

# **Real Macrobiotics for Cancer Prevention and Treatment**

By Verne Varona

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# Real Macrobiotics for Cancer Prevention and Treatment

By Verne Varona

## **"We ain't getting' healthier..."**

Think about this for a moment. In 1960, 1 out of 4 people had cancer. Today it is 1 out of 3. Estimates reason that this could grow to 1 out of 2 within the next 15 years. This means that over half the population will have some form of pre-cancer or developed cancer.

Since President Nixon declared a "war on cancer" over 35 years ago the incidence of cancer has increased to a mind-boggling 40%. Last year, well over 1,250,000 Americans were diagnosed with cancer. The real economics of cancer treatment are absurdly exorbitant: Cancer treatment expenditures, for treatment and research, are close to \$100 billion annually (\$100,000,000,000). The chemotherapy part of that figure, in 1995, was approximately, \$8.5 billion.

Cancer deaths are not widely advertised, but are definitely increasing; despite some fluctuations that prompt media outlets to claim cancer is in decline. Cancer has overtaken heart disease as America's # 1 killer. In spite of the best therapy that conventional medicine has to offer, this year, over 650,000 Americans will suffer and die from cancer.

### *In Greed We Trust.*

Here's some corporate irony: the Bristol Myers company owns patents on twelve of the nearly forty "FDA-approved" chemotherapeutic drugs. The president, past president, chairman of the board, and a couple of the directors of Bristol Myers all hold, or have held, chief positions on the board at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

## **Some Back Story**

—"You have a large mass in your chest, Mr. Varona..."

"I'm sorry, you'll have to repeat that. I swear I heard you say, 'mass' "...

—"You heard correctly. I can only assume that this has been growing for a while and that it has already spread. If it is lymphoma, as we suspect, without chemotherapy, you may have *no longer than 10 months to live*. And, if so, I would suggest that you get your affairs in order."

The echo of those words from an oncologist reading my CT scan lingered heavily in the emergency medical room air around me. This had to be a very bad dream. It had all the surreal markings of a dream; a strong sense of present moment, diffused background that seemed like a blur and a sense that I was watching it all on a big screen. But, it wasn't.

Nor was the pain that I felt in the middle of my chest as I surfed the channels of a southwest hotel television that evening after a long day of radio and television appearances to promote my book, "Nature's Cancer-Fighting Foods." I drove myself to the ER, asked for an x-ray and presumed that my pain had something to do with inflammation. Minor stuff I figured.

### Me & My Shadow

The x-ray technician told me that I had a “shadow” on my chest x-ray and would require a CT scan. I had to really think about this recommendation, especially knowing that one CT scan can be the equivalent to over 133 regular lung x-rays. With panic as my co-pilot, I gave the go-ahead. I had some heart pressure, zero appetite and the fatigue I recently noticed was increasing. I needed to know what the diagnostics would reveal. Because my “mass of 7 centimeters,” was centralized near my aortic archway, a center of the lymph network, the oncologist suggested, in very confident terms, that I had “probable lymphoma.”

Now, to me, this was clearly, impossible! I had been macrobiotic for almost 30 years—how could this be? I returned to LA and immediately got three other medical opinions. All the same: “Probable lymphoma with a life expectancy of 8 to 12 months, if left untreated.” If treated, “perhaps 15 to 18 months, with potential side effects from the chemo....”

I took matters into my own hands, refused a biopsy and left what felt like the unhealthiest place in the country—Los Angeles. I moved, of all places, to Omaha, Nebraska. I had some good friends there and a special friend that generously offered caring support and encouragement. Stress, for the first time in years, became non-existent. I meditated, did daily visualizations, took morning walks in the woods, and watched plentiful deer and wild turkeys freely roam the rural property I’d rented. I ate small volumes of medicinal macrobiotic fare, chewed each mouthful a gazillion times and did some serious self-reflection on the life that I’d been living and the changes I wanted to make. I reconnected with a number of forgotten friends, asked forgiveness from others, gave forgiveness where it was warranted and read everything I could on alternative treatments. I found it ironic that I was the author of a book on Cancer and diet, and here I was, barely three months after its national print release, fighting my own “cancer.” I lost a great deal of weight from my strict low-fat regime, but reminded myself that vanity had to take a backseat to healing.

### Real Personal Growth

Within only a week of my strict regime I began to feel radiant, more positive, energetic and hopeful. After three months of this, I had another scan to check how much this mass had reduced. I was certain that it was now, at least, half the size. But, diagnostics proved me wrong. It had actually *increased*. Now, it was 11 centimeters—and *growing*! It seemed that no matter what I attempted to offset, slow or reverse this condition, it had a mind of its own and was determined to grow. My oncologist feared the worst. Suddenly, despite a usually positive disposition, I was dismal at the probability of an early death.

