

cancer answers

Cancer Answers is a series of free public lectures, presented by *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*, on a variety of cancer-related topics. The lectures, delivered by cancer experts, are designed to raise awareness and educate participants about issues related to prevention, screening, early diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and palliative care.

Following each lecture, the presentations are posted on the *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* website.



Spirituality & Cancer

Hope, meaning, and keeping it real

Rev. David Maginley
Chaplain, Cancer Program QEII
April 7, 2009

Religion

Sacred Text
Doctrine
Community
Ritual

**Healthy
Balance**

Spirituality

Nature
Behaviors
Individual
Feelings

Spirituality

A process of connections & relationships through others, ourselves, nature, the universe, or God

Centre for Spirituality, Department of Wellness, University of Denver

Spiritual Crisis

Cancer jeopardizes life, relationships,
sense of purpose... tomorrow.

“Cancer changes everything.”

Spiritual Crisis

Is God punishing me?

Why is this happening to me?

Did I do something to cause this?

What will happen to me when I die?

Spiritual Opportunity

To awaken

To re-connect

To re-evaluate

To be authentic

“A gift wrapped in barbed wire”

Lance Armstrong

77% of patients said they would want their physician to take spiritual needs into consideration, but less than 10% of physicians will.

King DE, Bushwick B: Beliefs and attitudes of hospital inpatients about faith healing and prayer. J Fam Pract 39 (4): 349-52, 1994.)

Defense Mechanisms

Anger

Denial

Emotional isolation

Survival strategies in the face of a threat

A culture of denial

\$23.5 billion in 2010



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Judith Lewis Hermann:

“...The typical response to atrocity or trauma is to banish it from consciousness.”

Spiritual work

...will raise your anxiety.

Authenticity

Congruency

Integration

Connection

Get Real

Peter Rollins

**...tapping into the suffering
of another we can tap into
the deep reservoirs of our
own suffering...**

Spirituality...

**takes you to the places
that scare you.**

Spirituality

- Identifying and removing obstacles to spiritual connection
 - (Mis)conceptions of the Divine; judgment; guilt; “specialness”; unworthiness.
- Spiritual practice: meditation, chanting, imagery, prayer
- Reading scriptural texts
 - Sacred texts, Tolle, A Course In Miracles.

Degrees of Grief

We grieve in direct proportion to the level of relationship.

Grief is the price we pay for love.

Degrees of Grief

While we fear loosing our loved one, friend or patient, that person begins to anticipate, from the moment of diagnosis, loosing everyone and everything they have ever known.

Норе

Kathleen O'Connor

Lamentation names what is wrong, what is out of order... what keeps human beings from thriving in all their creative potential. Simple acts of lament expose these conditions, name them, open them to grief and anger, and make them visible for remedy.

Kathleen O'Connor

In its complaint... anger and grief protests conditions that prevent human thriving, and this resistance may finally prepare the way for healing.

Peter Rollins

Contrary to what people often think, the key to easing peoples suffering is not in offering some insidious theodicy but in allowing a place for people to mourn and meet others who know what it is like to have been burned by that black sun.

An Insidious Theodicy

- “God must have a purpose in this.”
- “Everything happens for a reason.”
- “God doesn’t make mistakes.”
- When your number’s up...
- “God doesn’t give us more than we can handle.”
- “You’re strong, you’ll get through this.”

This is not about providing an answer but rather creating a safe place where we can speak our suffering. While it may seem depressing, such relationships are filled with liberation, light and hope.

Create Openings

- It is not what you say, but how you are present that counts
- Offering the invitation
- Embodying empathy
- Letting the patient lead
- Encouraging expansion on themes
- Reflecting key words

Create Openings

- Ask open-ended questions
- Be aware of what's at stake
- Be prepared to spend time focused on their experience
- Do not abandon

Spiritual Health

- Feelings of helplessness and depression are linked to shorter survival periods
- Active anger and coping styles are linked to longer survival periods (Levy 1995)
- Patients mobilized to activate the emotional experience increased survival in 5 and 10 year follow-ups (Dr. Steven Greer, London)
- Women given supportive emotional therapy did significantly better.
- Cancer patients who expressed their anger had higher cancer-killing lymphocytes at their tumor sites (Temoshok & Dreher, 1992)
- The vitality of anger is translated into the will to live.

