



Difference Between Healing and Curing, by Michael Lerner, PhD

In my thirty years of working with cancer patients, I've seen a profound distinction between curing and healing.

Curing is what a physician seeks to offer you. Healing, however, comes from within us. It's what **we** bring to the table. Healing can be described as a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual process of coming home.

Even if we're losing ground physically, there's extra-ordinary emotional, mental and spiritual healing that can go on. One of the most toxic new-age ideas is that we should "keep a positive attitude." What a crazy, crazy idea that is. It is much healthier, much more healing, to allow yourself to feel whatever is coming up in you, and allow yourself to work with that anxiety, depression, grief. Because, underneath that, if you allow those feelings to come up and express themselves, then you can find the truly positive way of living in relationship to those feelings. That's such an important thing.

Then there's the ideas we have about ourselves, our lives, about what the disease means. Often, people feel like their disease is some kind of judgment on them: "What did I do wrong?" I'm not sure that's an idea that serves people very much. When I had my heart-attack, I felt as though I was reborn. Even though I had been working with cancer patients for 18 years, when it was **my** heart attack, there was this profound rebirth experience. My beloved wife says that after the heart attack, I spent the first three months just rearranging the rocks in our garden. The whole world seemed new to me. I was inventing my life all over again. So there is the opportunity that comes with cancer, to ask ourselves how we want to reinvent our lives. And that can be one of the most powerful healing things we can do.

Healing is the most fundamental aspect of our condition, and it's a continuous rediscovery of what it means to be alive. It spills over into the rest of our life and guides us. It's not only about some "spiritual experience" of being high all the time. Not at all. It is about living with the ongoing stresses and strains and difficulties -- and joys -- of life, but doing so in a way that we feel whole.

Living in relationship with the struggles of life is what makes us human.