

WHAT I DIDN'T EXPECT TO LEARN IN 'CANCER SCHOOL'

By Maria Carter

In four weeks to the day, I lived with cancer. In four weeks to the day, I LIVED!

My fate-filled journey to self-worth.

=====

Brrrrrrnnnnng, brrrrrrnnnnng, brrrrrrnnnnng!

Do I answer the phone or not on this busy-as-usual day? "UCSD Medical" showed across the caller ID. I picked up immediately.

"Hi, Maria. . . the pathology report just came back on your biopsy and I hate to tell you this, especially over the phone, but the results show that you have cancer. . ."

My, God! The word alone sounds devastating.

Although my doctor explained the very early detection and that a hysterectomy typically eliminates it from the body, it still felt frightening. I had *cancer* in my body.

My anger in the form of tears flooded through my explanation to Michael, my husband. How could this possibly happen to me when I'm the health nut of the family? Normally in the peak of health, I fool *everyone*. They simply can't believe I'm 50. But this? No warning. No symptoms. Only an annual physical with an irregular pap smear.

I did not count on my 'life as I know it' to come to a screeching halt. I did not count on the big 5-0 years to have this kind of a start. What now? What did all of this mean?

More people these days have heard and accept that "cancer is repressed anger." Anger? Me? I'm the least likely candidate for anger, let alone 'repressed.' Or was the anger so totally repressed that I lived completely oblivious, unaware. . . deep in denial?

What anger could possibly be repressed that would cause this fateful condition? I thought I already healed my childhood and past. I've done a lot of personal growth work, both as a student and as a facilitator. Anger seemed foreign to me. I'm the type of person that most people say, "She doesn't have an angry bone in her body." In fact, my dear friend, Janet Attwood, once described me as "A Walking Heart."

How could *this* be happening to me?

After the initial shock, getting my life in order became the priority. Not so much the reprioritizing of my life in general—I did that, too, but to *race* to discover and 'handle the cause' of the cancer—to **do it** *right now!*

I had ‘cured’ my other illnesses and conditions throughout my life. First I would identify the emotional cause, most often not too difficult to do. Then I would heal the issue using a number of different ways until I *felt* clear and the symptom simply went away. In my healing, I considered all aspects of a balanced life: the mind, body, emotions and spirit. But *cancer* and the *repressed anger* were way beyond me. I knew I needed much more help to accomplish a true clearing of the cancer.

I turned to the big proponents of this concept, two well-known authors. I poured through Dr. Christiane Northrup’s book, *Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom*. I purchased Louise L. Hay’s guided visualization CD, *Cancer: Discover Your Healing Power* and I made it part of my morning and evening routine. I was encouraged by the fact that Louise healed herself of cancer.

Their top priority: *Heal the emotional cause*. . . or risk reoccurrence.

THE EMOTIONAL CAUSE

Identifying the Cause

I checked in for a full session with Dr. Carolle Jean-Murat, Wellness Center for Mid-Life Women. I knew that Dr. Carolle, a highly credentialed OB/GYN surgeon and award-winning author would have some answers.

“Cancer of the uterus lining.”

“A female organ. . .”

“A female issue. . .”

She asked a few questions about my childhood. What I considered a ‘non-issue’ occurrence in my life popped up. My parents wanted a boy so much they kept on having girls. Five girls later and on their sixth try, they finally had their son.

A ‘norm’ in many cultures is to desire and favor a son over a daughter—the son would carry the family name, etc. Our Filipino culture dictated this and my parents took it to the extreme. At the third child, the doctors warned my parents that another medical condition may turn fatal if my mother had more children. They pressed on. A fourth child. . . fifth child. . . and finally with the sixth child, they had their coveted son. Still on the delivery table after birthing my brother, the doctors shut down my mother’s baby making career. They performed a hysterectomy and the surgery for her other condition.

Dr. Carolle reinterpreted my story, from the eyes of a little girl, in the form of a question, “You mean your mother risked her life to have a son—your brother?”

