

Bringing Spirit into Cancer Treatment

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In a small, freshly-wallpapered treatment room at a local hospital's oncology center, I sat quietly with my husband and best friend while Ursula Gilkeson held a plastic bag of cool-aid colored chemotherapy, and closed her eyes. After she read and adjusted the light and color frequencies of the chemotherapy to match the vibration of my energy field, she passed it to each of the rest of us to bless before the nurse returned to start infusing the chemotherapy into me. While the rest of the hospital was filled with illness and trauma, and people waiting and rushing, in this small refuge of a room, something utterly calm and deeply healing was happening.

Gilkeson, an energy healer in the Kansas City-Lawrence area who specializes in treating people with cancer, turned a strong drug with extensive side effects into a tool of transformation and helped activate my body's natural ability to heal that day, and many others during the six months of my chemotherapy treatment. She also accompanied me through three major surgeries (even doing energy work directly on my body as part of the operating room team for several of those), and worked on me weekly throughout the cancer treatment all of which opened up pathways not just for quick recovery, but deep transformation.

Cancer-free, and stronger and clearer than ever despite surrendering my breasts, uterus, and other body parts, I found working with a master energy healer with many years experience was crucial to my healing from cancer, and from longer-seeded traumas and emotional wounds that proceeded cancer. What I experienced was also evident to my three surgeons, oncologist and many nurses who regularly commented on how quickly I healed, and marveled at how I needed no additional pain medication after coming out of each of the surgeries. Because of my experience, my curiosity got the best of me about how energy healing works through cancer and beyond, and I interviewed Gilkeson and several of her patients to learn more.

Gilkeson draws upon considerable knowledge and experience in all her work; she has 30 years experience as a practitioner and teacher of energy healing, and she has developed unique treatment forms which can be finely adjusted to a patient's needs. A native of Germany where she trained in Energy Healing, Natural Medicine, massage and body work, classical homeopathy and a variety of body-centered approaches to psychology, she co-founded a natural healing center in Germany and facilitated many workshops for patients and practitioners in Europe. She has, in turn, treated hundreds of people, like P.J. Brungardt, a 52-year-old grocery store operating manager in Lawrence, KS., who says: "She saved my life. I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for her."

Since she arrived in the Lawrence-Kansas City area a decade ago, she has offered classes on energy healing to the public, and lectures to medical students and professionals. In speaking to people who work in conventional medicine, Gilkeson can cite some important evidence:

energy healing speeds up the healing process and lessens the need for pain-killers and other medication.

My own experience echoes this: After a total hysterectomy with a mid-line cut, I begged a nurse to stop the morphine drip a mere ten hours after surgery because of my allergic reaction. Although the nurse assured me I would have considerable pain without the morphine, once the drip was stopped, I experienced minimal pain. Within three days, I was able to walk half a mile to the mailbox and back, a small stroll that dazzled my surgeon who, having had a hysterectomy herself, knew how difficult just sitting up could be.

Kacy Childs-Winston, 46, a stay-at-home mom in Prairie Village, Kansas has a similar story to tell about undergoing a mastectomy of one breast and reconstruction of both breasts during the same surgery. Once out of surgery, she recalls: "I didn't have any drugs other than anti-nausea ones, and my surgeon was amazed that two weeks later I had my full range of motion."

But there are more enduring benefits from working with an energy healer during surgical procedures for cancer. "I felt like someone was going through surgery with me, communicating with my soul," explains Childs-Winston. "When I was in surgery, I had the feeling I was up there looking down, and I had this extra help, like a guide handling it for me so I could be relaxed. Coming out of surgery and seeing Gilkeson was also calming: I remember when I woke up, seeing her blue eyes, and I knew everything was okay. She gave me a sense of peace.

Gilkeson explains that during surgeries, whether she's in the operating room, or working with the patient from the meditative space of a hospital chapel, "the main focus of my work is to keep in contact with the soul."

That contact was very calming to Erin Weir, a 34-year-old Kansas City marketing coordinator who went to Gilkeson when she discovered she had cancerous tumors in both breasts. While employing a multi-faceted healing program for herself that also included nutrition, vitamins, and acupuncture, Weir found energy healing and especially imagery work with Gilkeson brought her more confidence and peace, plus more of a non-battling type mentality, more of a transformation mentality.

Gilkeson knows a lot about this mentality: "For me, all true healing is about transformation. This occurs when we invite spirit into the areas of our lives where there are problems - physical, emotional or mental - to shift energy and expand consciousness. As much as the body stores information about what has contributed to illness, the body also has innate wisdom we can tap into in order to heal and journey into deeper understanding of who we are as human beings."

Her choice to become a healer comes more from her biography than her resume. She explains that she was led to work with many excellent healers and teachers because of the trauma and illness she experienced as a child and young woman. "My own healing journey has helped me understand the complex nature of trauma and chronic illness. Everything I have experienced and studied is a source of inspiration that I draw from today. I am committed to help others on a similar journey discover their paths toward growth on the soul level," she says.

