

## **The meaning of living with cancer and death**

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### **Abstract**

Cancer is a dreaded disease. A cancer prognosis could change one's life in many ways. This keynote was a personal account of how I developed and tested existential positive psychology (or PP 2.0) as a resilient way to cope with cancer and suffering. After discussing the inadequacies of positive psychology (PP 1.0) as usual in coping with the horrors of human existence, and the need for PP 2.0, I proposed 12 basic rules of resilience based on time-tested wisdoms and psychological research. These principles are as follows: (1) Courage to face reality; (2) Faith in self, others and God; (3) Knowing yourself and your purpose in life; (4) Self-transcendence; (5) An appreciative attitude; (6) Compassion; (7) A growth mindset; (8) A dialectic view of life; (9) The dual-system model of coping; (10) A double vision; (11) Effective coping; and (12) Acceptance and surrendering.

Cancer is a fitting metaphor for the evil and suffering of life, because it brings pain and death to everyone, even innocent children and adults who practice a healthy lifestyle. Cancer symbolizes the inherent fragility and brevity of human life—the undeniable universal fact that no matter what we do to protect ourselves, we can all be injured physically and psychologically by toxic and violent people, broken relationships, traumatic events, pathogens, accidents, loss, aging, illness, and death.

Thus, the challenge confronting us is how we can survive, thrive, and be happy given the horrible burden of living. I proposed existential positive psychology (EPP) (Wong, 2009b, 2016a) or second wave positive psychology (PP 2.0) (Wong, 2011) precisely because of my conviction that we need a realistic and helpful answer to the tragic human condition.

Coping with the most aggressive type of prostate cancer (Gleason Score 9) allowed me to experientially test and validate the key principles of PP 2.0. This paper explains how these principles can help people live life to the full, while struggling in the presence of the Grim Reaper.

### **Awareness of Our Mortality Demands an Adequate Response**

Becker (1973) proposed that in order to cope with their fear of death, our ancestors developed cultural worldviews or myths about the afterlife. Such beliefs have been passed on to us, because of their adaptive value in dealing with our awareness of our mortality. Becker's view has been developed into terror management theory (Greenberg, Solomon & Pyszczynski, 1997).

More specifically, Greenberg (2020) suggested that faith in both literal and symbolic mortality gives people hope for a future beyond the grave and for psychological security. In addition to a faith based cultural worldview, the other important factor is self-esteem based on the belief that we are valued contributors to this world. Greenberg concluded:

People live out their lives largely imbedded in a symbolic world of meaning and value in which they can believe they are of enduring significance and, as long as they maintain belief in that world and their significance, they can function with psychological

equanimity. However, if either of these beliefs is threatened, defences must be marshalled or death anxiety will percolate to the surface.

While terror management theory emphasizes unconscious defense mechanisms, my meaning management theory focuses on how we intentionally develop our meaning systems which not only protect us against the terror of death but also propel us toward the path of accepting our mortality and living a vital and productive life (Wong, 2008d).

It is a tragic mistake for us to ignore death—the only thing certain in life. We can only live fully after becoming keenly aware of the fragility and brevity of life (Wong & Tomer, 2011). At the same time, we also need to learn how to embrace death as our final destination without feeling its sting.

My research on death attitude (Wong, Reker & Gesser, 1994) shows that it is multidimensional: death avoidance, death fear or anxiety, neutral acceptance as a biological fate, and positive acceptance as a state of eternal bliss. The tension between life and death may drive one to suicide (i.e., to escape death acceptance), only when death becomes a better option than the pain of living. Strictly, suicide is not a regular death attitude; it is last resort for self-determination to exit from a living hell.

In coping with cancer, I have gone through all four types of death attitudes. First, I avoided thinking that I might have cancer. When the biopsy test produced undeniable evidence, I sought to reduce my death anxiety through burying myself in work, or trying to beat cancer with diet and stress management (Wong, 1993). Then, I accepted my mortality rationally as a biological fact, telling myself that I was old enough to die. Finally, I was able to embrace death and danced with it each day, as a constantly reminder that I lived on borrowed time, and did my uttermost to make a valuable contribution each day.

As a cancer survivor, I often felt like living in a twilight zone, with one foot already in the grave, but with my heart still beating. All the happiness-enhancing activities offered by positive psychology had no relevance to me, especially during the days when I was in the grip of excruciating pain.