A week later I entered the hospital for a two-day stay and had the long avoided biopsy. Afterward, the surgeon appeared at my bedside and I remember thinking, while still in a drug groggy state, that the worst news was imminent. I braced myself and once again, everything suddenly seemed dream-like as the surgeon’s voice monotone began echoing through my head.

### The “Terminal” Diagnosis

“Mr. Varona, you’re going to be all right. You *don’t* have cancer. As a matter of fact, you didn’t even have a tumor. Had we done an MRI of the lungs, which is not all that common because it’s moving tissue, we would have known. But, the CT scan made it appear as a solid mass. You actually had a fluid cyst, that’s all—and we think it was congenital. We drained it, pulled it out by its root and your surrounding tissue looks very healthy. You’re gonna be fine. Have a nice weekend.”

And with that, he smiled, waved like the Lone Ranger and galloped out of the room. I was preparing to die, but suddenly, I was in a different movie. I spent about 5 months dealing with this and going through the stages that most cancer patients typically go through—the tears, anger, denial, fear, sadness, remorse, etc. What I heard from the surgeon’s lips in that little hospital room was every cancer patient’s dream: “You *don’t* have cancer...”

This experience had a profound effect on my character, my view of sickness, of modern medicine, and of how I was trained to look at cancer through a very conceptual macrobiotic prism. In this article I want to share how I now view cancer through a redefined macrobiotic perspective. The opinions that follow, are my own and not of any party line, group consciousness or commercial interest. However, I have an amazing new super everything supplement, and if you know just 20 people...

### **Dr. Know-It-All & His Time-Line Diagnosis**

First of all, I believe that physicians, oncologists or surgeons have absolutely no right to give patients a timeline of death. It's presumptuous, arrogant and more often than not, inaccurate. The negative psychological power of such a prediction often does more harm than good. People are *not* statistics. If everyone who is immediately diagnosed with cancer returns home, suffers from post-diagnostic anxiety, continues to eat the same poor food and maintain the identical unhealthy lifestyle, that they had in the past, in that case, perhaps then they might fit within a statistical disease category.

People are unique individuals with amazing potential for transformation on every level, including cellular. For those who are adventurous enough to change multiple aspects of their lives, beginning with foundational ones such as food and lifestyle, the possibility of exceptional healing is...definitely, a possibility. *Expect* a miracle, I always say.

However, the real work is to expect a miracle without the psychological attachment of thinking that a miracle *must* happen. It's the attachment that often generates low-level, constant stress. What will be, will be. You give it your best shot, pray and keep focused on what you want.

I once asked a 4<sup>th</sup> stage cancer client how he related to all his failed attempts at alternative healing. He thought for a moment and said: "It's been said that, '*The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it,*' – I never understood that until very recently."

***'The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it...'***

### **Reasons for Cancer**

We need an expanded mindset to comprehend the possibilities of why someone develops a cellular mutiny such as cancer. I do not believe that a client's dietary slip of cookies, some baked goods or flour snacks qualify as the primary reason for their cancer spreading. This flies in the face of so many factors that we know contribute to a growing cancer. In fact, considering all that we now know about cancer, such reasoning is intellectually insulting.

#### *Pick A Cause...*

We know that for some cancers a genetic history has its influence, as does: environmental toxins, building construction toxins, pesticides, x-rays and gamma rays, cosmetic contaminants, emotional factors, tobacco excess, BBQ fats, daily life stress, excess animal protein and fat consumption, simple sugar intake, etc— the list seems endless. Recently, the FDA found significant traces of 60-80 pesticides in the average American food-shopping basket. Yet, to this date, no further research, or product banning has been authorized.

But, it's rarely one simple reason. A number of factors conspire to weaken our immunity, making us more susceptible to cancer's growth. Apparently, we all have some degree of cancerous cells floating around our blood stream. It is the susceptibility of a damaged cellular DNA and a weakened immune system no longer effectively combative that gives cancer cells a green light to progress.

