

## Preface

I keep three books beside my bed: “Mind over Medicine,” “Radical Remission,” and “After the Diagnosis.” The first book advocates discarding the diagnosis and fostering self-healing. The second compiles traits shared by individuals who have overcome terminal illnesses. The third delves into accepting one’s diagnosis, embracing life with peace and dignity, and preparing for death. While these perspectives may seem contradictory, I find them complementary. It’s a scientific truth that a positive mindset is a potent healing tool, yet it alone may not suffice against threatening conditions. People with sunny dispositions succumb to illness all the time, but isn’t life better lived with hope in our hearts, no matter how much time that is, free from the fear of death?

I’m 53 years old and have been diagnosed with leptomeningeal metastatic cancer. This condition, also known as LMD, involves cancer cells infiltrating the cerebrospinal fluid, a clear liquid vital for brain and spinal cord cushioning, and the leptomeninges, the protective membranes encasing the brain and spinal cord. In my case, my previous breast cancer, which had gone into remission, had spread from my left breast and armpit to these critical areas.

Sadly, there's no cure and conventional therapies only offer a brief extension of life, typically a few months at best. The option presented to me was chemotherapy, focused radiation, and medication, which might marginally prolong my life but also comes with distressing side effects such as hair loss, nausea, and vomiting. Prioritizing quality of life over mere quantity, I chose not to pursue this route.

Although my doctors refrained from specifying an exact timeline, the prognosis remains bleak. Left untreated, the time from diagnosis to death typically spans four to six weeks. With conventional treatment, overall survival extends to approximately two to four months, according to the National Institute of Health. Other Google searches say three months to a year and so I've decided to choose that as my prognosis. It's now been five months.

As I write this, uncertain of its ending, I realize I'm no different from anyone else. Aren't all our lives terminal? Just a month after my diagnosis, my cousin's 60-year-old husband, in great health and a devout Christian, collapsed from a heart attack while driving a go-kart and passed away. His sudden demise reminds us that nobody knows their expiration date. Haven't we all known those who departed too soon, as well as those who defy logic by enduring? It's a paradox I find difficult to reconcile.

In the months following my diagnosis, I didn't expect to feel this way, but for the first time, I'm completely free and at peace. I no longer lie awake worrying about bills or taxes. Not because they don't exist anymore, I just have a clearer perspective these days.

My hope and intent in writing this book and sharing my stories is that somehow you, the reader, can relate to one or more of them, perhaps you recognize yourself in similar circumstances, and maybe what I've learned can also help you

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heal. God wants you to know it's never too late. It's never too late to find gratitude and purpose in past pains and trials.

If I were to chart the peaks and valleys of my life, it would resemble a heart monitor during cardiac arrest. I've celebrated steep highs and endured deep lows, each teaching me invaluable lessons. I didn't realize it at the time, but with the grace of God, He helped me to learn from the hard and challenging times, appreciate them, and even be grateful for them because I now realize that I have learned so much more during the difficult times than I have during the easy times.

*Thank you, God, for the challenges in my life. Though I may not understand them all, grant me the wisdom to learn from them and aid those facing similar struggles.*

C.S. Lewis once said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

I've come to see that every failure, every hardship, has prepared me for this moment. The trials that I thought I was merely surviving was actually God shaping and molding me for what could be the final trial of my life.