



The Cancer Recovery Pyramid: Spiritual Resource #2

Exude Gratitude

What is the least-healthy spiritual habit, the one that causes disease of every kind? It's ingratitude — the lack of thankfulness, an inadequate appreciation for the blessings we enjoy.

Have you expressed thankfulness today? We all have so many blessings to appreciate every day, but most of us overlook them. The conscious practice of being grateful is central to the healing process.

Even with cancer, even in the middle of difficult treatment, even in your darkest and most fearful hours, be thankful for all you do have. For life, for love, for family, for friends, for the awesome beauty of nature, for the presence of God – for all these things and more, be thankful.

Thousands of survivors are convinced that there is a physiological correlative to gratitude; their bodies respond.

If you wish to cultivate a deeper attitude of gratitude, begin to see yourself as a guest who is only visiting here on earth. All that you have is not really yours; it is a gracious gift from your host. You are privileged to enjoy the gifts of friends and family, home and transportation, food and recreation, vocation and service, during your stay. Even your health, no matter what the state, is another of those gifts.

Jill's Story

Jill lay near death in a small rural Nebraska hospital after being told she was “filled” with cancer and that it was inoperable. Mired in despair and self-pity, she could see nothing for which she could be thankful.

“I was divorced, my two children were grown and lived in different parts of the country. I hated my dead-end job. My life seemed miserable. But one night I looked out of my hospital window to see a deep dark sky that was filled with stars. I shut off all the lights in my room and just gazed at the sky for what must have been hours. I started to ask a lot of questions: What is this huge universe about? What is my place in it? Why am I sick? I can't say I got a lot of answers. But I did get a different perspective.

“I became thankful,” continued Jill, “grateful just for being a part of this huge and wonderful world. I realized that in my 50-plus years, I had been able to experience so much. The marvel of giving birth to two other lives – what a miracle! The beauty of the country, where I feel such strong roots; I was so grateful to live here rather than in a city. The deep friendship I had with my sister. I was so thankful for her love. That night at the window changed my whole perspective on my problems.”

Like Jill, we too can capture true wellness when we choose gratitude. But so many roadblocks on the cancer journey seem to detour us.



Exude Gratitude continued

To mire us in ruts of ingratitude and self-pity. We're so busy with appointments and treatments, discomfort and despair, fear and pain, some moments even suffering, that we lose our perspective. We tend to look at the cancer journey as a long and twisted path, filled with potholes. There seems to be nothing for which we can be thankful. This is faulty and self-destructive thinking.

Gratitude transforms the very experience of illness and of life. Gratitude is one component of viewing the world with spiritual eyes. See beyond the day-to-day experiences that seem so all-consuming. Treasure the wonder of life. Become aware of your "guest status" in this brief moment in time and space. Be thankful. Gratitude heals.

Complete the following sentence:

I am so happy and grateful now that _____
_____.

Express your gratitude – every hour of every day.