### **To Hell and Back: The Need for Mature Happiness**

About three weeks ago, I experienced an unexpected setback in my recovery from radical prostatectomy—my body reacted very badly to a medication (Detrol-LA). This drug was prescribed by my urologist to slow down my overactive bladder after the surgery, but it shut down not only my bladder activities but also all my bowel functions, resulting in excruciating stomach pain, which was extended to my back muscles and my chest. I frequently broke out in cold sweat and my vomiting reflex took over, but nothing came out.

For several days, I was writhing in pain and could not find a single spot or position that could grant me temporary relief. My world was turned into a torture chamber, a hell hole. I was reduced to a bundle of exposed raw nerves. I clenched my teeth and tightened my muscles, bracing for the endless waves of brutal assault on my body and mind. Time crawled ever so slowly. Pain was what I breathed in and breathed out. It consumed all my energy and all my inner reserve. (Wong, 2008c)

During those days and nights of misery, nothing mattered anymore except for instant relief from the wrenching pain, which was killing me slowly. It was death by a thousand cuts! All my

scientific knowledge about what contributes to happiness and wellbeing faded into the distant background. All the projects that made my life worth living also evaporated into thin air.

As I pondered on the stark contrast between the nurses and the patients, the idea of a parallel universe suddenly hit me. It was a moment of epiphany. I was awakened to the fact that on this planet earth, in the same space-time continuum, there are actually two very different worlds with very different life experiences and perspectives: the normal world and the noxious world.

In the normal world, people expect positive things to happen and dismiss the occasional negative outcomes as temporary and unfortunate setbacks. They are confident about their freedom and efficacy to exercise control over their own lives. They enjoy relatively good health and take basic biological functions for granted. The science of happiness is primarily based on studying samples from the normal world.

Evil has always been a part of human existence, and it continues to have a way of ruining people's lives in all sectors of human society. Evil in all its varieties pose a challenge to positive psychologists, who need to grapple with the dark side of human nature (Baumeister, 1996; Peck, 1983; Wong, 2019a).

Who can plumb the cesspool of evil? Who can fathom the depth of human miseries? Who can penetrate the heart of darkness? Who can rationalize the atrocities committed against fellow human beings? Why are innocent people afflicted with the deadly disease of cancer? When does the evil of coronavirus kill so many innocent people?

We cannot wish the noxious world away. Nor can we create a utopia through science. The noxious world will not go away as long as we are locked in our creaturely bodies, driven by insatiable desires, and threatened by the capricious nature which often unleashes its deadly destructive power. The tragic triad—human frailty, evil, and natural disasters—(Fowers, Richardson, & Slife, 2017; Wong, 2019a, 2019d)—has the power to make life miserable, unless we find a way to transcend and transform inescapable suffering and death.

But this is also a world of heroism and extreme self-sacrifice. Who can comprehend the paradox of Good Friday? What compelled Christ to die on that cruel cross so that multitudes might find hope and redemption? Who can understand the logic that one person should endure hell so that others may find heaven? Who can scale the pinnacles of the human spirit, when individuals, compelled by their conscience and vision, willingly sacrifice all they have, including their own lives, to fight against evil so that ordinary people can live with freedom and dignity?

The reality is that the “noxious world” may be more common than we care to admit. The First Noble Truth of Buddhism is Dukkha, which may be roughly translated as life is full of suffering and dissatisfaction. This profound truth reveals that, throughout life, people suffer from various kinds of troubles, ranging from physical pain to psychological distress, from losing what they value most to the disillusion that happiness does not last. We are all acquainted with both external and internal sources of troubles. It is sad but true that often bad is stronger than good (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001).

For all human beings, the inescapable existential givens—sickness, aging, death, aloneness, meaninglessness—cast a long, dark shadow over all our activities, even when the sky is brightly shining. The challenge is how to live fully with the constant awareness of the noxious world of suffering and death.

## **The Need for a Different Kind of Happiness**

Different as they are, the two worlds actually co-exist as day and night. They even intermingle as wheat and tares—one may enjoy a blessed married life but work in a toxic organization. Birth and death can happen in the same family on the same day. Painful and happy memories are interlocked within the same mind.

The truth is that the sufferers are all of us. We move back and forth between the two worlds at different stages of life. As the baby boomers age, many of them will eventually join the “noxious world” of suffering, life-threatening illness, and death. The noxious world is an equalizer, where all the past achievements and happy memories retreat into the background and all people can think of is how to find relief from pain and how to regain some sense of hope in the face of suffering and death.