## How Your Body Heals

That said, we should examine the role that food plays in restoring our health. Food, as a substance that becomes part of our blood chemistry and influences our entire physiology, helps our body prevent and overcome disease in four basic ways:

- 1. Food's nutritional matrix fortifies our blood and cellular activity**—The reduced acid residue from a diet of whole plant foods such as whole grain, vegetable, sea vegetable, beans, with smaller quantities of animal protein, oils and fruit provides our bodies with absorbable food-based nutrients. In some cases, more concentrated nutrients from herbs, medicinal mushrooms, enzymes, a variety of fibrous foods, a wide range of phytochemicals from green, yellow and orange vegetables, reduced food volumes and low acid-residue foods all contribute to creating a stronger nutritional profile that fortifies our resistance to cancer.
- 2. Balanced food and a healthy lifestyle also enhances our immune system**—Most health books are always recommending immunity nutraceuticals, such as Maitake, Essiac, Red Clover/Poke root teas, Chlorella, Burdock and a variety of standardized Beta-Glucans. While these products have merit and some research to support a positive influence on immunity, *the first line of defense is to simply not weaken our immunity*. Simple sugar consumption, poor sleep and emotional stress are toxic influences for the health of natural killer (NK) cells.

In some studies that go back to 1975, just 100 grams of sugar (from orange juice, in this particular study) depressed immune function for 4 to 6 hours. Alcohol and caffeine also

take their toll on immunity. This may be inconsequential for those in good health, but for someone with cancer these foods and substances can only hinder healing. Consistent emotional suppression and depression equally wear on our immunity, as does lack of sleep, poor quality sleep and consistent late nights that throw off our biological clocks and alter the release of critical natural body chemicals such as melatonin and cortisol hormone. I am convinced from personal experience, client follow-ups, hundreds of interviews with cancer survivors and current nutritional research, that this is how we heal: *we strengthen our immunity in order to halt further progression of cancer*.

Real healing is not about “super-nutrients,” special “cancer-fighting foods” (apologies to the title department at my publisher) or any one wonder, Amazon, miracle herb or exotic, berry juice. They may all *contribute* to enhancing our ability to heal, but in the end, it all seems to relate to making sure that we are first not doing things to weaken our immunity, instead of always thinking of ways to bolster immunity.

- 3. Regulating Your Blood Sugar** — In the last 10 years we've learned much about blood sugar metabolism and the role that irregular blood sugar contributes to inflammation and tumor growth. The best strategy is to eat in a wholesome natural way that promotes a consistent and regulated blood sugar. Eating whole grains (whole and not flour products which are particles and can negatively influence blood sugar), vegetables, beans and sea vegetables with small amounts of fruit and animal protein helps maintain an even blood sugar. One of the worst culprits for making blood sugar dance all over the place is irregular eating times. The longer you wait between meals the more likely you'll end up with a lower blood sugar, which invariably stimulates strong, hard-to-resist cravings for sweets or overeating. Often, missing afternoon meals and waiting until dinner to fill up fosters late night eating habits, which in turn, hinders sleep and immune function. All of these factors conspire with each other.
- 4. Strengthening Your Detox Ability** — The balance of your carbohydrate, fat and protein ratios, as well as your food *quality*, dramatically influence our body's ability to naturally detoxify. Eating a whole food diet, as suggested within this article strengthens the organs of elimination (kidneys, liver, intestines,

lymph and skin), as it promotes better circulation to make the natural process of daily detoxing more efficient. Research has shown that the outer phosphorous covering of whole grains bond to toxins and can also reduce high estrogen levels associate with a high fat diet. Miso, as a source of alkalized fermentation can enhance intestinal bacteria to promote better absorption and a cleaner gut. Many simple whole foods can stimulate our body to naturally detox.

This process can be also be helped by daily exercise, infrared saunas, skin brushing and reduced meal volumes. I believe it's only our sense of the dramatic that wants to do a detox purge to "clean out" our body. In many cases, extreme detox therapies such as mono-eating, fasting, folk medicine compresses and fomentations can actually burden the body with released toxins that overwhelm the filtering organs. Better to change the diet, regulate daily activity and eat reduced volumes for at least one month before attempting any detoxing therapies. This will make your detox experience less toxic and burdensome to your body.

## The Real Skinny on Chemotherapy

The underlying principle of chemotherapy is to kill cancer by administering chemicals that interfere with the process of cell division. Chemotherapy accomplishes this either by damaging the proteins involved, or by damaging the DNA itself. This causes the damaged cells to commit suicide (by apoptosis—cell death).

Often, you'll hear about some celebrity or noted individual who is diagnosed with some form of cancer, then undergoes heavy chemotherapy and suddenly within several months, announces to media that, "I'm cancer-free—the tumors are gone!" The print media will relentlessly talk about this person's "courageous battle with cancer." Personally, I can't see it as *courageous*. Perhaps, *misinformed* is a more appropriate term. It seems suicidal to pour concentrations of toxins into your system and hope you can survive the onslaught. Or maybe it's just blatant gullibility. Those guys in the white coats can be very convincing. Most oncologists, if you can engage them in an honest conversation, will confide that based on what they've seen, they'd never even entertain undergoing chemotherapy if they were diagnosed.