Jolt of realization: No wonder I rarely mention I am a Filipina. I was angry at the culture responsible for almost killing my mother! I was angry at the culture for devaluing girls!

My life's struggles suddenly made sense. The message I internalized as a very young child¹ played out in many ways in my life—all the 'pulling back' in relationship, career, art, my writing, success. . .

"I have no value as a woman."

"Other than being in a supportive role to men, women had no place in having success 'in a man's world.'"

I fulfilled those subconscious beliefs extremely well. As I found myself repeatedly 'missing the boat' in life, I always felt something was incomplete. . . something yet to be done. I most always thought I had the 'right ticket' but it obviously wasn't quite right. My smarts, talents, skills, experience, etc. . . even my special way of connecting with people. . . wasn't that worth a ticket?

Dr. Carolle had hit on the source of the pain that had been growing inside me my whole lifetime. This was it! We found the main cause of my cancer: deeply repressed anger and sadness at being 'abandoned' *for being a girl*. We both knew it emotionally and intuitively. It struck an emotional chord.

Dr. Carolle prescribed a new 'life plan' which included deep emotional and spiritual healing of this major cause, as well as other related issues.

Again the priority: ***Heal the emotional cause***. . . or risk reoccurrence.

I turned to Esperanza Universal and the S.O.U.L. Institute.

Healing the Cause

I previously attended the S.O.U.L. Institute seminars and workshops and knew exactly that I could heal the cause with their help.

Esperanza had explained to me earlier that all the personal growth and spiritual work I had done over the years helped me grow tremendously, even to the point of helping and inspiring others. That while this work was mostly psychological, expanding into the emotional and spiritual, in doing S.O.U.L., I would be exploring a much deeper and higher spiritual level. With the cancer, I had an emergency. I urgently needed this *deep* spiritual healing, *focused solely on me and the cause of the cancer*.

She explained that the body has a memory that holds emotions if not fully felt or released (the repressed anger). That if the deep spiritual healing is not done, then a person may create dis-ease in the body and/or other forms of self-sabotage in his or her life (to include reoccurrences). My story confirmed that on both counts.

¹ Also see Dr. Christiane Northrup's book, *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, Chapter 1 on The Patriarchal Myth

Because I attended the S.O.U.L. seminars, I was prepared for and eligible for a Healing Circle. In the Healing Circle, we were to focus solely on healing the causes of my cancer, to ‘un-repress’ my anger. At S.O.U.L. Institute, they teach you to heal yourself with Love, Truth, and Acceptance: their objective was for me to *know* me, *free* me and *love* me. . .

Esperanza said that just as I created the repressed anger, I could also choose differently and create the life I truly desired. I made the choice and commitment that I didn’t want to live my life with this disease, the cause, or any of the ‘collateral damage’ any longer. Not a minute longer! I chose the healing and with the tools and environment provided by S.O.U.L. Institute, I embarked on healing the emotional cause of my cancer.

Esperanza urged that Michael and our children, Nicole and Dominic, should participate in whatever I chose to do for my self-healing. So I did not go through this alone. Michael, Nicole and Dominic, came together with Esperanza and the S.O.U.L. Institute team for the Healing Circle.

The process was very emotional for me. It felt more like an intense washing. Tears of pain and release poured out of me from a deep well inside. They rose up in waves, coming to the surface, washing me with emotions I never knew I had. The depth almost scared me. Esperanza lovingly and skillfully, with the precision of a Master, stayed with me as I brought the repressed emotions to the surface. Once released, I chose differently for my life. The beauty of the S.O.U.L. spiritual teachings is that I always knew that I could take responsibility for my experience. I could set myself FREE!

Not only did I touch and release deep rage at this core issue, I unearthed other devastating affects it caused in my relationship with my children. I knew I had to face painful truths and begin any healing that they would also need from the domino repercussions that had already been set into motion.