Happiness in the noxious world is predicated on the human capacity to transcend and transform negative experiences through meaning and faith (Wong, 2008a). The greatest achievement of humanity is our ability to experience the invisible spiritual reality and discover shining stars in the darkest night of the soul (Wong, 2008b).

We become nobler, purer, kinder, and more generous, when we dig deep into our innermost being and reach out to the highest heaven, while struggling to survive unimaginable terror and torment. For suffering beings (Homo Patients), happiness has a deeper meaning than positive affect, life satisfaction, or subjective well-being.

For the sufferers, happiness primarily means: relief from suffering, tragic optimism, faith in God or Higher Power, compassion and kindness, enlightenment and wisdom, meaning and purpose.

Mature happiness is hope against all odds; it is affirming the positive in extremely negative circumstances (Frankl, 1984; Wong, 2008b; Wong & Bowers, 2018). It is courage to accept and endure the seriousness of my condition, assurance that help is on the way, and the resolve to hang on to the hope that I will survive this ordeal and become a better person.

This is the feeling of being part of a fellowship of suffering bonded by compassion. It is deeper than social support. Compassionate care is an integral part of holistic medicine and hospice care (Wong, 2005; Wong, 2009a). It is an appreciation of the kindness and compassion shown by others. It is gratitude to loved ones who do everything possible to make suffering bearable or being grateful for the gift of life and the grace of God. It can be called the chaironic happiness (Wong, 2011), because it is similar to the kind of blessing Paul the apostle experienced when he was in a dungeon (Philippians 4:14).

This mature happiness is informed by both Eastern religions (Buddhism, Taoism) and Christianity. It is related to the wisdom traditions from East and West. It encompasses contentment that the situation could have been worse, the wisdom of letting go of what cannot be kept and accepting what cannot be changed, the feelings of equanimity that the worst would be death, which is inevitable anyway, the knowledge that life is transient and that all suffering will pass away, the abiding sense of meaning and purpose that makes my suffering bearable, and the confidence that I will not suffer in vain and that my message of hope and happiness to suffering people will find acceptance somewhere in the world.

I will take a defiant stance towards whatever suffering I may have to endure. I am glad that I am worthy of suffering for others—that my experience of hell can open a door to heaven for people I do not even know. The above threads of thoughts and feelings once sustained Viktor Frankl in a Nazi death camp; they also sustained me in my journey through hell.

For want of a better term, the kind of happiness I have just described may be called dark-happiness, because it can only be found in the darkest night of the soul. It is rejoicing in the midst of suffering. It is the process of becoming our best when we are in the worst possible situations. Such dark-happiness may be best described in metaphors. It is a tapestry of dark colours with a few bright threads. It is the rainbow after a storm, or the silver lining of a dark cloud. It is the rejoicing after surviving terrible trauma. It is the sweet aftertaste of eating something bitter. One has to feel bad before one can feel good, and one has to let go before one can receive blessings.

### **The Ultimate Test of Positive Psychology**

When I was writing in pain, I definitely was not in the mood for anything jovial. I did not want to hear a cheerful song or a merry tune. I would rather listen to the good old hymns about suffering and redemption, the haunting melancholy songs of Leonard Cohen, or the Negro Spirituals drawn from those cotton fields.

I can understand why people who are flying high on the wings of success and happiness are likely to be turned off by my soulful blues of sorrow and pain. But the ultimate test of positive psychology is whether it is relevant and efficacious for the multitudes in extreme and noxious situations.

Now, my back and my neck are aching from typing. Therefore, I must stop right now. However, I am glad that I have finally told the story about what I have gone through in the past three weeks. In a sense, I am grateful for the painful journey into hell. At least, I can say that I have directly experienced dark-happiness and discovered that it is indeed a gift from suffering.”

### **The Mysteries of Suffering**

In 2004, I decided to tackle the mysteries of suffering, which had been one of my lifelong research interests. “Transforming Suffering, Loss, and Death Through Meaning, Hope, and Faith” was the conference theme in our 2004 Meaning Conference. We also organized a special Symposium titled “The Gift of Suffering: Spiritual Transformation, Science, and Medicine” which was funded by the Templeton Foundation. Symposium participants included Dr. Harold Koenig, the world’s leading expert on spirituality and health, and Dr. George Ellis, winner of the 2004 Temple Prize in Religion, alongside psychologist Dr. Warren Brown and neuroscientist Dr. Malcolm Jeeves.