In many cases of a cancer "cure" with chemotherapy, within a period of 6 months to a year afterward, the cancer frequently "returns", and with a vengeance. In most cases, it never left. The chemo might have reduced or made primary tumors disappear, but its toxicity ends up weakening the individuals natural immunity to a point where the body can no longer marshal enough immune function to keep the cancer from progressing. Technically, you're not considered "cured" until you've been cancer-free for five years. However, this has not stopped people in the news from making misleading cure claims.

"Yes! That tumor disappeared, but sadly, the patent expired..."

In a very small percentage of cases, short-term chemo has proved promising, allowing the individual to buy time from a tumor that might be structurally threatening nerve or organ function, but all too frequently it destroys too many healthy cells to justify depending on it as a therapy. If you've been diagnosed with cancer and your physician tells you that with chemo you have a "good chance", ask him if he's talking about "tumor response rate," or "tumor shrinkage," vs survival rate. All too often, the concern is for the tumor disappearing, but not in the patient's long-term survival. "Yes! That tumor disappeared, but sadly...the patent *expired*."

This is a distinction that is often misleading and prompts people to undergo chemotherapy with false hope—and typically incapacitating side effects. Like the famous tramp clown, Emmett Kelly, who used to wield a giant sledge hammer to crack open a tiny peanut shell, chemotherapy represents this identical act. It is, literally, overkill.

Dr. Ralph Moss, author of eight books relating to cancer, pens the *Cancer Chronicles* newsletter and is a well-respected researcher and alternative medicine advocate. Ross wrote *Questioning Chemotherapy* and cited that according to his charted research, chemotherapy may only be effective in the short term for the following

conditions: Acute Lymphocytic leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, and Nonseminomatous Testicular Cancer, as well as for a few rare forms of cancer, such as Choriocarcinoma, Wilm's tumor, and Retinoblastoma.

*But all of these cancers account for only 3% to 6% of all cancers occurring in the United States. This leaves some 94% to 97% of other cancers, in which chemotherapy cannot eliminate the disease. The vast majority of common cancers, such as breast, colon, and lung cancer are hardly affected by chemotherapy. Another category, recently added, where chemotherapy has a relatively minor "successful" effect is Stage 3 ovarian cancer, where it appears to extend life by an average of eighteen months, as well as small-cell lung cancer in which treatment offers an additional six months.*

### 'Good to Go' After 28 Days?

The legitimacy of a national organization designed to protect the public can only be questioned when the battle focuses on definitions that seem to be politically motivated in favor of "Big Pharma.", case in point: The FDA defines an "effective" cancer drug as one that achieves a 50% or more reduction in tumor size for at least 28 days. But, in the vast majority of cases there is absolutely no correlation between shrinking tumors for 28 days and the cure of the cancer, or the extension of life.

It's delusional to think that you can drug a body into wellness. Cancer is a systemic disorder, which means it involves the entire human organism. You have to nourish not only the body, but the mind and spirit. The cancer may reveal itself in a particular organ or site, but it's the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The affected site is suspected to be one's genetic weak link.

*Approximately, 96% of all cancer survivors of chemotherapy have a relapse after 5 years. Cancer is an anaerobic organism (without oxygen), which thrives in an acidic, low oxygen, dark, moist environment. Cancer feeds on glucose and secretes lactic acid as a by-product. The liver then converts this lactic acid back into glucose, so you end up with a viscous cycle of the cancer literally feeding itself. One of the factors in healing is to create greater systemic alkalinity by reducing common acidic foods, which can provide higher levels of oxygen to the tissues and reduce, or cut off, the supply of glucose to the tumor.*

### **When Ideals Compete with Reality – The Macrobiotic Irrelevance Of Classifying Cancers According to "Yin and Yang"**

I recently took a telephone call from a prospective client who complained, "I'm so confused about this macrobiotic theory--- not sure if I have a yin or yang cancer. Now, lemme get this stuff straight: if I have a yin cancer, then I can eat some meat, because meat is more yang, correct?"

Absolutely, incorrect.

And, thoroughly confusing. Let me offer another perspective:

George Ohsawa, one of the early synthesizers of the cultural, philosophical and dietary template for which he borrowed the name of "macrobiotics," initially looked at cancer in terms of it's nature. Based on the fact that cancer cells multiply, an act of expanding force, he classified it as a "yin" condition. Ohsawa suggested that the dietary basis of healing cancer should include avoiding yin foods and to move toward a more yang approach in food selection and cooking techniques.

