

Alternative cures for cancer and knowing The Secret

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I got another one of those e-mails to buy a "secrets to beating cancer" book in my mailbox this week. You know the ones. They list all the miraculous things that happen to your body when you do what they have so carefully detailed in the book, which is yours for only \$19.99.

It's been a while since I have bitten on one of these, but I can remember actually looking into a few of them a number of years ago when my diagnosis was a little newer, and e-mail became a way to market. Because, who doesn't want to know "the secret" to healing cancer and getting well? What each book usually had was a kernel of truth about something important that was surrounded by lots of marketing. Of course, the secret is that there is no secret. In fact, the more I read about preventing cancer and being healthy during and after cancer, the more I know that what we need to do has been clearly identified -- we just need to do it. To find out what it is, read on--and it's free.

I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when I interviewed Otis Brawley, MD, Chief Medical Officer at the American Cancer Society, at a meeting on disparities in cancer treatment in Las Vegas. Brawley, who is African American, spoke to the assembled physicians from the National Medical Association, the country's largest association of minority physicians, about health issues for African Americans. The message was clear. It's not about biological differences in race; it's about equal access to treatment whether the patient is poor, black, or rural.

Then he focused on lifestyle and the connection to cancer. Brawley said he is incredibly affected by the data that shows that in 1969, 12 percent of black women were obese, while in 2005, it was 40 percent.

I don't know what the percentages are for white women, but I am guessing they are similar.

In an interview afterward he told me that he believes obesity is almost as bad as tobacco when it comes to causing cancer.

At the end of the interview, I was struck by the fact that we have been getting the same information for years. Obesity, diet, lack of exercise, and tobacco are linked to cancer, getting cancer and maybe even having a recurrence of cancer once treated.

So why is it still the secret cure or quick fix that we want? It's hard to change the way we eat to manage our weight; it's hard to make time for exercise; and it's hard to stop smoking when we now know it's more addictive than cocaine.

But it's never too late to start. So I am. The past month was filled with motivating moments for me, beginning with my 60th birthday and followed by Dr. Brawley's

logical assessment to use what we know. Then my daughter Kirtley, who will be 24 in a few months, told me she has begun the KPBP, the Kirtley Perkins Betterment Project, which includes taking care of her body and her soul with specific things to do for her physical, social, and emotional self.

Kirtley has grown up as the daughter of a breast cancer survivor and granddaughter to my mom, who died of breast cancer. I don't know if her cancer risk had anything to do with the KPBP, but I hope so.

So, I am beginning the KLLL plan (I like alliteration), which stands for the Kathy LaTour Leaping Lizards plan, as in leaping into the next part of my life.

First, I am going to take off the 30 pounds that has slowly crept onto my frame since my diagnosis 23 years ago. I am working not only with my internist, who is also a survivor, but also my holistic chiropractor who has gotten me off sugar and onto some great food-based supplements. She sees food as medicine for the body and soul.

Luckily I don't have to stop smoking, but I do have to stop getting those chocolate shakes from Jack-in-the-Box.

Second, I am putting a lap pool in my back yard. I am a total creature of convenience. I know that unless I can exercise easily, I won't do it. And I love to swim.

Third, I am going to ride my motorcycle more and meet up with friends more to take care of my soul. In fact, a number of the breast cancer survivors I have ridden with from all over the world will be joining me in Hill Country next May for a week of riding, hanging, and healing. Come join us if you fit the criteria.

It feels good to make a plan. The Japanese culture says life begins again at 60. You get to start over. As long as I can skip acne, I am ready to go.

Let me know about your plan, and I'll keep you posted on my progress.

P.S. If you are having trouble leaving a comment here or want to make a personal comment to me, please let me know at kathyl@curetoday.com