My daughter, Nicole, a beautiful, fiercely independent 22-year old, sat in front of me, wide-eyed, yet with a look of full support for my healing. Through a tirade of tears, I admitted that when she was born, I was disappointed she wasn’t a son! We even named her after the coveted male of my family, my brother, Dominic, nicknamed Nicky. The guilt over that disappointment remained buried deep inside—a double layer of repressed emotions.

Ingrained in me, I had carried forward our culture’s edict and repeated the burden of my mother to produce a son. And when I didn’t, I’m sure I also repeated the feelings of failure that my mother felt. I could now see how my anger, guilt, and feelings of failure about not producing a son, layered with the grief at the loss of my brother, could eat away at me in the form of cancer.

Nicky ‘left us’ when he was killed in a car accident at the age of 14. His shocking death happened just one year before Nicole was born. This coveted son, my parents’ pride and joy, left us much too soon. This long-awaited son, an angel whom we all loved very much, gave us a ‘fleeting moment’ of only 14 years—for my parents to experience being proud parents of a son, and for all his sisters, to experience a wonderful brother. Children are not supposed to die before their parents. Wonderful little brothers are supposed to grow into strong capable men who will

share the love and joys of life with their big sisters over their lifetime. His 'leaving us' caused deep, deep sorrow. Both his death *and* his birth had such a deep emotional impact on my entire family as I have now begun to see.

I realize now that naming both of our children in honor of my brother was my own way to console my parents on the excruciating pain they felt at his loss. That somehow, this might make up for what I couldn't fulfill for them because I was a girl. But I *could* produce children and honor the family again by "carrying on the name" in the memory of our precious brother.

Nicole, nicknamed, Nikki, for the first year of her life, had no idea what had been brewing in the emotional life of her mother. I shared my anger at Nicole and Michael for *their relationship*. I revealed my resentment that Nicole was Daddy's Little Girl, his princess, the apple of his eye. . . How jealous I was for not having had that with my Dad. I know my Dad loves me very much and that Mom does, too. I don't blame them. This was just how it was.

With my deeply held belief in my unworthiness as a little girl, I was perplexed at the ease and joy of Michael and Nicole's relationship. How could it be this way for them when my history had painted another picture of how it was to be a girl? Now I understood why I subconsciously pushed Nicole away and how our relationship, although loving, had also been distant.

I love my daughter, but was conflicted. On one hand, I found great joy in Michael and Nicole's close bond. On the other, I longed for the same type of bond with my Dad *and* felt left out of Michael and Nicole's close-knit unit. I realize now that instead of pushing Nicole away, I could have just as easily closely bonded with her, too, but I had insecurity and jealousy in the way.

I turned to our son, Dominic, nicknamed Nick, a handsome strapping witty young man of 21. He was our coveted son, the coveted grandson—the namesake of my brother. How my parents loved him, even the second they laid eyes on him! He was the spittin' image of my brother, Nicky, as a baby at that same age. I can understand why he has such an esteemed position in my parents' eyes.

At Nick's birth, my child bearing urge had dissipated. I had done my job as a woman and produced a son. We stopped having children after Nick.

Nick grew up very close to me. We shared a very heartfelt and intuitive connection, similar to Nicole's relationship with Michael. Nick was focused and determined as a child and he brought us a fair share of challenges. He also gave us the joy and pleasure a parent hopes for in a child. He would tell us his goals and I treasured our conversations about life and his future. He had always expressed his desire to be a Marine and he fulfilled this goal soon after completing high school. Needless to say as his mother, I had mixed feelings of both tremendous pride *and* . . . being enraged with him for 'leaving me' in the spring of 2005 to deploy with his Marine unit to Iraq. His leaving triggered the emotions I had around my brother Nicky 'leaving me' in death at too young of an age. Being in a war zone was too dangerously close to a similar fate. No wonder I was ultra-sensitive and became unglued. I could not bear the excruciating pain of loss again.

I healed all this and more around one issue that had a dangerous domino effect over my lifetime.

With S.O.U.L. Institute, *I felt as if my entire lifetime and generations were healed.* . .