Michio Kushi, a student of Mr. Ohaswa during the late 1940s developed another theory in the late early 70s suggesting there were yin cancers and yang types of cancer. That is to say, certain cancers were due to an abundance of yin food, while others were instigated from the over-consumption of yang foods. This distinction also separated them into specific areas of the body, organ involvement and rate of growth.

It's the author's opinion that using the terms, Yin and Yang---with all due respect to the general brilliance of Mr. Kushi---is archaic, unnecessary and consistently confusing to many. They are easily misunderstood terms and foreign to our lexicon. Using classical Chinese terminology of Yin and Yang as a reference can be alienating to many, particularly if they're not familiar with the nuances of Asian philosophy. What is difficult to comprehend, even by many macrobiotic students themselves, is the dynamic nature of these opposites and how they exist in combination with one another as opposed to sole entities. It is not a linear philosophy where you simply say something is yin, or something is yang. This is one of the biggest novice mistakes made by macrobiotic people in conversation; "That's very yin," or, "I feel yang..." The layers of combination cannot be conveyed in such pat observations.

I suspect that one of the reasons Mr. Kushi made this distinction in classifying cancers by yin and yang categories was to *show how specific extremes predispose one to different cancers*; animal protein excess often manifests itself in the lower body (as in prostate), while sugar excess revealed itself in to the upper body (such as breast, throat and brain). From this perspective, it's helpful to understand which dietary excess might be one of the causes or instigators of a particular cancer, *but in reality, both extremes always contribute to systemic degeneration, the weakening immune function, increasing anaerobic bacteria and diminishing nutritional profiles.*

And, the dietary prescription will always be the same: Initially, varying percentages of whole grains, vegetables, sea vegetables, and beans. Small volumes of fish, oils and fruit are recommended according to individual cravings, to maintain one's weight, and as possible supplementary fare, but not as principle food.

I've heard macrobiotic people with cancer talk self-righteously about the evils of including fruit in their cancer protocol, yet sit there with a giant plate of food and stuff their guts until they couldn't move. It may be wise to remember Ohsawa's dictum that, "quantity changes quality." A lot of good food is counter-productive to healing. We need smaller volumes eaten more frequently so that our bodies will find an easier time to digest and process. In some cases, a small piece of fruit may satisfy the person's sweet craving and avoid taxing the liver and digestive system with an onslaught of food.

### Making Up Our Own Chinese

To make matters even more complicated, Ohsawa, in an ambitious effort to simplify this classification system, reversed some of the definitions of yin and yang that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) had been using and writing about in their classical medical texts for thousands of years.

So now you have a group of modern people who are using an ancient Chinese system of classifying phenomena, but have made their own rules based on their own philosophical reasoning. For TCM practitioners this has always devalued macrobiotic medical theories and for the general public it has proved confusing and questionable. I fail to see any practicality in this.

Observing life with an unprejudiced view will confirm that all phenomena appear in degrees of opposition; hot and cold, light and dark, inflammation and constriction, back and front, centrifugal and centripetal, aerobic and anaerobic, strong and weak, acid and alkaline, etc. Physically, as well as magnetically, there are natural laws that govern these extremes; like repels like, and opposites attract, etc. There is no doubt that extremes exist and have natural laws that govern them. However, we might better relate to these extremes in a plain language that describes their tendencies, such as expansion and contraction, acid and alkaline, or inflammation and constriction---any English term denoting such tendencies will do. While we are a melting pot culture, we should maintain clear definitions and in one language that is familiar. Most languages contain foreign phrases, but using important classification phrases that have varied definitions from another language has not proven user-friendly.

### Energetics vs. Physical “Reality,”

Energetics vs. Physical “Reality,” is the ongoing conflict between alternative medicine, particularly macrobiotic theory, and western medicine. Many macrobiotic theories are based on the science of *energetics*, while modern medicine prides itself on what can be observed physically.

There are still many scientists that question acupuncture because they cannot accept that 5,000 years ago the ancient Chinese mapped out invisible pathways (meridians) of energy that run throughout the body, relate to different organ systems and can be either stimulated or sedated via meridian points with needles, heat or touch. We know it often works, but, from a physical perspective, we still wonder why.

When you look at a lot of macrobiotic theory, you see numerous energetic references, many of which were constructed by concept and philosophical assumption. This rarely flies for a pragmatic scientific audience or the governing body of medical professionals who, generally, are not in touch with what you cannot see, or quantitatively measure. Both sides need to give a bit. If macrobiotic practitioners want to be taken seriously by the general public and the medical establishment, and God knows they vitally need this information, we have to find ways to easily illustrate this information without resorting to philosophical assumption, relying on anecdotal testimony or making sweeping statements that seriously undermine our credibility.

