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## **RESPANTS: INFORMATION, INSPIRATION AND EXPIRATION**

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Most medical school applicants today state that the candidate for admission is interested in and fascinated by the human body. The problem is that a person comes with each body. The person is not treated properly by many a physician. The person may also disturb the physician who has been given medical information but not a medical education. An education teaches you how to deal with and care for the human experience of illness and not just to treat the diagnosis. A medical education should also teach the skill of communication so that we do not kill with our words, but heal with them – just as we heal with a scalpel and do not wound with it. One of our sons showed me how wordswordswords become swordswordswords when not used properly.

What I have found is that information does not change people. The obese, alcoholics, smokers and nonconforming patients all know their behavior is not good for them. So why do they do it? It gets back to a lack of messages from parents, teachers, clergy and other figures of love and authority in their earlier lives. Ugly ducklings rarely find out on their own that they are swans. In a study of Harvard students, those who felt loved children had one fourth the illnesses of an unloved child by middle age.

I have found that approximately 20% of patients are what I call *respants*- responsible participants who display and are interested in learning survival behavior. What I do for the other 80% is love them and give them return appointments no matter what they do. With time and my love some begin to realize they are worth loving and caring for and begin to care for and about themselves. In a sense they realize they are swans too and divine children. At the point where they open to this realization, the information I present to them is utilized to achieve better health and survival statistics.

Nine hundred years ago, Maimonides stated, "People would suffer fewer illnesses if they took as good care of themselves as they do of their animals." Times haven't changed. I see pet owners with cats and dogs who have lung cancer or asthma smoke outdoors to protect their beloved pets. Killing yourself or your family is not questioned.

I can't sell the idea of being a respart or cite better statistics to convince them, because they aren't interested in working at living. They have grown up hearing there is something wrong with them. So guilt, shame and blame are what they are dealing with and if you ask them to fight for their lives, they believe this is one more thing they won't get right. Sad but true. I often ask people to answer questions, join support

groups, and draw pictures of themselves and their treatment and disease. That eliminates many patients because they are not artists, could do it wrong, or don't want to work at surviving.

If I can inspire them and breathe life into them then changes will occur. Now they are waking up to life and what makes them happy. This is not about self interest but about paying attention to their bodies and what feels good for them to do. On Monday mornings we have more heart attacks, suicides and illnesses and this is because of how we feel about our meaningless lives and work that we don't want to do. I help people reclaim their lives and be reborn so every cell in their body is given a message about the joys of life each day. Have I seen people expected to die in only a few months cured of their disease by living this way? Yes. Do I recommend it as the sole treatment? No, because I know how hard it is to "live in your heart and have magic happen" and to "leave all your troubles to God."

I do, however, point out the benefits of love to respants and those they are in contact with. When people are unwilling to do this I let their families know that they need to take care of themselves too. Why? Because there is something called Siegel's sign in physical diagnosis. When a family walks into your office and everyone looks sick except one person you can be sure the one who looks well is the one with the illness and is using it to manipulate everyone else in the family. I always guarantee them a cure on their next visit. They never come back to that office again and always arrange future meetings in the ER or other safe places where a cure is not available.

What are respants' survival techniques? They take action, seek wisdom, meditate, use imagery and find spiritual support. Spiritual support may come from a religion but some religions have regulations that create guilt and lead to feelings that one deserves God's punishment. Disease is no different than when one loses one's car keys. You don't say, "God wants me to walk home.", You look for your keys. When you are ill you have lost your health and respants look for it to be restored.

Respants live a life with meaning, express appropriate anger and other feelings, ask for help when it is needed, learn to say "No" to things they don't want to do, make their own decisions about treatment, bring play into their lives, deal with feelings of depression and learn from them rather than burying them inside themselves, and do not live a role but an authentic life.

In essence life becomes a labor pain in which we birth ourselves. Because we are making the choices the delivery has less pain, complications, and side effects.

About twenty years ago I met a respant named Susan Duffy. Susan had developed an incurable illness called scleroderma and was not given much time to live. She was one enraged lady - over her illness and her difficult life. Her parents and sister were alcoholics who had attempted suicide (and ultimately did commit suicide) and were angry at her for not doing so. When I met her, all I could do was listen, which I learned was what she really needed someone to do. After she emptied out her rage in 1987 she wrote me a letter telling me that she had let love into her prison and it had touched every negative item in it and transformed each into something meaningful. She is alive

today, a member of our support group, and one of my teachers. I will present her list of advice for survivors at the end of this article.

Becky is another respart. Eight years ago my phone rings and someone asks me for Jack Kevorkian's home number, so she can have his help with euthanasia. I learn why Becky wants to die and tell her she is a child of God and to send me some drawings. I don't tell people, "Don't smoke!" or "Don't commit suicide!" I say, "I love you and God Loves you!" and "Why hurt a child of God?". Becky and I worked on her pain and she is alive today. I am her CD, her Chosen Dad. What is my role? To keep loving her no matter what she does. I don't have to like her behavior while I continue to love her. That is very different from telling her there is something wrong with her versus something wrong with her actions. Since then, Becky has helped me with others who are considering suicide. This is something the medical students of today need to learn to do.

