

There's Nothing A Little Cancer Won't Cure Learning to Listen to Life's Whispers



by Jill A. Ehlers

I didn't expect to spend my 46th birthday in 2006 sitting in a hospital waiting room – but sometimes life throws you a curve ball. My 26 year-old daughter, Cherie, and I were waiting for my husband, Ken, who was having a scan to see if cancer had metastasized to his bones. Many may think of this as a scary ending but what we found was a new beginning – well, several new beginnings.

In June 2006 Ken was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Often slow growing, his was a fast onset, very aggressive form. Luckily, the initial tests showed it had not spread to his bones or lymph nodes. While not entirely conclusive, these results were at least encouraging. Our kids, Cherie and Nick, and I rallied around this man we dearly love, quickly deciding to focus on the positive and especially on getting him well.

Ken, being a left-brain person and scientifically educated, did his research about what to expect. For his mental health his reading included *Full Catastrophe Living* by John Kabat-Zinn, *Who Dies* by Stephen Levine, *Love Without Conditions* by Paul Ferrini, and the *Energy Anatomy* CD's by Caroline Myss. This experience has convinced him that we are constantly surrounded by life's whispers telling us what course of action is best for us but we are most often too wrapped up in our own history, plans, expectations, judgments and attachments to listen. Sometimes life (or God, or the Divine, or our greater self, or whatever you are comfortable calling it) gets tired of waiting for us and decides to YELL!! That's what the prostate cancer was –

a major league whack on the side of the head. "Catch a clue!" it said. That's when the whispers started getting heard -- leading our lives to have an endless series of gentle nudges in a variety of directions.

Several Rotarian friends had received treatment at a particular medical school and so an appointment was scheduled. Surgery was recommended but an insurance dispute made that course of action financially impossible. During an appointment at the School of Medicine at University of California, San Francisco, we were told that surgery was not only not recommended but potentially harmful. The treatment of choice was radiation. After much research, Ken is convinced that surgery would have been the wrong course of action in his case. The insurance problem was the very first whisper and we had no other choice but to listen. As is so often true of whispers, its' value is only obvious in retrospect.

Through his reading, Ken became interested in labyrinths as a tool for prayer and meditation. We have six acres and he downloaded a pattern for a seven ring labyrinth. The next day he measured, marked and cut the 100 foot x 100 foot labyrinth into our field with his riding lawnmower. I couldn't believe that he cut it perfectly the first time. Over the next week or so, we laboriously hauled load after load of crushed granite to the pathway. When the granite was all laid we adorned the center with an old milk can from Ken's parents dairy. We topped it off by bolting an old metal tractor seat to it for the perfect meditation seat. It is a place of acceptance and healing and it became the source of the next whisper and a wonderful group of healing women.

Ken is an optometrist and one day a woman arrived at his office without an appointment and asked if it was possible to have a long overdue eye exam. There was an opening in the schedule and she was seen immediately. As she sat in the exam chair, Ken noticed that she was wearing a labyrinth medallion. He asked her about it and proceeded to tell her about his labyrinth and current health situation. Three days later she called and asked him if he had heard of Energy Medicine, specifically Healing Touch. She said there was a group of women practicing this art in town and he should consider using their services. This sounded a little left field to his scientific mind but the whisper got a little louder and he read the recommended web site. He learned that Healing Touch is practiced by a lot of RN's, is approved for Continuing Education for RN's and is being offered in many hospitals in the U.S.

But there needed to be one more whisper. Shortly after hearing and reading about Healing Touch, Ken overheard another patient talking about her recent move here and what she did. She was an RN from Hawaii who had worked in a hospital that actively encouraged the nurses to use Healing Touch. She and her partner were practitioners of energy medicine and a great friendship was established. Ken's left brain said "what if" and his right brain said "what have you got to lose?" It was becoming very clear there are no co-incidences in life if you listen closely. So he became a client and received Healing Touch on a regular basis during the time he received 44 radiation treatments. Another gentle whisper said: "Jill, you should go along and watch".