### **Sugar, Low -Fat, Low-Protein & The Weight-Loss Dilemma**

#### Cells With Killer Appetites

Now, if such detailed theoretics is giving you a headache over your right eye, allow me to simplify further: From a dietary basis, the little that we know about cancers is that simple sugar (strong acid-forming foods) fuels cancer development. Cancer cells are the first to take up blood glucose. This is the basis of a medical PET Scan (*Positron Emission Tomography*. See: <http://www.mayfieldclinic.com/PE-PET.htm>).

*Because malignant cells grow at a rapid rate, they end up metabolizing more sugar than normal cells.*

Diagnostically, this gives your physician a glimpse into how aggressive a tumor might be, or how its growth can be slowed by conventional treatment therapies. At the same time, excessive animal protein and fat has been implicated in a number of male cancers, including colon cancer. In essence, *both extremes contribute to this condition*. In fact, basic nutrition teaches that protein breaks down into amino acids, which are absorbed through the small intestine’s lining to enter the bloodstream. However, *excess* amino acids are actually converted to fats and sugars.

Unknown to many is the hormonal havoc that concentrated and refined sugar plays with our system. And, our addiction is only growing. You can hardly buy a bag of cookies from a natural food market that do not contain simple sugar. They put a tuxedo on sugar by calling it “Evaporated Cane Sugar,” or, “Organic Raw,” but ‘a rose by any other name would still smell as sweet.’ Don’t be duped. They put simple sugars in packaged salmon, tomato sauce, beans, rice cakes, even rice and soy milks---and more, all to entice consumer dollars by catering to our national sweet-tooth. Sugar, in more secretive clothing, has crept back into the natural food market by now being advertised as, *natural*.

#### “Reward: An Extra Helping of Beans!”

One of our esteemed Japanese macrobiotic teachers used to recommend a diet drastically low in protein. His contention was that protein breakdown by-products have been noted to promote cancer growth, so his diet limited concentrated proteins (beans, tempeh, tofu, etc.) to

once or twice weekly. While many people visiting his center did well initially, they were not able to maintain such a drastic approach. While visiting there as a guest lecturer, I listened to many people tell me that they were constantly hungry, found the food unsatisfying and were constantly craving protein and oil.

Many were compensating by overeating, yet were still losing weight. What they achieved by overeating was not weight gain, but the unexpected result of more frequent bowel movements. Very few continued their regime when they returned home. When people with cancer come to macrobiotics and experience dramatic weight loss, emotionally, their body image suffers. Initially, many are ecstatic about losing weight that they've carried for years, but at a certain point, it becomes depressing. In the back of their mind, they equate, as most physicians do, weight loss with cancer progression, regardless of the degree of their health consciousness. They'd look in the mirror, see wrinkled, sagging flesh and suddenly feel hopeless. "I'm a shadow of myself..." one man complained. His voice was the personification of defeat. It's vanity, its revenge and for many, something difficult to overcome.

However, it's not just a vanity issue; loss of hope can lead to doubts about mortality, mood swings and depression. Dietarily, in an effort to compensate for a lack of meal satiation, those eating a macrobiotic diet for cancer sometimes resort to eating greater volumes of food. Often, this can lead to bouts of fatigue, gas, bloating and poor sleep.

The biggest problem with this severe deprivation approach seems to be consistency. People were stressing about the foods they missed, dreaming about food, planning their "binge meal" and generally talking about it nostalgically, if not incessantly. This growing obsession with food or general dissatisfaction was contrary to healing, and obviously stressful.

### *Eat Bread to Prevent Homicidal Tendencies?*

I have found that the addition of digestive enzymes, particularly for older individuals, made a positive difference in their absorption and appetites. Additionally, eating more frequently, maybe four smaller meals, as opposed to three during the day usually worked well. I recommend a concentrated protein source (beans, bean products or small amounts of animal protein) sometimes twice daily, but in small portions, as this makes the meals more satisfying along with 1 to 2 tsp. of olive or sesame oil prepared at low temperatures in their daily cooking. Miso is a strong healing agent and intestinal restorative. Don't limit yourself to ordinary miso soup. There are a number of good cookbooks with suggestions for miso, as well as Shurtleff's "Book of Miso" where he has scores of miso recipes that will keep you inspired and hearty. Variety helps avert boredom.

I remember once walking into a rural macrobiotic retreat kitchen and spying an older man rummaging through every cabinet, drawer and fridge. After a moment, I asked, "Can I help you?" He turned to me with a half-crazed look in his eye and muttered, "Somebody had some bread at lunch time. I saw it. If I don't get a piece of bread soon, I'm gonna kill somebody—I know it sounds crazy, but that's how I feel. I got brown rice coming out of my ears..."