When I ask medical students to draw themselves as doctors, the majority of the drawings are totally depersonalizing. Some show no human beings - only computers, instruments, diplomas and books. In contrast, one drawing I have shows a kneeling young man handing the patient a tissue. That is what Becky said, "When someone responds to her needs, even simply giving her a tissue, she is given the will to live. .

I do not criticize people for their choices but try and help them find what is right for them. In doing so I help them find new options and paths to healing their lives and hopefully their illnesses as well. Death is not a failure and is inevitable. I remind people to not try and avoid death but to enjoy life. If you try and avoid death you end up very angry when you find out life has a 100% mortality rate, but when you enjoy life the bonus is a longer and healthier one.

To be a respart you need to find your path and ways to healing. The messages are age-old and can be found in the literature of great spiritual leaders, in the US Marines training manual, and in the writings of children with cancer. There are two key elements. One is the inspiration I discussed and the other is your behavior. Just as multiple personalities disassociate so you must disassociate from your old self and behave as if you were the person you want to be. You rehearse and practice and find the coaches to help guide you. That is the role I see myself in today. I am a coach for the inspired respart who wants to learn survival behavior.

How will you know one when you meet respants? Tell them, "I'm taking you to dinner," and ask them these questions: "What would you like to eat? How would you introduce yourself to God? What should I hang in the lobby of public buildings with a sign above it that says. Come and see how beautiful and meaningful life is?"

The correct answers are: The response about the dinner should be within 5 to 10 seconds, demonstrating you are in touch with your feelings and not thinking about fat content, cost, or what you want. You and God don't need an introduction. You are a child of God. And last, you hang up not a picture of a baby, a rainbow or a flower, but a mirror.

Now let me close with a list from Susan for survivors.

### **THE FOLLOWING ARE FROM SUSAN DUFFY'S SECRETS OF LIVING FOR SURVIVORS**

1. Trust yourself enough to become your own teacher.
2. Cultivate your own sense of being and spirituality.
3. Trust in your own instincts, intuitions and leadings.
4. Learn to flow with your own ideas concerning searching and seeking answers.
5. Choose to have faith in yourself and your place in life.
6. Discipline yourself to love the positive more than the negative.
7. Let go of everything that you can't change.
8. Change yourself through self-acceptance and love then what happens around you won't matter.
9. Learn to forgive the unforgivable and you will become free.
10. Forgive God, others and yourself.
11. Allow yourself to feel anger, pain, joy and sadness.
12. Express your feelings and don't feel so alone.
13. Everything changes.
14. Look to other people for guidance and inspiration but not answers.
15. Other people don't have all the answers; they are learning too.
16. Nothing so bad ever happened to you that didn't happen to someone else.
17. No one is unique. We all suffer the same joys and pains of life.
18. Our problems may come in different shapes and sizes but the solutions are the same.
19. Embrace life. It will hug you back.
20. Don't have a need to control.
21. Allow the order of things to take place. God knows what He is doing.
22. Enjoy the peace, knowing someone bigger and stronger is in charge.
22. Don't make too many schedules. You will go crazy.
23. You can't fix everything. You are not the Creator.
24. Have faith and trust in the things you don't understand. Life will become easier.
25. Nothing ever happens to you that is not for your good in the bigness of things.
26. Deal with grief, pain and loss when they happen and you won't have to relive them.
27. Don't make too many plans for the future. Life may step in.
28. Love is the greatest healer there is.
29. The less you need someone the more you can love them.
30. Rest when you need to. No one else can do it for you.
31. Never stop learning. You will become bored.
32. Behind every cloud of adversity is a silver lining. Have the courage and faith to find it.
33. Good and bad events are the pieces of the puzzle that make life complete.
34. God heals. Doctors get paid for it.
35. Letting go of those we love is the greatest gift of love we can give them.
36. Live each day as if it were your last. You will have a lot of great days.
37. Don't live a life of confusion. You will get lost.
38. Love unconditionally those unable to love back and you will be set free.

39. Pray, meditate, sit quietly, take walks.
40. Look up to something bigger than you are: life, love, God.
41. Allow yourself to make mistakes, then move on. Life is too short.
42. Live a life of prayer and you can get through anything.
43. Learn to laugh at yourself and you will make friends with yourself.
44. Know you are a child of God.
45. God loves you even when you think no one else does.
46. Be your own person in all things.
47. When you know yourself other people will know you too.
48. Learn to accept criticism, advice and suggestions. They can help you.
49. Be humble when you receive praise.
50. Don't get stuck following one religion, group or person move forward.
51. Life holds the wisdom, answers and solutions that any person could ever need their life.
52. Have the courage to explore.
53. Open to life. Feel it, experience it, live it and you will learn to fly (transcend).

In conclusion let me say live in the moment as children and animals do. To put it in the words of one of my patients, "I want to be dying forever." If we live with a sense of time we learn how to spend it and that it is everything. Ultimately, what is immortal is not our bodies but our love.

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