

Nina Joy's Story



One of the things that I encourage everyone to do is to prepare their Bucket List – think about all those things that you really would like to do or achieve.

Are there places you want to visit, qualifications or skills you want to achieve, life events that you want to experience? Do something about it, make that list, and then go about making them happen! Traditionally, Bucket Lists are for people who know that they are dying. I think we should all do them because we are living! Plus, it's a really fun thing to work on. What are the things on your list?

In August 2012, my whole world changed. Not only did I find out that I had breast cancer, but I was told that it had spread, to my lymph, lungs, liver and bones. And was incurable. My life expectancy was less than 12 months. The suggested treatment was to have chemotherapy straight away to hopefully shrink the tumours and buy some time. Eventually they would grow again. Then more chemo. Until it didn't work any more.

This is the news that no-one ever wants to hear. It's big news to process and understand. One of my ways of coping is to seek information. I did lots of researching, and reading, and talking through how I felt with friends and family. This helped me to reach some conclusions about how I felt about having cancer.

I didn't feel "why me?" Why not me? It happens. I also didn't feel that it's a battle between cancer and me. I don't like the aggressive language used about cancer, that it's a fight, or even worse, f*** off cancer.

My body had made this cancer, it was part of me. The tumours were the symptom, but my body was the cause. It therefore made sense to me that I should be looking at the root cause. Whereas the conventional treatment concentrates on illness, I chose to concentrate on wellness. I therefore took the brave/irrational/mad decision to turn down chemotherapy.

I also took the decision to learn from some experts on what I could do to make my body well again. To turn my body into a place where cancer isn't welcome. By experts, I don't mean doctors. After all, they believed that I couldn't be cured, and had less than 12 months to live! I didn't want to put my health in their hands!

The experts I was interested in are cancer survivors. They have done what I want to do and I could no doubt learn lots from them. But time was of the essence, I didn't have the time, energy or resources to go and find such people. Luckily, I became aware of a holistic cancer centre in Germany, called the 3E Centre. www.3e-zentrum.de The principles they follow have been designed after many years studying cancer survivors across the globe, to find out what factors were common in those surviving cancer.

The findings fall under three broad headings – the mind, diet, and toxicity. The people who survive cancer are those prepared to make drastic lifestyle changes in these areas. I was. So I went to the 3E Centre to learn more. I spent 5 weeks there in October 2012 which was an amazing experience.

What has the mind got to do with cancer and your health you may be asking? Just about everything. We know that if we are worried or stressed that this has a negative impact on the body. Your cortisol levels go up, and this suppresses the immune system. Not good. Chance for cancer or other illnesses to take hold.

One of the first things to consider was how and why did I think I had got cancer? What had been going on in my life for the 2 or 3 years prior to my diagnosis? If we assume that this is when the cancer had been growing, then these are the conditions I would need to change. What were the stresses, what was making me unhappy? What are the things that make me happy and was I spending enough time doing them?

I would encourage everyone to take time to do this exercise. I mean really do it – take the time, do some deep soul searching. Face up to those things which you think you daren't. What are the things that make you happy, and do you make time to do them? You must.

There are lots of things you can do to keep your mind healthy – I have tried lots of them, to find which are the ones which I enjoy and which work for me. You may want to do the same, so here are some examples –

- Meditating – if you don't know how, attend a class, find one online download an app

- Gratitude Journalling – every day write down all the things big and small that you are grateful for
- Getting outside – fresh air and nature, spending time with your own thoughts
- Do something nice for someone else – giving is good for us! Commit a random act of kindness
- Do the fun stuff – what makes you happy, do it often, make it a priority

That gives you some ideas on how to look after the mind. That leaves the other two principles covered at the 3E Centre – diet and toxicity. It makes total sense to me that what you put in your body makes a difference to it. Consume more nutrients and vitamins, less toxins in, more toxins out.

That is why I have totally changed how I shop for food, what I will eat, and how I think about food.

It may sound a bit drastic – but actually it has been an absolute joy to rediscover what food is all about. Now, my fruit bowl and fridge resembles a high class greengrocers. The colours, smells and textures are amazing – like a crunchy vitamin-packed rainbow. I sometimes pick up a ripe nectarine and savour that lovely smell of summer.

When deciding what to eat, I ask myself “what does my body need”. I think of nutrients, and vitamins and tastes and crunchiness. When assembling a salad, I look for additional ingredients to add colour, texture and give little explosions of taste, such as cashew nuts. Or goji berries. Oh go on then, maybe both.

I think in western society we have lost our way with food. We eat what is convenient and easy and cheap. We are more likely to think “what do I fancy to eat”, which leads us to unhealthy choices. Processed food, ready meals, ingredients and additives we can’t even pronounce. Without considering what our bodies are designed to consume.

Imagine that you are a car – designed to take diesel. What would happen if you give it petrol? It packs in. It can’t cope. And that is what we are doing to our bodies with processed food. And then we wonder why we “break down”.

Let me stress that I am not a medical or nutritional expert. I am sharing what I have learned in practice, and what I now know makes a difference.

After 7 months on this regime, I was in much better health to deal with what was coming. The cancer was pretty advanced, and all the gentle, natural therapies were not enough. I needed a more drastic intervention.

I still did not want to go for the conventional systemic chemotherapy, with all the damage it causes to healthy cells too. I researched into my options, and again found the solution in Germany. I found Prof Thomas Vogl, in Frankfurt who delivers chemotherapy in a different way, called T.A.C.E. (trans areterial chemo embolization). In layman's terms, the chemo is delivered through the artery in the groin, under local anaesthetic direct to the tumours. It is therefore much stronger than the systemic means of delivery, and causes fewer side effects.

I had 8 visits from March 2013 to November 2013, and I just got better and better after each one. I had no side effects at all, which I believe is down to the fact that I got my body healthy first. I only started when my body was ready for it, and when my gut instinct told me that it was the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

This treatment, combined with the other supplements and therapies has kept me well. Today, two years after that fateful diagnosis, I am pain-free, the cancer is dormant, and I am living my life to the full. Today I am not only coping with cancer, but living my life and happily co-existing with it.

As a professional motivational speaker, I like to share my experiences and hope that others may benefit. I would like a world where we are all doing the fun stuff, doing nice things for each other, and eating more organic carrots.

It can take courage to cope with life changing news. But that news can be a catalyst for great things if you let it. It can encourage us to take greater responsibility for our health and wellness, to realise what is important if life and make sure that we make room for those things every single day.

Be happy. I am.

Nina Joy Morton-Brook

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