I had some unexpected experiences in organizing this conference. Firstly, my application for a Templeton Grant was rejected, because a review said emphatically that “positive psychology has nothing to do with suffering.” I had to write a long rebuttal to successfully sway the Templeton Foundation to support this symposium. Even now, many leader positive psychologists still do not know how to handle suffering as a necessary piece of flourishing (Wong, 2019b, 2019c).

Secondly, I received a long letter from a well-known physician, who strongly objected to the wording of our symposium: “The Gift of Suffering.” According to him, “I have seen much of suffering. To call suffering a gift is a rhetorical and poetical stretch that does violence to its reality, for some suffering is truly unendurable. Daily, throughout the world, individuals are tortured for political, religious, military, and trivial reasons. To none of the recipients of this torture, whether physical or psychological, is the suffering a good gift? Every day, in many places, another child is beaten, degraded, raped, or abused. Which of your prominent leaders

featured on your speakers' list is prepared to meet with any of these children to explain to them the gift-nature of their suffering?"

Now, in my old age, having personally experienced or observed many cases of seemingly unbearable suffering. I feel even more confident than 14 years ago that suffering is indeed a blessing in disguise, a gift from God that not only deepens our understanding of the self and awakens us to all the wrong things we do in our lives, but also opens our eyes to the hidden beauty and goodness of life. I still feel grateful for the privilege of living in this world and making a useful contribution (Jans-Beken & Wong, 2019).

I do not think anyone can find an adequate answer to the question of why little children have to undergo surgeries, chemotherapy, and then die alone. It is always heartbreaking to see them suffer and die in the hospital or in war torn regions. This dark reality may motivate us to do whatever we can so that they do not have to go through hell even before they have an opportunity to live.

According to Kathleen Brehony's (2001) *After the Darkest Hour: How Suffering Begins the Journey to Wisdom*, pain, suffering, or despair has a way of adding meaning and depth to our lives. It propels us to higher levels of self-knowledge and a deeper understanding of the true reality of human existence. When we are stripped of all our illusions and delusions, when we are confronted with the reality of death, it is only natural that we would ask ourselves the following existential questions: Who am I? What is my purpose here? What is life all about? What happens after death?

In *Making Sense Out of Suffering*, Peter Kreeft (1987), a Catholic philosopher, observes that billions of people have been touched by apparently pointless and random suffering. He finds the ultimate meaning of suffering in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. How can we reconcile the suffering of little children with a belief in a good God? Does God descend into our hells? Kreeft answers in the affirmative and he quotes the unforgettable line of Corrie Ten Boom from the depths of a Nazi death camp, "No matter how deep our darkness, he is deeper still."

For Kreeft, God's answer to our suffering was Christ on the cross. Christ came into this world for the purpose of suffering with us and for us so that we may find redemption and eternal joy. By faith, we follow the steps of Christ and become part of God's ongoing work of grace and redemption for the suffering masses. In a poetic way, Kreeft describes the intimate fellowship of suffering:

When we feel the hammers of life beating on our heads or on our hearts, we can know—we must know—that he is here with us, taking our blows. Every tear we shed becomes his tear. He may not yet wipe them away, but he makes them his. (Kreeft, 1987)

When all our cherished worldly things are taken away from us, when the whole world fades away and the end draws near, how do we remain hopeful? We can transcend our limitations in space and time by turning inwards to spiritual values, such as faith, love, wisdom, and compassion. These values represent our best self or higher angels. The faith dimension encompasses our ultimate concerns, a sense of a mystical transcendental reality, and feeling of being connected with the Creator and all humanity. Faith unlocks the mysteries of suffering and death.

## A Case For PP 2.0

Carl Jung (1961/2013) in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, had a very realistic portrait of the world in which we live:

The world into which we are born is brutal and cruel, and at the same time of divine beauty. Which element we think outweighs the other, whether meaninglessness or meaning, is a matter of temperament. If meaninglessness were absolutely preponderant, the meaningfulness of life would vanish to an increasing degree with each step in our development. But that is or seems to me not the case. Probably as in all metaphysical questions, both are true; life is or has meaning and meaninglessness. I cherish the anxious hope that meaning will be preponderate and win the battle. (p. 429)

The challenge confronting us is how we can survive, thrive, and be happy in such a world. I proposed existential positive psychology (Wong, 2009b, 2016a) and second wave positive psychology (Wong, 2011) precisely because we need a positive and helpful answer to the tragedy of human existence.