Making sure that you have a variety of textures and tastes in your diet will also help you remain food-inspired. *Textures*, such as bland, creamy, chewy, dry, etc., and *Tastes*, such as, bitter, salty, sweet, sour and pungent can be an important part of meal preparation. Look at the common western diet—it's full of textures! If you're having a bowl of steamed dark leafy greens (bitter taste), mixing equal proportions of lemon juice (sour taste) and natural soy sauce (salty taste)—diluted with a bit of water, can be used as a "sprinkle" over the greens to make such fare more appealing and satisfying.

## **Cancer in the Macrobiotic Community**

In the last ten years there have been numerous deaths in the macrobiotic community, particularly of teachers. Often, I will get this question from seminar audiences. Why should this happen if they were macrobiotic? The

presumption is that adopting a macrobiotic lifestyle should make one completely immune to sickness and disease. This is partially the fault of many writings that has positioned macrobiotics as quick cure for a myriad of conditions.

I believe that a macrobiotic lifestyle, awareness of its principles and its dietary template can enhance our innate sensitivity to be more aware of our body's distress signals. In my personal experience and as a 30 years counselor, I've seen people dramatically transform their health. Unfortunately, the macrobiotic emphasis in the last 25 years has centered around food as a main healing tool, minimizing the role of emotional expression, exercise, a sense of daily life passion and a need for making our time purposeful. *These factors have a strong influence that no individual committed to personal growth or core healing can afford to ignore.*

I took a good look at my own history and lifestyle after I was told I had cancer, which fortunately turned out to be a fluid cyst that I had had, presumably, since birth. But what factors caused it to grow in my later years? Retrospectively, I believe the gradual widening of my diet, to include caffeine, more oils, more saturated fats, generous amounts of flour (which influence blood sugar and the culminating in a massive wake-up call whose message still echoes in my head. For me the lessons came slow, in fact, they're still coming...but that's the work I realized I needed to do.

Others, sadly, were not as fortunate and succumbed to the very condition that they were advising people how to avoid. I don't think it serves anyone to glibly pin it on any one factor ("Death by wheat toast"), but consider viewing it as a large puzzle with many pieces, each offering a more complete view of what we call life.

## **A "Macro" Perspective - 10 Self-Healing Traits**

The healing path is composed of many roads all leading to the same destination: the place where body, mind and spirit are resurrected. The road, or roads we choose to adventure on should be based on fulfilling the incomplete areas of our lives; areas we've neglected, that beg for greater self-nurturance and expression.

These roads may be named Faith, Purpose, Nutrition, Love, Honesty, Compassion, Immunity, Passion, Spirit, Forgiveness and Gratitude. In the relatively young field of allopathic medicine—the kind that's practiced by most conventional medical doctors today—we've only recently recognized that healing efforts must not only be personalized for the patients special needs, but must offer some semblance of control, encouraging the patient to make informed choices instead of being hi-pressured by "experts" into believing that there are no other options available.

It is *Macro*-biotics, not *Micro*-biotics. And, that's a good thing. *Macro* means large and reminds us to consider all the factors that entail living a large life. Clinical research, as well as scores of anecdotal testimony, has repeatedly shown that the people who survive cancer often do so with the support of the following ten traits:

1. Life Purpose
2. Positive Attitude
3. Good Nourishment
4. Healthy Lifestyle
5. Manageable Stress
6. Sense of Humor
7. Love and Social Support
8. Emotional Expression
9. Physical Exercise
10. Strong Faith

These ten traits can have a vital healing influence. In seminars, where I speak about these self-healing characteristics, participants are asked to consider the areas they need to emphasize for more comprehensive healing. Hopefully, an inner dialogue is inspired that begins to redefine and question everything about the way we live, love and care for ourselves. The beginning of whole healing occurs when we commit ourselves to examining and integrating those missing ingredients, which are essential for a more healthy, passionate and resilient life that can only be savored by living each moment fully for the present.

*“Today is the tomorrow I was so worried about, yesterday.”*

— A. Hopkins

## Some General Cancer Prevention & Treatment Suggestions

Below is a lengthy list of suggestions organized categorically for your good health, or recovery. Do what you can and continue to add as they become a part of your lifestyle.

