes & Reflections

Honour Your Cancer: Let It Show You A New Path

Cancer. The big, bad C. The dark monster that has to be surgically excised, chemically eradicated, and battled till our dying breath. We are conditioned to believe that illness needs to be fought and gotten rid of. We're taught to think that illness is caused by foreign influences, outside our body and often outside our control.



However, cancer and many auto-immune diseases arise from the inside. When we pay closer attention to this, we begin to understand the critical role that our inner experiences, thoughts and emotions play in the cause and cure of cancer. We begin to see that cancer, like other serious illnesses, presents an opportunity for deeper self-awareness and growth.

How honouring cancer transformed my life.

I am convinced that the purpose of my cancer experience was to impel me to take the 'fork-in-the-road' and change the direction of my life, which otherwise, I would have resisted. It pushed me to look within and find the necessary resources from a deeper place. The outcome is real and tangible personal growth i.e. arriving at a higher level of equilibrium.

Post-cancer, I went through a painful process of fundamentally de-constructing and re-constructing myself at every level in the attempt to understand myself. In this exploration my intrinsic gift revealed itself unmistakably – clarity of thought and expression, which makes me an effective communicator and coach. This insight gave new direction and momentum to my life.

Like most people, Nilima and I began by viewing cancer as a rude interruption to our well-set life. But we soon realised

that our experience was not only about us and we felt called to play a wider role. My first career (in Advertising) was a personal passion and very fulfilling, but I had a sense that it was ending. Post cancer, I first moved from handling clients to a strategy/talent development role. Then I focused on building leaders and leadership teams. Then the big move: leaving my comfortable corporate career, becoming an independent consultant, and returning to India.

We started by helping individuals informally, slowly moved to organising small workshops, then began to conduct week-long intensive residential retreats and have now set up an organisation to scale-up our work so more people can benefit. This website is a key marker of our journey and as it has ripened, we have grown enormously. We are more 'present' and more connected to 'Presence'.

Along the way, new relationships have formed, many have strengthened and some have withered. We continue to explore a wide range of healing tools, techniques and traditions. Based upon lived experience, a powerful and comprehensive cancer protocol has emerged, which our clients are benefiting from and which we have shared through our work. The mist has cleared and the path ahead is more visible.

This is how we have honoured cancer, and found a new life.

An Empowering Way To See Cancer

These perspectives have helped me tremendously in the nine years since I faced colon cancer. If you have cancer or know someone with cancer, these insights can make a difference



When I first heard the diagnosis of cancer, I felt vulnerable and powerless. Power, it seems, was with my doctors, my family, or some higher force. A decade hence, I have realized that most people with cancer never really reclaim that power. And I have come to believe that, at some stage, irrespective of the prognosis, the person experiencing cancer must reclaim it. It is only when we reclaim our power that the rest of life can unfold.

In my own journey, I began to reclaim my power when I started looking at cancer from a different set of lenses.

Statistic or Anecdote?

One thing I discovered very early in this cancer experience was a lot of statistics. Everyone throws statistics at you. And when you look at the statistics, they are chilling. In the western world, 1 in 3 people will get cancer. Of those who get it, 1 in 2 will die from it, etc.

However, I didn't want to be a "statistic". I wanted to be an "anecdote"; one of those rare people who overcome statistical odds.

Survivor or thriver?

I have also realized during my journey, that when it comes to Cancer, much of our common language is extremely limiting.

I don't like being called a "survivor". I call myself a "cancer-thriver". I thrive on my cancer. Cancer has made me a better person and I have grown as a result; today the work I do is far more fulfilling than my international corporate career was.

Patient or impatient?

I don't like the description "cancer patient". I prefer to be called the "cancer-impatient", because the kind of subtle messages we get from words like "survivor" and "patient" often suggests something bigger and stronger than us, trying to keep us down, putting a block around us.

We talk about "fighting cancer", "the cancer monster", or "the Big C", but to me the human spirit is far bigger, far stronger, far more optimistic, than anything that cancer can throw at us.

In conclusion

Very few people, including the best doctors in the world, could give me all the answers I was looking for. Doctors, friends, family, the media and the internet are great resources, but it

really does begin (and end) with you. Fortunately, there is plenty that you can and really, must do to reclaim your power.

Here's a starting point, if you need one. Do your own research. This means going beyond the books and articles and the internet. Find and connect with those “thrivers” who have overcome the same diagnosis as you.

Notes & Reflections

MORE RESOURCES

Online

Cancer Awakens Website
www.cancerawakens.com

Cancer Awakens Youtube Channel
www.youtube.com/cancerawakens

Cancer Awakens Facebook Page
www.facebook.com/cancerawakens

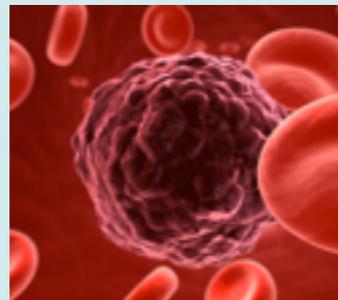
Cancer Awakens Twitter Page
www.twitter.com/cancerawakens

Published eBooks

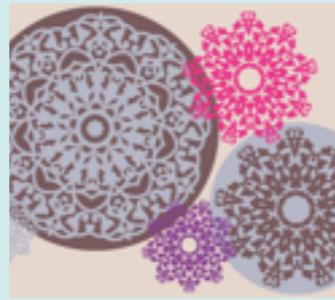
(as of June 2012. Check here for more.)



How Cancer
Awakens Us



Cancer Basics



Supplementing
Cancer Therapy
Part 1

Acknowledgements

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