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Coping with My Daughter's Diagnosis of Cancer

BY MARIE-EVE SENECHAL

WHEN I WAS ATTUNED to Usui Reiki Ryoho Levels I & II 25 years ago, I didn't completely understand what I was saying yes to nor did I know how much this weekend class would transform my life. At that time, I was only offered a spot in my parents' first Reiki class because one of the attendees was not able to make it. I enjoyed the workshop and for a few years following the class, I called on Reiki energy for guidance in my life. Then I became busy with my studies at university, I got married and then I started working. I found that the busier I became, the less I was connected to the Reiki energy and its source of Love and Wisdom.

After a few years of marriage, my son was born followed by my daughter three years later. As soon as she turned five, she was diagnosed with kidney cancer. Within the first two weeks, we were given two different diagnoses, the second worse than the original one of Stage 2 cancer. Following surgery, the doctor recommended radiation treatments and a longer protocol of chemotherapy.

All this devastating news dismayed the whole family. I remember being annoyed by the numerous praises from acquaintances, friends and family members with respect to our courage—mine especially. However, in my mind, I was anything but courageous. How could I be courageous when I was that afraid and I was crying all the time? I struggled and suffered a long time because of the false idea that I had about courage. I was far from being a superhero facing the danger with no fear. Facing all that we would have to in the next few months, I felt my mind drifting away, and I began to doubt my ability to handle everything. My husband, too, felt incompetent. We didn't know how we would cope with everything: the appointments, the treatments, the endless admissions and follow-ups at the hospital—nor did we want to neglect our son. Also, as husband and wife, we didn't want to lose each other.

At first sight, my daughter didn't seem ill at all. Personally, I had trouble trusting the doctor's diagnosis. It didn't make sense to me that the doctor was planning to "make her sick" for her to ultimately get better. I remember being more afraid of the chemotherapy than my daughter's death itself. I was afraid of the inescapable pain and useless suffering resulting from the treatments. Despite what my husband and I thought, we felt that we didn't have any choice but to start chemotherapy treatments for our daughter as soon as possible. It went well for the first couple of weeks. How-

ever, one day, a month after she began the treatments, she began to suffer greatly. She had just finished her first cycle of chemotherapy¹ as well as the ten-day radiotherapy treatment, and to top it all off, she had also received medication for boosting her immune system. Put together, these treatments and medications had great potential to cause side effects on my daughter's little tummy, which they did. My daughter was curled up in pain on the couch, becoming weaker, complaining about her little tummy hurting. My husband, my son and I could only watch the unfortunate spectacle because we didn't know what to do. This kind of helplessness is certainly an unbearable experience for a parent's heart. We had only completed a month of treatments and it was already this difficult. How would it be later or even at the end of this protocol? Would she be able to survive all this?

That same day I went out for a walk and prayed with all my heart for the first time since the beginning of this journey. I just needed a bit of hope and comfort. After long reflection, I was guided to carry out Reiki sessions on my daughter. As clumsy as my explanation seemed to be, my daughter surprisingly said yes to a first session. At that point, I think she would have said yes to anything that would have stopped the pain. That was all I needed. Despite the fact that I hadn't used Reiki for years, I knew that I only had to trust where to put my hands, set my intention for the energy to flow and Reiki would flow.

During that day, I gave her a few 10-minute sessions. My daughter didn't allow me to treat her any longer than that at a time. Even my hands over her body seemed to be unbearable. She didn't want us to touch her. Unfortunately, there were no obvious improvements between sessions. In despair, my husband called the hospital to ask what to do and was told that our daughter had to be admitted right away. In the meantime, my daughter vanished into her room and reappeared shortly after with her checkers game asking her dad to play with her, as if nothing had happened. We were shocked at her turnabout. At that time, I wasn't able to give myself any explanation as to what was happening. Nevertheless, I decided that I would give her Reiki sessions on a daily basis.

¹ One chemotherapy cycle was a three-week period within the whole protocol of chemotherapy.

"On a daily basis" became giving Reiki every single time I had a chance to. Years before, I learned that when treating an adult, I give an hour session and follow a certain set of hand positions. I discovered that carrying out a Reiki session on a child is completely different. And with a sick child, it can turn into an entirely different scenario. On her first day in the hospital, I gave her multiple sessions. My limited knowledge and my preconceived ideas about how to handle a session were tested many times, and I had to adjust *my need* to give Reiki to her to that of my daughter's needs. I had to make use of my imagination and make the most of all occasions presented to me. I took advantage of every chemotherapy treatment, asking the Reiki to flow and balance the medication itself as much as to bring the healing to my daughter. I asked the energy to flow when, in my arms, she was wrapped in a shawl or when we were both sitting still together at the hospital waiting for the next test. I gave Reiki to her water and her food many times. I charged her teddy bears and her dolls to help her sleep. I had to trust that this was good enough.

Despite the severity of the disease my daughter was fighting, it seemed that it was far from stopping her. It was impossible to keep her still for more than 15 minutes. Furthermore, being unable to go to school, my daughter became so busy with her games and especially with her crafting that I used to say, "She is busier than an actual CEO." In fact, it took me a while to figure out that children have a real intimate connection with the Reiki energy. They are always in the present moment and they "know" when their body is balanced and completely filled with renewed energy, so that they can return to their play. The younger they are the purer the connection seems to be. After a few sessions I noticed that my daughter was not an exception to this and that she knew when she had enough.