THE PHYSICAL SURGERY

With my heart and soul, open and on the mend, I was well prepared for healing on a very different level—the physical.

Three weeks after the dreadful call from my doctor, and a few days after the Healing Circle, I underwent the physical surgery. Blessed with having the latest in cutting-edge technology—a robotic-assisted laparoscopic hysterectomy, I escaped from having the regular, full-belly incision, the more invasive procedure.

Since major surgery was a first for me, I wanted to make the *experience* a very healing one and come out of it as comfortable as possible. I followed verbatim the instructions in Dr. Northrup's book from the chapter about preparing for surgery.

Healing Statements

As directed, I made 3 copies of the suggested healing statements with instructions. I handed one copy to my surgeon, one to my anesthesiologist, and pinned one to the front of my gown for all the medical staff to see.

“Following this operation, you will feel comfortable and you will heal very well.” (Repeat five times.) . . . After saying the statements, please put on my earphones and start my CD player. . .”

The soothing sound of my own voice comforted and encouraged me as I listened to my CD player in the Pre-Op Room. As the nurses inserted IV's, checked vitals, covered me with warm blankets. . . I braced myself, much like riding a roller coaster. I was in for a ride! As they wheeled me from the Pre-Op Room to the O.R., I drifted off to sleep, sleep, sleep. . .

My CD player, on repeat mode, 'carried me' through the full five hours of surgery. Fully unconscious, my psyche heard my own recorded voice say:

“Following this operation I will feel comfortable and will heal very well (repeated 5 times).

Following this operation I will be hungry and thirsty and will urinate easily (repeated 5 times).

I am surrounded by brilliant white light and love. My guides are with me and the loving thoughts of so many of my loved ones. I am so loved. Powerful healing energy surrounds me and my healing team of angels. Every person giving me care is a healing angel. . .

Following this operation, I will heal very quickly, sooner than what the doctors have told me. And for my recovery I will be able to exercise and be back to full activity much sooner than expected. My healing goes extremely fast and as a result of the surgery, my body is healthy and whole.

Every step goes smoothly and easily. My body and all the cells in my body respond, eager to heal and create perfect health and wholeness. I easily, readily and gratefully receive all the prayers and healing energy sent to me.

Divine wisdom is present within me and provides the perfect timing and thorough healing necessary for me to heal to wholeness. This healing to wholeness includes full healing of my mind, body, emotions and spirit. This full healing connects me ever closer to the Divine.

Healing me brings me to health and wholeness so I live my life with energy, vigor, passion and purpose.

Every person on the medical team. . . every person at the hospital involved in my care and healing are blessed by spirit so that every movement they make is with such precision, love, care and healing. They have been drawn to this profession because they have healing within them. They are healing angels and I so gratefully accept their care, love and healing energy.

I bless the cancer and let it go. As it is surgically removed from my body, I bless it realizing that it has served its purpose and is no longer needed; that I move on and forward in my life with gratitude that it has opened my heart and my mind and provided a wake-up call for me to live my life differently. And as I heal with all these blessed angels around me and all the love and prayers sent my way, I am radiant with light and with spirit. That radiance about me fills the room and fills my body to provide very deep healing, quick healing, and thorough healing of my body and my spirit as I move to a new phase of my life.

Special O.R. Music

To my delight, the surgeons obliged my request to have some very special music playing in the operating room—the amazingly beautiful and soothing music of Mark Romero! **I knew the healing, balancing energy and clarity effects of Mark's special music and I had to have it in the O.R. with me.** . . not only for me, but also for the benefit of the entire surgical team.

Ever the consummate event organizer, here I was working with the medical team to create a very healing environment. I knew that otherwise I would have had the regular institutionalized clinical O.R. ambiance! I participated in my surgery in a way that supported the surgical team, as well as me.

I asked. . . I received. . . and was blessed with these special concessions.