### *Food Related*

1. **Find a physician that will help monitor your progress** and be a supportive member of your healing team.
2. **Eat whole food.** That means, whole grains, vegetables, beans, bean products, and sea vegetables as principle fare. Select small quantities of fruit and (optional) animal protein as a dietary supplement. Use good quality sea salt that is cooked into your food. Introduce some traditional fermented foods from other cultures such as sauerkraut, umeboshi, miso and lightly salted vegetable pickles. Enjoy a variety of non-caffeinated teas.
3. **Speak with your alternative health practitioner about recommended Western and Chinese forms of adjunctive healing** such as: Acupuncture, Qi Gong, Herbs, Immunity Nutraceuticals, Enzymes, Food-Based Supplements, Algae Products, etc.
4. **Enjoy relaxed mealtimes**, chew well, but not laboriously and give thanks for your nourishment.
5. **Buy organic** items whenever possible.
6. **Avoid tap water. Use recently checked well water, natural spring water or if these choices are not available use reverse osmosis.** Consider the investment of a water ionizer that makes your drinking water more alkaline.  
See: <http://www.waterworks4u.com/Rejuvenator-Water-Ionizers.php?tmenu=mionizers>.
7. **Do not store your water in plastic containers.** Use glass.
8. **Get shower filters** so that you are not breathing chlorine fumes during hot showers or baths.
9. **Eat more in frequency, less in volume.** Better to eat 4 or 5 smaller meals, than 2 or 3 big meals. Avoid late night eating by giving yourself at least 3 hours from dinner to bed. Sleep is for rest, not digestion.

### *Mind Related*

1. **Engage in daily creative expression.** Anytime you're really engrossed in something you're passionate about, you *are in the moment*. That moment usually contains minimal stress and great fulfillment. It is a wonderful place for healing and we all need more time in what philosopher, Ken Wilbur calls, “Timeless Moments.”
2. **Make your home a sanctuary of comfort and retreat.** Scale down, bulk up, create a new space for your new direction. Make it yours, make it comfortable.
3. **Study** — Take a class, correspondence course or an e-course. Challenge your mind and continue to grow.
4. **Make a list** of things you want to do, places you want to visit, pictures you want to take and people you want to meet.
5. **Get psychological support.** The value of another helping you to look at core issues cannot be underestimated. Read about Byron Katie and “The Work.”  
See: <http://www.thework.com>
6. **Read the writings of Thich Nhat Han.** Han has become the messenger of “mindfulness.” See: <http://www.plumvillage.org>

### Body Related

1. **Get bodywork whenever you can.** Shiatsu, Jin Shin, Tai Massage, Swedish, Deep Tissue, Roling, Reiki, Polarity, etc.
2. **Practice Yoga.** Yoga exercises were based on animal postures and finding ways to duplicate those positions with the human form. It influences respiration, all acupuncture meridians and muscle groups. Practice, if only 2 to 4 postures nightly, at least, try it.
3. **Infrared Therapies.** This low volume but penetrating Sauna heat penetrates deep into tissue and helps restore cellular health as it detoxes. Infrared heat treatment can also be done with hand wands that are applied to different areas of the body, both a diagnostic and treatment aid. See: <http://www.gaiahh.com/farinfrared.html>
4. **Get to bed early, get up early.** Rest during the late afternoon, if possible. In the acupuncture cycle of energy clock resting at this time benefits the kidneys--our vitality organs, as well as the adrenal glands situated on top of each kidney. The adrenal glands exert a strong influence on how we respond to stress, as well as the quality of our sleep.
5. **Enjoy physical movement each day.** Walk, hike, bike, swim, light jog, row, but get those muscles and lungs active.

### Emotionally Related

1. **Make peace with unresolved relationship issues.** If the people you want to heal with have passed on, forgive, talk to them and let it go. Holding on never really serves you. Mark Twain said, "*Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.*" Something to think about.
2. **Love those that you are close to, or give through volunteer efforts.**
3. **Keep a daily or weekly journal** of your insights, feelings and thoughts. You don't have to write War & Peace, just brief entries to give an overview or express yourself.
4. **Say good-bye to negative people who are self-absorbed and drain your energy.**
5. **Avoid isolating yourself.** Reach out via support groups and cancer survivors.
6. **Make time for friends and family,** primary or extended. Don't just do things, talk, laugh, create something together. Find the common thread.

### Spirit Related

1. **Engage in some form of spiritual practice daily.**
2. **Meditate!** Put aside 20 minutes daily to meditate or visualize your health goals. Get some support to do this. Read: Simonton's: "Getting Well, Again" and other books on visualizations or simple meditation.
3. **Spend time in Nature.** Find some grass, trees, a field, a lake, a park and lose yourself. Ohsawa called Nature, our "vegetal mother." It nourishes your energetic body.

*"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."*

— Helen Keller



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