She seemed to cherish the moments we had together. In fact, she started asking me for more Reiki sessions and became distressed when I left the hospital at night and she was staying behind. I was not allowed to leave without making promises to send Reiki. When my son was in his bed and I was alone, I sent Reiki to her in her hospital room. In fact, it was at those moments that I carried out longer sessions. I had the feeling that every session produced a great calm state, even to the core of her Soul. First, it balanced her physical energy. I felt her being energetic without being hyperactive. It cleared her mind of the mood swings and dramatically reduced the common side effects of the chemotherapy.

Despite some days being a little harder than others, my daughter never felt as ill as on that day after the first cycle of chemotherapy. She obviously got tired at some points and had trouble eating sometimes, which caused her to lose a bit of weight. She even experienced an episode without any white cells in her body for over a week and had to be admitted to the hospital in a preven-

tive measure of reverse quarantine.² Everything went perfectly fine, and I am convinced that Reiki kept my daughter's energy high enough to get her through her days without catching any illnesses. All these experiences did not stop her from playing actively—as active as a child on chemotherapy can be—and enjoying her life. She was the only child on the ward who was riding in the corridor on the hospital tricycle for hours when all others admitted for chemotherapy were lethargic in their beds. I have to admit that sometimes, I got tired before she did. She was always on the go. It seemed that Reiki filled her little body with energy and happiness every day. I believe that the Reiki even gave her insights about the outcome of this journey. One day, she told me with much confidence that she would be healed soon.

Slowly but surely, I reconnected with Reiki. I felt its energy setting the seeds of change in my heart and working its magic. Over the days, I felt more peace and happiness coming back like when clouds leave the sky after the rain. Yet I do not mean that everything and every day became easier all of a sudden. So many times, I was confronted with the choice of being a victim or taking responsibility for my life. We all had our moments of despair: my daughter, my son, my husband and I. This disease can lead to a complete loss of control over one's life. Perpetual change is the routine with cancer. For instance, a promising morning could turn into a nightmare in the afternoon or vice versa. When we went to bed there was no certainty that we would get through the night without being awoken. And of course the Ego is always waiting right around the corner to fill the mind with false ideas and make us complain: the timing is not perfect, it's too long, too short, it is not in the right place, not with the right people. Coping with cancer can be perceived as the most traumatic experience ever.

Reiki brought me the strength to live with cancer daily. Its energy provides consciousness of the power we all have and allows us to make the decision of what pair of glasses we'll see life through. Each day I chose to learn from that experience, and I received strong certainty that Reiki energy would help me and guide me along. I decided to roll up my sleeves, open my eyes wide and actively change what I could and accept what I couldn't change. Acceptance is a very important part in our growth. I didn't quit, and I started to trust that this was happening for a reason. I decided that the cancer would help me grow spiritually. Among many other things, I now believe that the cancer experience taught me to let go and to appreciate the moment as it is, here and now, complete and perfect—and to cherish every moment, every minute, every hour because they will never come

² Keeping healthy people, or in this case, people at great risk for contracting disease, apart from those who are infected, unlike the more usual process of quarantining those who are infected.

back and we never know when the wind will change. Even though the moment may seem imperfect, learning to appreciate life as it is presented to us helps us to become grateful again. Still today, this experience affects me in what I do in my life.

Despite my daughter's experiences with cancer, I was able again to see the beauty of life, to see beyond the pale or greenish color of my daughter's skin and instead see the happiness on her face and her smile. When we shaved her hair I didn't become sad at the sight of her being bald. I saw instead the sparkle of joy and amusement in her eyes as she looked in the mirror at her face covered in chocolate after she had had a snack. In summer, I noticed the butterflies and my blooming flowers in the backyard. But I first and foremost noticed the presence of a dancing little girl in the garden.

I overcame the fear of the chemotherapy that my daughter received with the help of Reiki. I surprisingly tamed the fear of losing my daughter as well. It is stunning how Reiki can help with living peacefully beyond any fears of loss and death. Some people may say that the threat was almost nil for us. Indeed, the chances of her survival were very good—as high as 95%. But as minimal as the threat seemed, not thinking about it would have been denying the fact that everybody dies someday. Life made me remember that giving life means giving death as well and that as the German Proverb says, a born child is already old enough to

pass away. So I know that if we hadn't done anything to help our daughter in her healing process she wouldn't be with us today.

We say that life brings us only the experiences we can handle. It is true, as long as we overcome the shock and we welcome what we are offered as opportunities to grow. I think that I was lucky to find Reiki again in time for it to help my daughter and me. After one year of treatment, we received very positive test results and got the news that we could return to a "normal" life. We were also told at that time that my daughter would go through a six-month recovery with a progressive return to school. With the help of Reiki, my daughter surprised us again. She returned to school full time sooner than we thought she would and gained more and more energy within the first month. It has been five years now and she is considered healed according to her doctor. Thank you, Reiki!



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