The first tenet of PP 2.0 is to embrace suffering and death as integral to human existence. All our efforts to enhance well-being and achieve a good life have to be built on this undeniable foundation. It means that our research and interventions have to be predicated on the understanding that the world is full of evil and suffering, just as the natural environment is full of bacteria, viruses, and toxins.

The main limitations of positive psychology as usual (PP 1.0) is its binary approach to happiness and suffering. In contrast, PP 2.0 posits that positive and negative emotions co-exist in dynamic, dialectical interactions. Therefore, I can be simultaneously at the bottom of a dark abyss and resting in the arms of our loving Heavenly Father. My eyes can be filled with tears of sorrow, but at the same time, my heart can be full of the joy and comfort from the God of all comforts.

According to PP 2.0, all emotions, including negative ones, have adaptive value. More importantly, the best way to experience positive emotions is to accept and go through the negative ones. Thus, to develop a positive attitude towards death and suffering, one needs to confront the dark side of human existence.

For positive psychologists with the mindset of modernity, they could not comprehend how the dimension of transcendental reality can greatly enlarge our perspectives and enrich our lives, even when the world is closing in on us. Nor can they understand why I would rather suffer hardships and frustrations living with the people I love than enjoying all the creature comforts living without my loved ones.

PP 2.0 demands a reorientation from what I can get to what I can give, regardless of the cost. From this perspective, other people matter, not because they contribute to my happiness, but because my sacrificial love for them makes me fully human.

### **Conclusion: Some Helpful Hints in Living With Cancer and Suffering**

Paradoxically, death holds the key to living a vital, authentic, and meaningful life. Yalom (2008) once said that the idea of death has saved many lives. That is, we cannot live fully without becoming aware of the fragility and finiteness of life.

Death acceptance is the biggest challenge of acceptance, to no longer regard death as an enemy, but as a good companion and a great gift. It is an end to all suffering and anxiety; it may open the door to something better. Our awareness that we are dying offers us the best opportunity to live fully and become our best. We need to learn how to embrace death without fear of its sting.

There is so much power in acceptance – there is no limit to what we can embrace by the grace of God. True happiness comes from accepting the dark side of life. We need to accept our vulnerabilities, limitations, and the horrors of existence—with the courage and honesty of a warrior (Wong, 2015a). When we willingly surrender to death’s presence in our lives, or accept it as a gift from God, we become open to the mystery of a transcendental reality. From this enlarged spiritual perspective, suffering becomes a stepping stone that connects us with God and with the cosmos, thus losing its all-consuming power. The pain is still there, but it becomes absorbed into our expanded consciousness. In being fully present and intimate with God, we lose ourselves and our pains.

Here are some helpful guidelines in living with cancer and suffering:

The positive psychology of death and dying can be best understood in terms of the dual-system model (Wong, 2012a). According to this model, optimal adaptation depends on our ability to confront and transform the dark side of life in service of achieving positive goals. Both avoidance and approach systems are needed to be free from the prison of death fear and to motivate us to engage actively in what matters to us. From this dual-systems perspective, death fear and death acceptance can co-exist and work together for our well-being.

Life, even immortal life, is a curse unless we can find real meaning and purpose for our existence. We do not understand, until we discover something worth fighting and dying for. We can die happy, knowing that our suffering and sacrifice have made life better for others.

I am gratified that my lifelong research on meaning and resilience (Wong, 2017) has prepared me for my battle with cancer. It is my sincere hope that these suggestions will offer some hope, encouragement, and wisdom to all those struggling with the horrors of life. Here are the 12 rules of living with cancer or with any other traumatic event:

1. **Courage to face reality.** Confront and accept the dark side of life—your vulnerabilities, limitations, and the horrors of existence—with courage and honesty (Wong, 2015a). Without courage, you will not be able to face the challenges of daily life and the uncertainty of the future. With courage, all the suffering in the world are opportunities for you to become what you were meant to be—an everyday hero who lives and contributes in the presence of death and suffering.
2. **Faith in the self, others, and God.** A leap of faith is both essential and adaptive when you do not have all the facts or when you feel overwhelmed by life. Faith in a higher power, and faith in life’s inherent meaning and values are especially helpful when you feel hopeless and are ready to give up on life. This worldview of believing in immortality will empower you to face death with dignity and peace and empower you to take the personal responsibility of fighting the good fight and completing your race (Greenberg, 2020; Wong, 2012b, 2015a). Faith in a higher power can also enable you to move forward with confidence, even when the situation is beyond your control, because depending on God can coexist with self-efficacy as two independent dimensions (Wong & Sproule, 1984).



