

Good Morning, my name is Cherie Nobbs and I wrote Cancer Journey Handbook for Travellers, Carers & Friends. Phew! It's a mouthful, isn't it?

I'm passionate about helping others on a cancer journey, I write these talks just how I think, feel or speak, so if this talk sounds more like a lecture then I apologise in advance.

To begin with I would like to talk about the power of the mind and the importance of positive thinking during a cancer journey.

Tomorrow marks the third year since Butch passed away and I suppose you're wondering what it is I can tell you about being positive when our journey obviously didn't have such a rewarding or uplifting end.

Throughout our journey, which was like an emotional roller coaster, it was hard to remain focussed on the positive in the face of so much negativity, both from the medical profession and those around us.

Its difficult, which is an understatement really, to feel positive when we read cancer is the leading cause of death in Australia, but there are many positive stories out there. Before Butch was diagnosed with cancer, we didn't know much about cancer, except that people died from it – that's not a positive or uplifting thought at all.

There is more to curing cancer than just treatment - I can't emphasise enough how important a positive attitude is. Statistics have shown that a positive attitude throughout, from you and your medical professional is one of the single most contributing factors on a cancer journey.

There will always be people out there who are not expecting a positive outcome from a cancer journey and I suggest you avoid them with a ten foot barge pole...longer if you can!

As an example...About four months before Butch passed away, he was walking between 10 and 15 kilometres a day. He was looking great and feeling fine. At his regular oncology appointment he told his specialist he was thinking of looking for another job. His specialist told him he had to start thinking like a sick man, he should stop walking, give up his job and make the most of the time he had left.

Now Butch had a belief in these medical experts and nothing I could say or do would shake that belief. Within the month he had stopped walking every day and had deteriorated considerably.

It wasn't until after he'd passed my daughter said he had told her several weeks later his specialist had sent him home to die.

What we believe, when others share an opinion, especially if we respect them, has a marked effect on our belief systems and approach to life.

During Butch's journey, I talked to another specialist who told me he didn't give people 'die by dates', because inevitably they would die almost 'on time'.

Another specialist told me that no two cancer journeys are the same. You could have a whole room of people with the same type of cancer, but how their body would react to treatment wouldn't be the same. So just because someone passed away after being diagnosed with a similar cancer, don't go thinking you will meet the same fate. We are all unique individuals and not text book studies.

The power of the mind is amazing. How many times have you gone out, feeling on top of the world, but if someone says to you 'Ooh, you don't look well', you lose that great feeling, don't you? Or someone tells you you can't possibly achieve something...and then you don't? Or maybe someone had a strong belief in you and you did something you never thought you could?

I was talking to a naturopath the other day and she was telling me about a new client she had had. He had been given three months to live, after having gone through all the treatments the hospital could give him. She told him she wasn't sure if she could help him, because his body had been through so much and he had kinda left it until he had no other options. He changed his way of life, took supplements and addressed some issues he had never resolved. Six months later he went back to his specialist and was told he probably had another two years left now.

This makes me ask a few questions. 1. How do they know? 2. Where does the two years come from? And 3. Will he die on demand when that time comes around?

As Henry Ford once said 'Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right'

One of my mum's friends was diagnosed with cancer about six months before Butch was. It was well advanced, and she tried everything that was on offer. Eventually her specialist told her 'Sorry, there is nothing more we can do for you.' She was given a three month maximum life expectancy.

After her appointment, she went home, did some research, found treatments that worked for her and she is still alive and kicking up her heels! Her positive attitude is the most amazing I have ever experienced.

As I was writing my book, my daughter, Trish had a friend whose husband was diagnosed with cancer. I gave him a draft copy of my book to read. He has been clear for two years now. Now, I'm not saying my book is the be all and end all for those going through a cancer journey. What I am saying is that after reading my book, he became a **part** of his journey, his treatment and made changes to assist him towards a more positive result.

Being in control of your journey is important (and lets face it, this could be applied to anything. Don't let anyone drive for you! Handing your power over to others, whether they are health professionals, or family and friends is not the answer. Remember, it is only you who will have an impact on your health! You wouldn't travel alone through Bolivia without a road map or some kind of guidance, would you? (well, maybe if you were a man who didn't like asking for directions...tee hee)

I'm not advocating any particular form of treatment, orthodox or otherwise. I am asking you to be present in your cancer journey, to be in control and to know deep within yourself that the path you have chosen is the best one for you.

