

FACES OF CANCER - JILL'S WALK WITH HER MOM**Date:** Monday, January 21 @ 00:00:00 EST**Topic:** Posts from Jill**DOROTHY HENDRA*****December 25, 1920 - May 30, 2008***

Sunday, January 20, 2008

So hard to believe that it will be almost 6 months since i brought my Mom with cancer and my Dad with 94 years on him down to Charlotte.

What is the most strange is that this is something that i never planned for in my life. See, i am an organized, focused professional person. And all of a sudden, i was faced with something that was not in my self created life plan.

It is really all of my fault. At the beginning of 2007, i made a request to the Divine Force, or God to help me in ways that i needed help. Refine my character, challenge me and offer an opportunity to grow my spirit. You see, i am thankful and also worried that i get what i ask for. I am worried about what is next? Perhaps i will just back off from asking for more and just be with what i have for a while. I am good enough just as i am.

TFT (thought for today) because we are what we think...Jill

Monday, January 21, 2008

I am now thinking about how much thinking that we all do. This is of great joy to me. If you consider how much time you spend in the doing of something compared with the doing of what that thing is; i think your will be amazed that your doing is creating your opinion instead of your thinking creating your opinion.

The intent with which we do anything actually creates the experience for us. Aren't we simple beings? This is how one person can hate a job that someone else finds ths same job a pleasure and a gift. The body experience is preceeded by a chemical creation at your highest level and some studies believe this act to be the very act of creation itself.

When our brains become familiar with something they tend to become bored. The chemical sensitivity of the thought process dulls and is facilitated at the same time. But what our experience is that it actually takes less energy. It can become a habit.

I am impressed that what i started 6 months ago is less intriguing to me. I am now judging myself, but being honest as well. I should not judge, but just give thanks and stop doing so that my brain receptors have time to renew. This is why care takers need time off. To stay in an interested, positive frame of mind with love as the motivator.

Thought for Today...Jill

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

So in thinking about whether to help someone or not; do you first of all consider how much like you they are? How much is the identification process a part of whether we act or not? How much is the 'i have the ability and if i do not help what are the consequenses that i could prevent'? Or in other words, 'what are the ethical standards by which i live'?

Well, when Mom got diagnosed, i felt like it was an opportunity for me, not an obligation. I played out the options if i were not to act and felt that i could not live with those feelings about myself. I told Mom that 'we would be even when i had helped her for about 18 years'. This comment would always quiet her

comments about being a burden to me. Now perhaps this is what love is. Perhaps it is a connectedness, whether it is genetic or by circumstance. We become better for the opportunity presented. We feel connected to our ethical selves. We place our immediate needs secondary to those we love and defer for the greater benefit. And when we look back on our decisions, we are able to smile inside and think 'it was good'.

Thought for today...Jill

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

I am not sure why or how Mom got cancer in the first place. That may seem like a stupid thing to say, but most people ask the 'why me' question when they get the diagnosis. This is a huge question with rational and irrational parts. The rational are easy. Mom smoked an unfiltered type of cigarette for 60 years. She is 87. She is the caretaker of a 94 year old man and has been married to him for over 60 years. She is tired and probably has been depressed most of her life.

Now comes the interesting part, the irrational. Why didn't she get cancer in her 40's? She doesn't even have much lung damage from the smoking. She is some miracle. I think her denial has given her a huge immunologic advantage. Mom doesn't remember negative parts to her past. When i remind her about how bad something was, she usually smiles, twists her face up and says 'i don't remember that'. This really gets to me because i then think that i have remembered it wrong or i have distorted reality to protect my own psyche. Even the chemotherapy treatments 4 months ago are fading from her memory. She got so sick at times it would send me (physician) into a panic, but she would just pick herself up and say 'Wow, that was bad', and keep on going.

And so we ask ourselves, 'what should get our emotions upset'? What is important to remember and what should be forgotten, or repressed so well that it will wither and die from our consciousness. What are the factors both genetic and environmental that help our species to survive and succeed? Clearly, my Mom is a beautiful blend of those factors. They have worked well for her. 'Each to his own', she would say. Knowing that what was helpful to her may not be helpful to all. And it takes variety to give 'spice to life'.

TFT...Jill

Thursday, January 24, 2008

The integrative concept of mind, body and spirit has relevance with my Mom in this wellness walk. I am not sure why we put the word spirit last in the triad when it most likely is the driving force to create the mind set which in turn creates the body's function. I remember when i was about 10 my Mom would take my brother and i to church. I agreed with my Mom when we stopped going because the people in the church were more interested in what clothing was worn than what doctrine was understood. We would return on 'holy days' like Christmas midnite service and Easter. Dad never went with us. And when i would ask why, i was told that 'he already got a gold coin for perfect attendance as a child'.