3. **Knowing yourself and your purpose in life.** Understanding your role in the world and why you are placed here can give you a sense of mission and meaning. Once you know what matters most to you and what you do has significance, you will take responsibility in spending your remaining days in the best possible way (Wong, 2015b).
4. **Self-transcendence.** Be willing to make the necessary sacrifices and endure the pain so that you can transcend your limitations and make life better for yourself and others. You cannot ascend to heaven without descending into the hell of suffering and sacrifice (Wong, 2016c).
5. **An appreciative attitude.** Practice existential gratitude for being alive each day, for planet earth, and for all the people that make your life comfortable, even when you are going through a very tough time (Jans-Beken & Wong, 2019). You can always find something positive in every negative situation (Wong, 2016d).
6. **Compassion.** Reach out to people with love and generosity. Offer what you have in order to reduce suffering and increase happiness in others. Compassion and gratitude strengthen the bond between people and transforms your suffering into joy.
7. **A growth mindset.** Struggle to improve yourself each day as if you have a future. This means that you not only savour each moment and value each day, but also learn how to transform your setbacks and negative emotions to positive motivation to improve your life (Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). You can still improve yourself even in your last stretch of life. This process of becoming better than what you were yesterday is a powerful source of intrinsic motivation and meaning.
8. **A dialectic view of life.** Everything in life comes in polarity—day and night, good and evil, happiness and sorrow. One cannot exist without the others. With this mature worldview, you will not complain too much about the bad things in life, knowing that your rock bottom will be the foundation for you to go up, if you do not give up. Mature happiness results from balancing yin-yang in each situation (Wong, 2016b; Wong & Bowers, 2018).
9. **The dual-system model of coping.** You need to make full use of both the approach system and avoidance system in coping with the demands of life. You will be further ahead if you repair what is broken and enhance what is good simultaneously in the pursuit of a worthy life goal. The two systems can reinforce each other. Meaning is experienced in the interaction between these two processes (Wong, 2012a).
10. **A double vision.** You need to keep one eye on heaven with its uplifting ideals and another eye on earth with its grim reality. Tragic optimism will emerge when we face the daily struggle to survive and at the same time believe that a better future is awaiting if we do not give up (Wong, 2009c, 2016d).
11. **Effective coping.** Take stress reduction seriously by cultivating and conserving your resources and by using appropriate coping strategies (Wong, 1993). You may need to talk to your spouse and family members truthfully and lovingly, asking for their cooperation and support to create a harmonious environment at home.
12. **Acceptance and surrendering.** Practice mindful medication and mindful observation of life as it is with calmness and equanimity. Accept reality as it is enfolding without judgement and emotional avoidance (Kashdan & Ciarrochi, 2013). In times of panic, practice deep breathing and stand firm on your ground, knowing who you are what you stand for. Face your “enemies” with defiance, courage, and faith. Imagine that you are little David with five stone challenging Goliath the giant.

Having struggled so much when praying to be healed and getting the necessary medical help, in the end, the only option is to accept the inevitable and surrender your life to God or to destiny. When you are able to say, "Your will, not my will, be done," you can find inner peace. .

I am grateful that I have experienced hell longer than most people so that I can share with others how to survive the worst kind of hell on earth:

- During my darkest hours, I saw a distant star. By faith, I cried out for help with outstretched hands.
- In the depth of my despair, I heard a still small voice, telling me, "Fear not, be courageous, I will be with you."
- In desperate situations with no way out, I felt the grace of gratitude and the joy of being alive.
- Under the crushing burden of Being, I discovered the inner resources to keep on living.
- With tears flowing inwards, I learned resilience in my painful struggles to make the world a better place for all suffering people.
- This sacrifice filled my life with joy meaning.

If you can practice the above 12 rules in your life, you too can transform your private hell into a little piece of heaven on earth, whether you are struggling with cancer or something worse. The world can be very harsh and cruel, but the spirit of resilience is stronger.

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