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*Shine Through Your Brilliance and Transform Your Life Experience*

## Cancer — How Much Suffering is “Enough”

**By: Melissa Drake**

Isn't having cancer enough suffering? Do those who suffer more get more “points,” or are they more courageous survivors? Aren't all survivors courageous warriors?

Last Christmas I had a private conversation with my sister who was recovering from a radically invasive surgery to remove kidney cancer that metastasized to her pancreas and liver. She was ten weeks out from surgery and still dealing with an attached wound vac, intravenous feeding, immense pain, gastrointestinal problems and general malaise. As she talked about her long recovery and her initial bout with kidney cancer, she said something that shocked me. Something I can't get out of my head no matter how hard I try.

She said, “I feel like I brought this on, like I deserve this. Because the first time I had cancer, I just had surgery and it was gone. It's like I didn't suffer enough the first time, and now I've got to pay for it. I mean, I didn't have to have chemo or radiation or anything. It was just surgery.”

**WHAT?? Really? First off, NO ONE - NOT ONE PERSON - DESERVES CANCER, OR THE HELL THEY MUST ENDURE TO SURVIVE THIS TERRIBLE DISEASE. And second, you - my beautiful sister - did nothing to bring this about.**

I have since wondered if my mother had a similar thought process. When she was initially diagnosed with breast cancer, she had a lumpectomy and five weeks of daily radiation. Just a few minutes a day, she took it in stride - barely a blip in her life. She often complained that not many people even acknowledged that she had cancer because it was kind of a “non-event” in her life.

In my mom's case, her doctor was vigilant about checking her breasts annually for cancer, and every year she was pronounced “cancer-free.” But sadly, the cancer was growing inside her like a raging fire in ALL of her organs. By the time it was caught (by a back surgeon), it was so advanced there was nothing they could do to help her. She tried chemo, but it made her quality of life so much worse. She only survived three months after the second diagnosis.

*“What I do know is that everyone who faces this disease is a warrior who deserves to be lifted up in praise.”*

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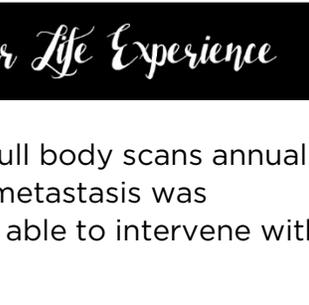
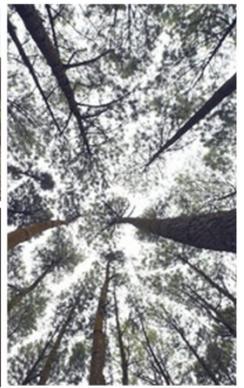


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Thankfully my sister’s doctor has been vigilant about doing full body scans annually to detect metastasis throughout her body. Sadly, last year, metastasis was discovered. Thankfully, it was identified early and they were able to intervene with surgery to remove the cancer.

If you or someone you know has had cancer, don’t settle for a mammogram or a limited view of your body. Insist on a full body scan to check for metastasis. It could save your life.

I really don’t understand why some people get cancer and some people do not. I also don’t understand why some people are healed from cancer and others are not. What I do know is that everyone who faces this disease is a warrior who deserves to be lifted up in praise. And not one should feel guilt, shame or condemnation for the battles they must endure to survive.

