

EXCERPT: TOOL OF VISION

Moving Forward

This feels kind of odd, because each morning for the last five years, I've written about how one can make efforts to live a "balanced life." Yet for the last six weeks, I have not written in the mornings because I've "lost my balance."

One morning, I woke up, and I could only move forwards. If I attempted to go backwards, I was totally thrown off. Everything was spinning. I soon went to an emergency room, and they said it was "vertigo," gave me a pill, and sent me to a specialist, who shifted me around and said, "It will go away." A few days later, I could not do anything to my left, let alone find the clarity to do my morning routine of yoga, meditation, and writing.

At this point, something told me to visit a different emergency room, so (moving only forward and right) I went to Lenox Hill Hospital. I got there and spent most of that Friday getting MRIs, scans, and tests. At the end of the day, a pleasant, intelligent surgeon stood at my bedside. He showed me images and explained that they had found a brain tumor, and it needed to be removed as soon as possible because it was so close to my brain stem. Urgency mounted. So Sunday morning it was, and by that evening, the surgery was done, and I awoke.

After surgery, I was moved to the intensive care unit, where all sorts of wires and tubes were protruding from my body, arms, and head, in addition to the incision that went from my neck to the middle of my head. I could not hold food down for days and could barely move or sleep. All I could do was lie in bed and breathe. Yet, breathing on my own felt like such a blessing, knowing so many others needed a machine to breathe. Meditating and praying became somewhat difficult, due to the fact that I was on heavy painkillers and had a hard time getting a hold of my mind. Still, I found the strength to laugh, thinking, "I don't stop working, do I? Because this seems like a pretty good time to test one of my many theories on regaining one's balance."

I think a question that runs constantly through the minds of people who get cancer is "Where did I go wrong?" In truth, it's hard to pinpoint how anyone gets cancer, and I can only speak for myself,

as my doctors and surgeons often drew the conclusion that my (cancerous) brain tumor probably developed at a very early age in my life. This explains why it is so rare for someone my age to develop this type of brain tumor. So, maybe instead of asking, “What did I do wrong?” I should ask, “What did I do right?” What did I do right to be living with cancer for, quite possibly, most of my life and not feel any of the effects of it until recently? Nobody seems to have the answer as to why cancer happens, and questions will continue to arise.

One question I will never forget is one I asked when I was researching this book years ago. I asked many top cancer specialists, “Is it possible for a cancer cell to live in an environment consisting solely of oxygen?” The answer was unanimously “No.” So I will draw the conclusion myself. If one increases his or her flow of oxygen, he or she can decrease the chance of cancer.

Next question: What increases the flow of oxygen? There seems to be countless things that can increase the flow of oxygen, yet the one answer I always end up with is love. It is love that makes friends, family, and even strangers reach out to help each other. I believe it is “love” that keeps us *“Moving Forward.”*

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