



The Cancer Recovery Pyramid: Support Resource #2

Laugh for Healing Power

Journalist and author Norman Cousins made many contributions to our understanding of the mind's role in mobilizing the body's healing processes. But none is so vividly remembered as his emphasis on laughter.

In his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, first published in 1979, Cousins called laughter "internal jogging." Since that time, science has confirmed that even something as simple as a laugh or a smile carries with it a positive biochemical response.

The message is clear: Lighten up! It will directly enhance your wellness. Take notice of how relaxed you feel after laughing at a good story or watching a funny movie. It's wonderful!

Jack's Story

Jack is a New York investment banker, successful, wealthy, the owner of a beautiful home in Westchester County, and the recipient of a metastatic prostate cancer diagnosis. "I thought, my God, I'm going to die. Cancer was the most god-awful threat I had ever faced." Jack received radiation treatment at a Manhattan medical center where he met Delmar, an older gentleman who always had a humorous story to share. Delmar successfully completed the same treatment for prostate cancer some seven years earlier. Now he volunteered three days a week at the hospital. "My job," said Delmar, "is court jester!"

For many of us, seriousness is seen as an important virtue. We tend to think that laughing or giggling is childish and not appropriate for adults. Jack used to subscribe to this thinking. "After all," he remarked, "investment banking is serious business. You have to be serious to be taken seriously."

Baloney! There is nothing inconsistent about being an adult and including laughter in your life. There is nothing wrong with being ill and pursuing a lighthearted approach to wellness. This need not be some form of personal denial. Instead, it can be the opportunity to let the hidden child in you come out once in a while. Get in touch with that exuberant, vibrant part of yourself. Enjoy playing with your own children or grandchildren. Laugh at yourself and your seriousness.

Jack reflected, "Delmar taught me a hell of a lot about living. When I stopped being so damned serious, I started to get well."

Go ahead. Rent that comedy on Netflix. Watch your favorite sitcom. Go to the local comedy club or a silly movie. Laugh! Let those positive chemicals and hormones loose. It's healing.



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