When we visited friends who would act negative we would go out armed with a few words or a phrase so we could stop them in their tracks. My favourites were comments about how great the weather was, no matter how bad it was, or to use the word 'indubitably' whilst nodding solemnly. This would bring a smile to our face as we shared a private joke. I had a friend who would continually talk about planting seeds whenever the conversation steered towards her possible demise. (*give an example*)

If you find a treatment or practice that works for you, then stay focussed on it. Don't be caught up in others belief systems of what is and isn't a cancer cure. It's easy to become scattered with all the options available to you, but my thoughts are that if you try too many different therapies, etc, you may be counteracting the good one of them might be doing. Of course that is just my opinion.

I have another friend who passed away earlier this year. She was doing really well and had been in remission for some time. She also did lots of research, but instead of focussing on what was working for her, she became scattered and tried every treatment that was suggested to her. As a result she lost her focus, she let others take charge of her journey and took on their negative belief systems. I'm not saying this was the only reason her journey ended badly, but I feel it had an impact of sorts.

My belief system, and that's exactly what it is, MY belief system, is that cancer isn't as much a disease as it is dis-ease within the body. We live in a toxic world, eat way too much processed food, we are stressed, rushed and tend to bottle up emotions and thoughts rather than letting them out. However it is surprising the amount of people who have been cured by changing their lifestyle or the way they handle trauma or stress, regardless of which form of treatment they chose – orthodox or natural..

The catch word I have had in my head since I offered to do this talk is 'Discriminate'! Discriminate when it comes to the support group around you. This is your journey. If they don't believe in you or a positive outcome, then you don't need them!

Now I'd like to briefly address Carers...

Carers

Standing beside cancer is extremely tough too. Knowing you have no control at all, that all choices are, for better or worse, made by the traveller, can be devastating, especially if you don't see eye to eye on the form of treatment used.

This was one of my toughest lessons. I would continually discover new information or therapies, but it was Butch who would decide whether he wanted to take it any further. I know I tried many ways to get him to see my point of view over that two and a half years, but he wasn't having a bar of it. And you know what, they wouldn't have worked anyway, because he didn't believe they would work for him.... That's how the mind works!

Don't get so caught up in trying to be positive you end up living in la-la land. I know I became so focussed on my positive outlook I refused to acknowledge any negativity we may have been experiencing. In hindsight, I should have sat and discussed those times when he felt stuck or that it was all futile. We would have talked it through instead of internalising our thoughts and feelings.

My advice to carers is 'Be positive, but not at the expense of being blind to reality'

I used to go to the Natural Health Food Store once a month to promote my book. During my time there I met a lot of people who had cancer and I had an opportunity to listen to their stories.

There was one lady I met who really brought home to me how the way people react can affect someone's journey.

We chatted for about three quarters of an hour before she felt she could tell me she had been diagnosed with cancer. She told me she didn't usually tell anyone because they seemed to treat her different, as if cancer was contagious or worse still, as if she was already dead.

During our conversation she explained how she had been in remission for about six months, but the cancer had come back.

I asked her why she thought it had returned. She told me about this wonderful health professional she had met who believed he could help her using various activities, changes in her diet and lifestyle.

True to his word, when she had a scan some months later it was clear. He advised her to keep up with all the changes they had made, which she did, visiting him on a weekly basis.

However, as word spread about this man and how he was helping people with their cancer challenge, he became more popular. It was difficult to get an appointment to see him and his employees didn't share his inspiring confidence in her.

This lady felt disillusioned, she desperately needed the positive feedback he had given her each week. All her family and friends were so negative, they had already decided she wouldn't make it.

So she stopped trying or keeping up this amazing regime, she succumbed to the negativity around her and within a short time, the cancer returned.

There are two points I'd like to raise from this story – one is that this lady, although she was fortunate enough to find someone who believed in a positive outcome to her cancer journey, when things turned pear shaped, it would have been a good idea to find another inspiring professional. She also gave away her power; she only believed she would be healthy again as long as someone else believed it for her. I often wonder what happened to that lady, she never returned to the shop while I was there.

I was positive for Butch during his journey, I believed if he did things my way he would beat his cancer and live on into old age. My being positive didn't mean diddly squat when he didn't believe in the therapies and treatments I did. It is the traveller and their belief that are the MOST important factors of a cancer journey.

Okay, so either we can watch the show or you can ask some questions. What would you like to do?