

## Healing Journey

In the fall of 1985 I went through a cancer scare which was complicated by being 8 weeks pregnant with our third baby. Our sons were 6 and 3 years old. The oncology specialist advised us to end the pregnancy and get the treatment. My body and spirit said no. I was carrying life and I knew deep down I would be OK and so would the baby. This started me on a journey into self-healing. I began learning about the vibrational “medicine” of visualization and music and about the power of prayer. Seven months later, Kate was born. That’s why we call her our miracle baby. My website has the rest of the story.(Learn more)

The rest of the story is that through this journey I learned to become my own best advocate for my own health. I educated myself about my options for treatment after we received the diagnosis of cervical cancer. I realized that I was going to have to step up and be a member of my own healthcare team and with my husband make the best decision.

Cervical cancer is easy to treat and has an excellent prognosis when caught early, except when you are pregnant. Not much research was available for cases where the pregnancy was maintained. The question was how the pregnancy hormones would affect the growth of the cancer cells.

The day the doctor did the pregnancy test, he also did a pap smear. It came back abnormal indicating severe dysplasia with malignant cells present. He did a colposcopy without biopsy and that test confirmed stage 0 cervical cancer. I was referred to an oncologist in Chicago who examined me and recommended an immediate hysterectomy. He did not treat us as a pregnant couple with two children at home. He treated me as a cancerous cervix. I was furious. I rejected his plan. He then recommended that we wait a few more weeks to allow the fetus to more firmly implant and do a biopsy. If the cancer had spread beyond the first level, it could grow deeper into the uterus and then spread throughout my body. My own doctor did the biopsy. We rejoiced when the results came back stage zero, meaning that the cervix was only infected down to the first layer of cells. We proceeded and I began my research into the use of guided imagery and music in self-healing. This was more than 24 years ago. Not many cancer centers were doing this then. I found some material and started meditating every day, imagining that the healthy cells were replacing the cancer cells.

One afternoon while Andy was at school and Kyle was napping, I closed my eyes to do my healing meditation. When I was finished, I opened my eyes and above my bed on the ceiling was a bright pulsating light in the shape of a cross. I immediately began to cry. I took it as a sign that I would be OK and that my prayers would be answered. After I composed myself, my left brain kicked in and tried to figure out how the light was coming in through the window and could cause the reflection on the ceiling. At that time in my spiritual development, I was still very skeptical of other dimensions of consciousness. It was a powerful experience that deepened my trust in God and in my own intuition that I and the baby would be OK.

A few weeks later, we had to do another colposcopy to check on the cancer. As I was lying in that delightful position with my legs up in the stirrups, the nurse at my head and my doctor doing the exam, he brought his head up and asked with disbelief, "What are you doing? The cancer cells appear to be shrinking." I told him about the daily visualizations and also said that we were probably on 100 prayer lists around the country (we both come from large extended families with many church-goers and people of deep faith). We all teared up. It was a magical moment that again allowed me to let go of any remaining fear. If I had been freer then I might have burst out in song, right there on the table!

The pregnancy progressed with no more drama. Kate was born healthy and strong. Six weeks later, my doctor did another colposcopy with biopsy. The results indicated cancer cells were present. He recommended a hysterectomy. Again I took it deep into meditation and I decided to reject the plan. I did not want to undergo major surgery. I was nursing an infant and had a 4 and 7 year old who needed their mom. I asked to go with the least invasive treatment of conization of the cervix. I agreed that if that was not enough I would proceed with the hysterectomy. The results came back negative. No cancer cells were present in the procedure. Again my intuition guided me correctly. Even the doctor said, "To have done the hysterectomy would have been overkill." (literally- killing an otherwise healthy organ!). He said he didn't understand why I still needed the uterus since I was done having children. I'm not sure he got it when I said that the uterus was more than just a place holder and was also part of a full orgasmic experience. Since he would have also recommended pulling out my ovaries too I'm so grateful at this age of 58 that I've been able to experience more years of the balancing of my monthly cycle as well as natural menopause.

We each have our health challenges and our bodies respond uniquely to our histories. Please hear that I have no judgement for other's decisions. Only respect for the complexities and the imperative of our own responsibility to care for ourselves in partnership with our health professionals.

I look back on this life changing experience and am grateful for the gifts. And of course, we can't imagine our lives without Kate.