

# From Cancer Patient to Respart

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by Bernie Siegel, MD

Unfortunately doctors and health professionals, in general, do not study success. We are far more likely to consider an unexpected recovery to be due to the treatment or a spontaneous remission. However, I have learned from my experience with patients and by asking them, "Why didn't you die when you were supposed to?" that they always had a story to tell. I can recall, as an intern, realizing that the seniors, with hip fractures, who were noisy and demanding didn't develop pneumonia and die while the submissive, quiet seniors who never raised their voice or caused a problem had a much higher mortality rate.

By speaking up and becoming a character or problem patient you become identified as a person and not by your room number or disease and, therefore, are far less likely to have a fatal or non-fatal medical error made while being cared for. The word patient derives its meaning from submissive sufferer. That is not a good thing to be when hospitalized or receiving medical treatment of any kind. You need to be a respart, or responsible participant if you want to heal and survive.

We now know from studies how one's emotions and personality affect survival rates. I was criticized years ago for speaking about many things; no one had researched because no one believed they made sense, which are now scientific. Simple things like laughter affecting the survival of cancer patients and loneliness affecting the genes which control immune function are now proven to be true by studies. The fact that women live longer than men and married men live longer than single men with the same cancers, is not about female hormones or sleeping with them, but about relationships and meaning in your life. Survival behavior and an immune competent personality are not an accident or luck.

Those in the mental health field are far more likely to be aware of this because of what they see happen to their patients. When people have a sense of meaning in their life, express anger and emotions appropriately in defense of themselves, ask for help from family and friends, participate in their health care decisions, say no to what they choose not to do, find time to do what they enjoy and to play, use their feelings to help them to heal their lives and do not live a role but an authentic life they will always do better than expected. I would add that a spiritual faith and not seeing the disease as God punishing them also plays a role, as well as, their desire and intention to survive. Disease is a loss of health, not punishment, and your health is to be looked for as you would seek to find your lost car keys.

I found a large part of the problem was that people were afraid to take responsibility and participate because if they didn't get well that would mean they were a failure. Decades ago I invited one hundred cancer patients to attend a support group and live a longer better life. I expected them to bring friends and family members and that I would have hundreds of people to deal with. Less than a dozen women showed up for the first meeting. I realized I did not know the people I was caring for and their will to live. If you do not grow up with parents who love you and give you mottoes to live by and teachers, clergy and other authority figures who love and respect you then you are into guilt, shame, blame, addictions and self destructive behavior.

Those who showed up became labeled exceptional cancer patients because they were a minority but

what they reveal to us is our potential. Difficult patients do not die when they are supposed to. Statistics do not determine their outcome or results. Those with inspiration who transform their lives and rebirth themselves give their bodies live messages and the body then does the best it can for them. Our bodies love us but if we do not love our life and bodies it sees illness and death as a way to be free of our afflictions. Monday morning supports that with more heart attacks, strokes, illnesses and suicides. When you let an MD, or Medical Deity, determine whether you live or die you are giving away your power. I have seen people, whose hope was taken away by doctors, commit suicide or go home, climb into bed and die. I have also seen others get damn angry at their doctors and go on to survive for many years or be cured of their disease.

You have to start with a belief in yourself and faith in all the things you incorporate into your life and choose as therapy. I know people who have left their troubles to God and been cured of cancer. A patient of mine, who was a landscaper, after surgery refused treatment for his cancer because it was springtime and he wanted to go home and make the world beautiful before he died. He lived to be ninety-four and became my teacher. The mind is indeed a powerful thing and not emphasized enough in the medical information we receive during our training. We do not receive a true medical education because it does not contain the tools to help people with their life experience. It is focused on disease and prescribing for them. We do not ask patients how may I help you but rather what is your chief complaint and then we prescribe for them without knowing their life story and why they might be sick at that time..

The mind and body are a unit and communicate with each other. I have yet to meet a medical student who has been told that Carl Jung interpreted a dream and correctly diagnosed a brain tumor. I have had the same experience using dreams and drawings by patients to help me guide them to the proper diagnosis and treatment. When patients become empowered they do not just respond from their intellect but use their intuition too. There are times people do not want chemotherapy and yet draw a beautiful picture of it while those receiving it draw the devil giving them poison. It is not hard to know who will have more side effects. When you are submissive and let others prescribe for you, you are in trouble. One young woman refused further treatment and when she drew a picture for me she labeled herself as bald, ugly and horrible and the cancer is crying and saying help me because it is going though the same hell she is. She is sticking a spear in her doctor because of what his treatment did to her.

I know a young man who had a high powered water gun in his hospital room and whenever anyone intruded upon his privacy he drenched them. The nurses and intern respected him for it and when he died his water gun became a gift to empower other children. I created a Siegel Kit for all hospitalized patients. In it are a water gun, noisemaker, magic marker and vital signs. The water gun you know about. The magic marker is for anyone going to the operating room to write cut here on one side and not this one stupid on the other. The noisemaker is to get attention when you need it. To quote several patients, "You are guaranteed an hour of uninterrupted silence if you push the call button." I know a woman who would be dead today if she didn't have a room mate who went for help when no one responded to her pushing her call button while she was choking on food she had aspirated. The vital signs are not about your pulse, blood pressure, temperature and respiratory rate but about your needs and desires. These are signs you hang on your hospital room door or over your bed telling people what your needs are and how you want to be treated. I also recommend hanging your baby pictures there too. So when people ask who the cute kid is you answer, "It's me."

Last but not least one must also choose the therapy you believe in and you can reprogram your mind and body through guided imagery if there are any conflicts. I know of a case where, after repairing the radiation therapy machine, the radioactive material was not replaced. So for one month people were not being treated and yet the radiation therapist did not know this until their routine inspection of the machine was done a month later. He was telling me how terrible he felt about not treating

anyone for a month when I said, "You'd have to be an idiot to not know you weren't treating anyone. So obviously people had side effects and their tumors shrinking because they thought they were being treated." His response, "Oh my God you're right."

That is why I work at deceiving people into health by working with their beliefs and communicating with them in a positive way rather than listing all the side effects they will have and none of the advantages of therapy. Doctors need training in communication and hypnotic techniques.

Wordswordswords can become swordswordswords. We can kill or cure with words or scalpels. That is why patients need to be respants and keep their power and feel free to change doctors and criticize them in a constructive way. The best doctors are criticized by patients, nurses and family. Why? Because they do not make excuses and learn from their mistakes. Believe me if your doctor or their loved ones have suffered a major illness they are no longer a spectator or tourist. They are now a native and understand the experience and a much better health care provider. So love yourself, take responsibility for and participate in your life and state of health. This is not about avoiding dying but about living and its beneficial side effects.

For more information visit [www.berniesiegelmd.com](http://www.berniesiegelmd.com).

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