So Mom gets sick. I was attending a tender little Methodist church in Landis. One Sunday, i asked for the congregation to pray for Mother. They did and it worked. It seemed like just 'the work of the church', very common and routine. To my Mother, she was shocked that people who did not know her would pray for her. I told her, 'they know you by me'. 'We are all connected Mom.' It wasn't long after that, that Mother stopped smoking her unfiltered cigarettes. She just turned to me one day and said that she had not smoked for the past three days and i said I was pleased. Thank you for loving yourself. You deserve clean air.

A couple of weeks ago, between the chemotherapy and the head radiation, when Mom felt stronger, she went to that Landis Methodist church. She gave thanks with me for the first time in over 40 years. The people saw the results of their prayers. We cried tears that made our hearts feel soft and strong at the same time. I believe that you know just what i am talking about. This is why spirit leads all health.

Thought for Today...Jill

Friday, January 25, 2008

I was getting ready to take Mom for a radiation treatment this morning when i got a call from her saying 'there is no heat'. Well, it was true that they had run out of oil and the house was about 60 degrees, but they acted as if they were actually freezing. This same problem happened a couple of months ago and i guess she thought it was fixed forever. To her the issue was huge; to me, it was

something relatively minor. The oil was delivered and the heat was on in an hour.

I have notice an entire array of comfort and control issues that i remember well from when i was growing up. Mom wanted/expected my life to go in a certain way and then when it didn't i was the one who must have been in error. I can remember the look on her face when i told her that i had choosen Psychiatry instead of Family Practice as a speciality. Her comment was, 'what was wrong with our family?'. Well, at that point i wanted to go into the list i had made, but felt that it would serve no purpose so i just smiled.

These issues of separation and dependency are so strange when they are going in the reverse order with the aging of parents. As Mom and Dad loose their abilities there is a downward spiral and with each loss a sense of sadness and wonder if it is gone forever. There is no clarity or end point in this walk. One can only hope that it sheds light on what i want for my 'golden years'. And i guess this is a large part of the growth process for us caregivers. That is, the coming to terms with what we can control and appreciating the areas that will require inter-dependency. What a great opportunity.

Thought for Today...Jill

Saturday, January 26, 2008

As part of my own self care, I am a part of about 1000 physicians blogging about Finding Meaning in Medicine. The issue of being a caregiver is not unique to the relative situaton or a paid attendant. The caregiving relationship is established at all levels and relationships in healthcare. And because we are all human (still) i hope, we are prone to getting our own 'stuff' involved while in a caretaking relationship.

The latest topic on our blog is about detachment in the caregiving relationship. At first, you might find that word offensive with being a provider, but it really has to do with creation of healthy boundaries and expectations in the healing relationship. Trust me, this is easier said than done. There needs to be a continual dialogue in ones head about current roles and proper action given the circumstances. When i take Mom for an appointment with one of her doctors my head is usually spinning. I am trying to figure out how to be a good health advocate for her while not being too pushy and offend her physician.

There have been a couple of times in this experience that i really knew what Mom needed, but had to convince her providers of the correct action. I continue to ask for prayerful guidance in all of this mess. My personal ethics about when to act and when to be still are constantly being tested. Would i, could you, ever face yourself if you have the capacity to act and chose not to for whatever reason? This issue of detachment is very deep. To be continued.

TFT...Jill

Sunday, January 27, 2008

Just got off the phone with Mom. She is having a lot of side-effects with the radiation to her head which is a preventative measure to avoid metastatic seeding. This next week is her last week of treatment. I asked her if she wants to finish the treatments. She said, 'well, of course, what good is going to the doctor, if you're not going to do what they tell you'. I have to just respond the she is in the driver's seat and we will stop any time that she wants. Man a live, I have huge issues with her justifying phrases. I think it is her inconsistency that gets me the most.

You see, if she was going to do what the doctors said, she would have stopped smoking decades ago. I guess i should not be so judgemental of her, having the cancer and all. But, i really feel that those phrases we all use to justify our behavior get us into the worst fixes when we are inconsistent with ourselves. Our unconscious is well aware of our inconsistencies and this probably causes increased adrenalin with all of it's ramifications.

This is clearly not the time or place to help Mom deal with her inconsistencies. My worry is, i wonder if this mental part of her mind-body connection will impair her total recovery. I also am well aware of the huge boundary issue about my trying to address anything to do with her feelings. I pray for the day all this crap just doesn't matter and she is well and less angry.

TFT...Jill

The Delta Walk scheduled for September 11, 2007 was aborted to care for Dorothy Hendra (Jill's Mother). This opportunity led us to refocus on "Care for the Caregiver" in mind - body - spiritual wellness.

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