Watching these serene, wonderful women (and one man) doing energy work on my sweet husband filled my heart with love. A tiny spark of interest lit in me (whisper, whisper). As the treatments progressed, they taught me some basic techniques to use on Ken after each radiation treatment. We are convinced that it is because of this energy work that Ken suffered very few of the normal side effects from the radiation treatment. I wanted to learn more so I registered for a Healing Touch Level 1 class at Children's Hospital in Seattle. After the week-end class I was on cloud nine and very excited about finding this new career opportunity. When I got home Ken had found an ad in Energy Magazine for Healing Touch for Animals (HTA). That was all it took, I was hooked! I have always had a deep love of all animals so this was a no-brainer. At 47 years of age I had finally found my passion!

The training for HTA includes four levels of instruction given over three day week-ends. Unfortunately, none of the HTA classes were offered close to home so over the next six months

I traveled to Salt Lake City, Baltimore, Denver and Cincinnati. That was a lot of flying for someone who can't sleep on airplanes. You know how they say "necessity is the mother of invention"? Well on the very last trip home I came up with the idea (whisper) for a way to sleep comfortably while traveling. I thought about it the whole way home and the next day I was compelled (well, more like obsessed) with making a prototype. Now, I have to say, I don't sew at all. As a matter of fact anything that I have ever sewn on a machine ended up scrunched in a ball and thrown into a closet - never to be seen again. Nevertheless I hand sewed my first prototype and it worked! Nodstop™ was born. Nodstop™ is a soft, stretchy headband that is designed to go around the back of vehicle headrests (airplane, RV, car, etc). It allows the user to sleep comfortably in an upright position or semi-reclined position without the usual floppy head syndrome and the resultant neck pain and strain.

As we went through the patent process we started to think about who we might have manufacture Nodstop™. We felt very strongly that this product was a blessing that was "given" to us. We felt it was very important to manufacture our product in the U.S. and as locally as possible. Ken, my CFO (as I began referring to him) started searching the internet. We called several manufacturers but found out we were "too small" for most. Then, up came a whisper, and Ken found Rockwest Training in Salem, OR. Rockwest is a private non-profit organization providing training and employment to physically and/or mentally disabled adults. We feel they are a perfect fit for this young company and look forward to having them make our product. Go to jill@nodstop.com for more information.

Through this whole process, I have been finishing my HTA certification and have had some amazing experiences with many different animal species (please visit my web site www.jktea.com). Along with my regular clientele I do volunteer work with the local Humane Society, Chimps, Inc. in Bend, OR, Wildlife Images Education and Rehabilitation Center in Merlin, OR, and double Oak Farms, a rescue, rehabilitation and adoption facility in the Applegate Valley of Oregon.

I have definitely found my passion in working with animals. As a matter of fact, since I came up with Nodstop while traveling for HTA training, I have also committed a portion of my net proceeds towards HTA education and animal rescue programs.

I feel that it is so important to "give back" with this product. One of my goals is to employ single moms in a job share program providing on site daycare.

Ken's cancer is currently well controlled. What began as some of the worst news a family can hear has turned into one of our life's great lessons – learning to listen to the whispers. We no longer try to make life fit our plans but rather live in the moment and trust that the whispers will take us where we need to go.

My life has been blessed with this wonderful man, our children, my new passion in HTA and Nodstop for a special reason. I plan on enjoying each and every moment for as long as I can.

About the author:

Jill is the youngest of eleven children and a native Oregonian. She and Ken (a native Idahoan) have two children - Cherie, 28, a personal trainer living in San Diego, CA and Nick, 25, a biologist living in Gardiner, MT, and a sweet dog "Bud." Jill and Ken have been married 25 years.

In 2006, Ken was diagnosed with prostate cancer. While devastating at first, the diagnosis has led Jill and Ken down the road of self discovery. Jill became a Healing Touch for Animals practitioner (her passion), wrote a children's book "A Fairy's Tail" and invented, patented and launched Nodstop, LLC.