All of this has led her toward helping clients find connections between biography, emotional patterns, and the physical body. Speaking about the emotional body, she explains that illness and trauma can be powerful teachers about our past and great inspirations for our future if

we're willing to look beyond the more mainstream medical models of only treating the physical symptoms.

"I think in our culture today there is still a deep need to have problems fixed or cut out. The process of transformation is not understood," Gilkeson explains. "You need to first be curious about what your problems are teaching you so you can become actively involved in making the changes necessary to recreate health. Our body, spirit and soul need to be realigned, and involved to really make solid changes, and to activate our spiritual gifts."

Someone who agrees with Gilkeson is Nancy O'Connor, Director of Education and Outreach at the Community Mercantile Food Cooperative in Lawrence, KS. "Diseases like cancer are about more than just cancer, and it's hard to imagine doing healing without putting all the pieces in places, spiritual and emotional too," says O'Connor.

O'Connor should know after surviving her 1997 cancer that led to radiation and chemotherapy. Gilkeson gave her an individualized mantra and meditation, designed to address her cancer and balance the different levels of her energy field which were affected by the illness for O'Connor to use before and during each radiation treatment.

"It helped to transform the experience," O'Connor says. "When you think of chemo and radiation, you think of something being done to you, but with Ursula's help, it became something I could participate in."

O'Connor explains that the meditation she used was so effective that O'Connor was sometimes surprised to find out technicians came in and adjusted a giant radiation machine on top with her without her noticing. "The meditation helped me transform the radiation to healing light and energy." She also found the meditation helped her to release the harmful aspects of the radiation from her body. Additionally, Gilkeson showed O'Connor and her husband and sons how to bless all the chemotherapy and infuse it with love and light.

O'Connor credits her work with Gilkeson with helping her cultivate hope and faith in her well-being throughout and beyond the cancer. "I can't imagine going through this kind of treatment without Ursula's help," she said. "I never felt like I was adrift in the medical sea. Ursula helped elevate the whole experience to a true holistic healing."

Such holistic healing was crucial to Brungardt, who was told during his 1999 colorectal cancer diagnosis that there was a good chance the cancer was terminal. Additionally, a very aggressive radiation and chemotherapy regime left him in extreme pain much of the time.

"When I walked into a session with Ursula, I would be thinking, I'm going to die, but then I'd leave my time with her thinking, there is a chance, I can beat this. She gave me the strength to go on. She also helped me see what I needed to think about," adds Brungardt who is less than a year away from the cancer being officially declared in remission.

"The value of such healing is a perfect balance to conventional treatments," explains Judith Dutton, a Lawrence, KS. psychotherapist specializing in EMDR who is completing extensive treatment for breast cancer. After surgery followed by four months of chemotherapy in early 2002, Dutton began working with Gilkeson during Dutton's radiation treatments and subsequent months of chemotherapy. "The way I've thought about it is that while KU Med Center may have gotten rid of the cancer and cured me, what I'm doing with Ursula is the healing."

Working with Gilkeson, Dutton found ways to use color and light meditations during her radiation treatments and her chemotherapy infusions, and she continues receiving energy treatments from Gilkeson now that those treatments have ended. Gilkeson explains “continuing the healing work after medical treatment is extremely important, because any illness still shows energetically in the energy field long after a person has gone through the treatments.”

Dutton says such follow-up energy work has been vital to her. “When you’re going through all the treatments, you don’t have time to think about it,” she says. During one recent treatment session with Gilkeson, Dutton says, “I felt this rage about my body being invaded, and then my whole body screaming out about it. It was incredibly intense, and then I was finally able to let go of some of it.”

For myself, at the outer edge of 18 months of treatment, continuing with energy healing to strengthen my immune system, lift my energy, and help me craft a life more in tune with caretaking this body and soul is essential medicine, a medicine that complements and enhances all the help I’ve received from oncologists, surgeons, nurses and technicians. For many of us journeying through both alternative and conventional medicine, it’s crucial to find master healers like Gilkeson who can bridge the ancient traditions of natural healing and the modern medical world, a bridging Gilkeson thinks about often:

“In our world today, there are two streams: one moving further and further away from the awareness of wholeness, and the other moving toward greater awareness of our natural power to heal. I see myself as a bridge between the community of healers and the medical community; helping speed up the physical healing process, yes, but also helping people find acceptance, inner peace and joy, qualities which they would then naturally radiate out into the world.”

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Ursula Gilkeson, has been a practitioner and teacher of Energy Healing for over thirty years. Her comprehensive work with the human energy field during health and illness has led her to develop groundbreaking modes of healing. Her methods have helped heal numerous people during major surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Ursula is thoroughly trained in Subtle Energy Therapy and homeopathy. She holds a degree from Germany in Natural Medicine. She has lectured and trained in Europe and the United States. She practices in Lawrence.