

Effort and Surrender

I have slowed down considerably in this chemo. My hikes with daisy are much shorter, my visits to the gym are almost nonexistent. But I discovered the miracle of yoga. Outside, on the beach of my campground, where I already feel so serene, I breathe. I hear the lapping of the lake. I am balanced. I am strong. I am quiet.

I went to the state doctor to determine for the retirement board that I am actually terminally ill. He was older, with kind eyes, and asked lots of questions. For a bit, it seemed that he was going to question my prognosis. Who would begrudge my disability payment of \$14k/ year with all that we have yet to endure? But when I asked what he was looking for, he crossed his arms and sighed. He explained that this meeting was a gift for any doctor interested in oncology. For less than 2% of patients have lived with this type of cancer. He assured us they we have been fortunate enough to have amazing support, outstanding doctors, and bizarrely aggressive treatment.

Oh yes, I'm terminal. But beautiful, and strong, not giving up. He was just curious enough if he could figure out the secret to our amazing attitude. He gave me a message for Rikki's magical thinking. "Because there is magic in it, reassure your husband that this tumor IS the same tumor that has been there 6 years. Whatever we have done to keep it at bay- keep doing". He then advised me to, "retire. And keep doing your yoga for 6 more years. I believe there is something to it." Rikki and I appreciated his kindness and loved his interest. We left there feeling like we should keep fighting.

So Thursday, all hooked up to my chemo bag, I went to yoga. My teacher called my attention to my shaking. I swung my head around, and in my best exasperation answered, "you might cut me some slack. I'm hooked up here." She smiled, sat in the lotus position and said that I misunderstood. "You see, the philosophy of yoga is the balance between effort and surrender. Your effort is too much when you shake. But you can't sit down and refuse the pose. You must ease off slightly, feeling for the balance." Of course I stayed right in my shaking stretch for the sun and cried. And I answered in a puny shaking voice that fighting cancer is the balance between effort and surrender. She walked over, gently placed her hands on my torso, adjusted my posture, her own tears forming and added, with breath like the gauze she wore, "LIFE is the balance between effort and surrender."

So I'm not sure how to ease back. I sit in my bed and cry. I complain to Rikki. I take drugs to help and I don't know why this isn't surrender. Later, when I'm up and out, I push hard and shake to fit it all in. And I move, volunteer, write, and visit. I went to aunties church where her pastor had, of all things, a hammock on the pulpit. And I heard him invite us to carefully sit at the edge of the hammock with our own strength. THEN learn the gift that gods mercy gives us. "Lay back. Relax. Trust. Enjoy what god does for us when we can't do for ourselves."

Balance is in two different worlds for me right now. In the bed/ hammock being cradled by god. But then I am empowered into doing for the world. For when I can't anymore. How do you do both at the same time?

This week I had my Mexican cousins at my blessed campground. This week I had a shout out from a childhood friend, who is now - listen to this- a yoga guru, who implored me to fight this disease by dancing around the primal fires. So we threw a palette on the campfire and we celebrated. I did, Eric, for you. For Dina. For our moms. For me.

Effort. Surrender. Reaching out. Love. It is quite the dance...