

# *The Joy of Cancer*

\* BY AMY SABRINA

There were several signs that prepared me for the news that came a few months later. Discovering a large quantity of turkey tail mushrooms clustered on the maple log that February was the most telling. The medicinal use of mushrooms and plants is one of my passions.

I was diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer in May of 2008. The cancer was labeled aggressive, though a mammogram nine months earlier showed no abnormalities. I was urged by both the surgeon and the oncologist to follow their recommendations immediately. These included chemotherapy, and if it reduced the cancer, then surgery to remove my breasts and lymph nodes. I understood that to their way of thinking my chances of survival were slim.

As a professional artist and in my work as a healer, I had lots of practice following and trusting my intuition. My beliefs about disease were based on experiences with my own health and that of my clients. I chose to take my time in considering the doctors' approach and to focus on following the lead of my intuition.

First, I stopped everything – my professional and community work, farm chores, and socializing – to just be quiet and tune in without distraction. When I noticed emotions rise up, I felt, expressed, and released them. A feeling of peace inevitably followed, whereby I could again tune in and notice what was moving within me. I looked and felt deeply into whether I was ready for my physical body to die. In brief, the answer I received was that I didn't need to die, but the life I had created must end. With that key piece of information I proceeded.

My friend, Carol, sent me the book *Breast Cancer? Breast Health! The Wise Woman Way*, by Susun Weed. Susun's philosophy was very similar to my own and her book became a companion and resource. I learned which foods and herbs were most nourishing for healing my body. I was reminded of practices that supported health and feeling happy, rather than those that focused on fear.

I lived acutely in the Present. Walking out on my Land, a 35-acre farm with prairie and woods and ponds, I breathed in the beauty of each plant that called my attention, and felt it healing me. When I prepared and ate my meals, I did so mindfully, reveling in the beauty of the food on my plate, then imagining each bite nourishing and healing me. When I lay down and my dogs or cats would come nestle by or on me, I melted into their warmth and felt it healing me. I saw and felt Love everywhere.

With this slowed down spaciousness, thoughts came in that I often chose to follow. A song or nonsense rhyme might arise in my throat, so out it went from me in song. Often, to my delight, the words that emerged related to a directive for me to follow. "Allow Allow Allow!" chimed out when I looked at my Aloe plant, preparing to spread its clear juicy gel on my breasts. I had always been resistant to receiving from others and now my life depended on my ability to let go, receive, and transform.

I noticed what "wants" surfaced in me – to lie on the ground, tap my body in certain spots, wear rose-colored clothing, or check out a particular healer. I trusted these messages as intuition, my Wise Self. Memories and feelings arose about past experiences. If I noticed any 'charge' – like anger, fear, hurt, or grief – I stayed with it and explored further, eventually freeing emotions and energy I had not realized were still present. In time I began to feel lighter in my whole Being.

Very consciously I focused on feeling good in each moment. It seemed to me that if I felt good every day and this was multiplied by two days, ten days, a hundred days, or five hundred days, didn't that lead to health? Wasn't that health? What is health?!

It was imperative in the beginning to set up protected sacred space, sharing news of the diagnosis with just my closest friends and immediate family. This enabled me to focus in on myself and create a strong positive field of energy around me, leaving the beliefs and fears of others outside. When I was ready to share more widely, I welcomed in the love and support from my community and family.

Several months after my diagnosis, I connected with a wise and brilliant natural healer who supported my intuitive knowing. She guided me in further detoxifying my body and balancing it through foods, herbs, meditation, and acupuncture. I love what I learned from those visits! When her testing indicated the presence of mold in my home and studio, she urged me to sleep outside in the fresh air. I put up a tent – then later, with her instruction and the help of my partner Frank – built a debris hut of saplings, branches, and grasses for my winter sleep quarters. Sleeping out on the Land continues to be a joy to me – joy wrapped in mystery and comfort.

It is over two years since the diagnosis and visit with the oncologist. I did not have chemotherapy or surgery and have not been back for allopathic intervention. I feel healthy and strong and happy. I visit my natural healer when I feel moved to do so and I continue to take excellent care of myself.

I loved my adventure with cancer! From the beginning it was rich, fun, magical, and transformative, in ways I had never anticipated.

The Inner Guide and Healer that led me to health is present in each of us as our birthright, *if we choose to listen*. Everyone's path is unique and it certainly won't look like mine. There is no right or wrong way to do it, just *Your Own Way*. This might include 'conventional' treatments or it might not. Despite the terror and prevailing messages about cancer, engaging and healing from it can be a fun and fascinating journey, even from the get go.

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