Норе

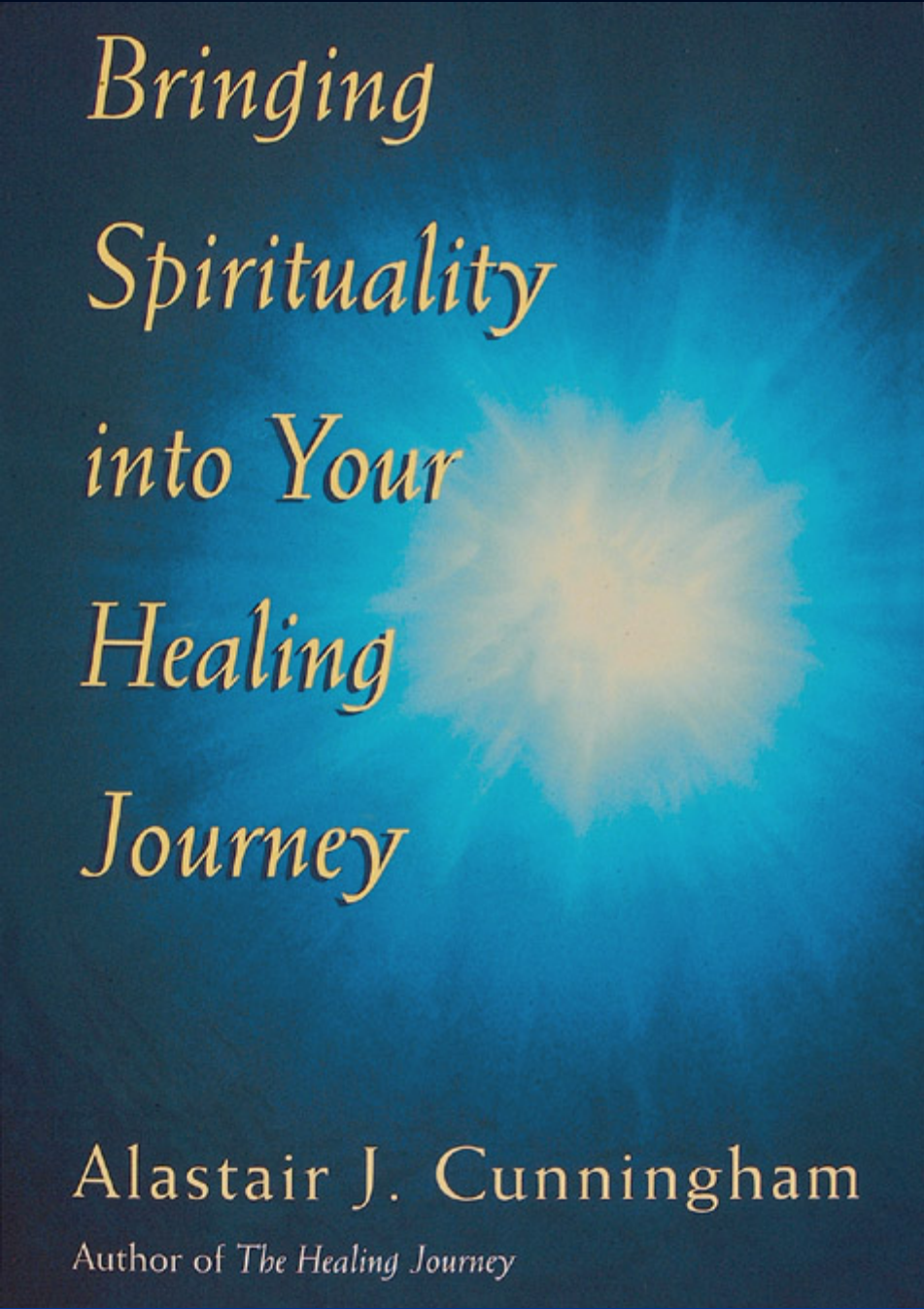
Themes emerging from interviews of long survivors.

- **Authenticity:** awareness of one's true needs and values; relative inner quiet
- **Autonomy:** exercises free choice in actions (living as desired)
- **Acceptance:** of self and others
 - More self understanding
 - Less judgment
 - Cancer less dominant
 - More peace, joy, love

Tools

- Silence
- Body language
- Expression
- Time
- Compassion
- Meditation
 - Tonglen

God



*Bringing
Spirituality
into Your
Healing
Journey*

Alastair J. Cunningham

Author of *The Healing Journey*

Being Real



Ring the bells that can
still ring.

Forget your perfect
offering.

There is a crack in
everything,

That's how the light
gets in.

- Leonard Cohen