Wake-Up News

Later, when the nurses moved me to my hospital room and tried to wake me, Michael squeezed in an important update in between a fleeting moment of wakefulness. He proudly relayed to me Dr. Silverman's 'tentative' good news: he found a very low grade cancer contained in only one area and they completely removed it from my body. The prognosis would have to be confirmed by the pathologist's report, which we would receive later in the week. Mostly incoherent in my semi-conscious state, I drifted back to sleep, easing into being relieved about the prognosis.

Even while asleep in my hospital room, the CD player continued in my ears in repeat mode, with my healing statements and Mark's music. When I woke up fully conscious, I quickly gained awareness of my body being disoriented and traumatized . . . *Yet my heart and soul felt 'full' and supported . . . BLESSED.*

POST-OP BLISS

In the week following the Healing Circle and the surgery I noticed big changes. Now an empty vessel—literally, both physically and emotionally, the vacuum has begun to fill in very interesting ways.

I noticed the biggest change with Michael. He revealed that he had been convinced that my 'holding back' all these years was my way of 'pushing him away' and telling him I wanted out of the marriage. We lived a somewhat superficial existence, 'treading water' to stay afloat in our 'comfortable' marriage. As with other couples, we misinterpreted our distress signals and floundered in subtle miscommunications. Despite the deep love for each other, we did not know what to do about being stuck. As a result of my deep emotional healing from the Healing Circle, we realized that I wasn't 'fighting' him, *I was fighting my past!*

Both realizing that, *now* when I look in Michael's eyes, I no longer 'see' the antagonistic strong coveted male (and react accordingly as a lesser-valued female), but rather I truly see *him*. The wall, the resistance. . . gone. I feel so much more at home with myself and we see how we're much more at home with each other—peaceful, joyful, truthfully real and present. Is that what they mean by bliss?

I no longer felt twinges of being terrified that he would abandon me—*because that's what men do with valueless women.* . .

I noticed that I'm not guarded. I'm no longer 'invisible' or wanting to hide.

I feel I'm OK—there's really *nothing wrong with me!*

Value? Yes. And this time it feels real, not just some affirmations intellectualizing what I *should* feel.

I feel this peace about me that makes me feel safe, safe to be me. Being at peace, I am more intimate, affectionate, open and real with my true feelings—as I feel them in the moment. I'm finally being truthful and real with *me*.

Not so scared anymore, I let Michael in to my heart. I let Nicole and Dominic in, too. I let people in.

I let God in.

That's bliss!

All this from my bout with cancer. . .

THE LAST FATE-FILLED CALL

Four weeks to the day, I received another fate-filled call.

Brrrrrrnnnnng, brrrrrrnnnnng, brrrrrrnnnnng!

“UCSD Medical” showed up again on the caller ID screen.

*“Hi, Maria. It's Dr. Silverman. . . We have your final pathology reports. Everything looks **great!** . . . You won't need any further treatment. . .”*

This cancer ‘**life** wish’ had played its fate with me.


In hearing these words, this time the tears came with a smile. . . but on a very different Maria who was. . . free of the cancer that threatened to hold her body hostage. . . free of the repressed anger that could threaten a recurrence of cancer. . . free of the deep emotional wall that kept her ‘held back’. This was a Maria so ready to begin a new life. . .

. . . as a woman of tremendous value. Awakened.

I wrote this while recovering from my surgery. I hope this story comforts, gives hope, and inspires.

May you heal deeply, love courageously, and live fully!
Maria Carter

I invite you to visit my website, www.FallInLoveWithYourLife.com. My fate-filled month with cancer impresses more deeply the importance of my book, *Fall In Love With Your Life: 365 Love Notes from to Romance the Self-Critic Within*. These Love Notes have helped me considerably on my journey to self-worth. Feel free to pass this story along.



If you have some healing challenges, either emotionally, spiritually or physically, visit www.FallInLoveWithYourLife.com for a multitude of Resources. I provide links on the website for those who helped with my healing of cancer. Most listed are the 'healing angels' mentioned in this story. I am eternally grateful for these healing angels, the surgical team at UCSD, led by Dr. Silverman, and all those who knew about my plight and prayed for my healing.

