Drema's Story

About The Author

Drema Sue Odum Bleitz, was a
dedicated nurse,
who experienced a profound
understanding of
The Three Principles of
Mind, Consciousness, Thought,
in the late 1970s.

She marveled at the changes she and
many of her coworkers underwent by
listening to Sydney Banks as he
shared this understanding, via
workshops, recordings, and books.

~ James H. Beck

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Applications of Mind Consciousness and Thought to Nursing

Drema Odum Bleitz

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Dedication

To all the wonderful caregivers; the medical professionals, nurses, support workers, doctors, psychologists, and therapists, who have felt the calling to share their compassionate feelings with patients, families, and co-workers.

This book is a love letter to you all!

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Foreword

This little book that you are holding in your hands is a blessing being delivered to humanity. Like all blessings, it will only manifest when it is realized. So it is up to each one of us to release the feelings we create as we share the compassion from inside.

Drema Odum Bleitz, was a dedicated nurse, who experienced a profound understanding of The Three Principles of Mind, Consciousness, and Thought.

Back in the late nineteen seventies, she marvelled at the changes she and many of her co-workers underwent by listening to Sydney Banks share this understanding via workshops, recordings, and books. She was awakened to the fact that negative thinking created negative moods and

stress. She would later remark on how healing was enhanced as negative moods disappeared. It is also remarkable to see the effect that her own healing had on her family, friends, co-workers, patients, and their caregivers. She began to realize that sharing her new-found wisdom with others, who were ready for change, accelerated her own wisdom, and created more opportunities for learning.

She was offered other challenging opportunities, and astounded her patients and administrators with miraculous results. Hospital wards were ascending out of chaos and into clarity. One ward, that contained hopeless, despondent, and hostile patients, morphed into a sanctuary of happy, positive, hopeful, and grateful people.

Drema and I met by happenstance. We both lived on Maui, and we had a mutual connection to Sydney Banks. My wife and I became her dear friends. About twenty years ago Drema contracted Cancer. After a major struggle, and feeling that her days were numbered, she asked me if I would record her story.

The recording is being reproduced as an audio book, which I highly recommend, as her voice conveys her love and authenticity, so well. The recording is the basis for this print edition and the eBook. All are part of Drema's gift to humanity.

~James Beck

Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to Karan Detani for his enthusiastic support and assistance in creating these projects. His wonderful energy is deeply appreciated.

~James Beck

Preface

Aloha! I am from Hawaii and Aloha is a very special word here. It means many things; hello, and goodbye, but it also has a deeper meaning. The true meaning of Aloha is a feeling that comes directly from the heart. It helps us through our life, and it is how we connect with another person on a higher spiritual level.

When we are in the feeling of Aloha, we experience compassion and understanding for people. We look forward to being of assistance to others, not out of duty, but out of unconditional love. To me, these feelings are the true essence and joy of nursing.

I hope that as you read this book, you will open your heart to the experience of

the Aloha feeling. It is through this feeling that the deeper meaning of what is being said will connect with your own innate wisdom.

So, Aloha!

“Thought is the consistent factor between happiness and unhappiness. It is the source of our moods.”

~Drema

Chapter One

Introduction to Mind, Consciousness and Thought

I've been a nurse for 30 some years. My first job was working in orthopaedics, and then I moved on to pediatrics. Then in the late seventies, I worked surgical intensive care for about six years, and then went on to infection control. It was when I was in infection control that I was introduced to the principles of mind, consciousness and thought.

For the purposes of this book I am giving you an extremely condensed version of the meaning of these principles. If you aren't familiar with these principles, I suggest you read any

of Sydney Banks' books, and listen to his audio and video tapes, which are excellent. The purpose of this book is to connect these principles with the art of nursing, in situations with other staff, patients, and their families.

MIND

When we talk of mind we are not talking about the biological brain or the intellect. When we refer to mind, we are talking about the mind being spiritual, and the source of power behind life itself. Mind is not a thing you have to understand in order to access it. It would be impossible to understand it. The important part is to know it's there. Like electricity, I don't understand it, but I know how to access it so that life is easier.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness is the gift of awareness that allows us to see the connection between our thinking and our experiences, or our realities. As our consciousness goes down we lose that feeling of love and understanding. We have very little awareness of the connection between our experiences and our thinking.

People that are psychotic, have no idea that they are creating their own reality. The feelings of love and positivity return as our consciousness ascends, and our level of understanding goes up. We have more awareness that we are living in a thought created reality.

THOUGHT

Thought is the tool we have been given to create our experience of life. We all

have freewill and we each have the ability to create many different experiences. Just look at your own family. They will describe the same situation totally differently sometimes.

Thought is the consistent factor between happiness and unhappiness. It is the source of our moods. So, our big focus as we talk about these principles, will be on thinking, and then how to create that shift in consciousness or understanding for consciousness or understanding for ourselves, and help to facilitate it in others.

“It is through these feelings that we touch the very soul of another human being. To me, this is the most important area I will cover.”

~Drema

Chapter Two

Applications to Health Care

After doing an internship studying the principles, my goal had been to see how they applied to different aspects of nursing and healthcare. While working in infection control, I had observed that there was a connection between someone's attitude and thinking, and their ability to heal and recover from major diseases and surgeries. I had wondered if you could help someone not just think positively, but to shift their level of consciousness or understanding.

When people shift in their level of understanding, they will be less vulnerable to using their thinking against

themselves. This would apply even in situations where they would be going through changes such as cancer, or even the experience of death.

I cannot begin to describe how blessed I've been in my career. I was given the opportunity to work with the most incredible patients, and they have taught me. My job was simply to uncover the wisdom that was already there, but covered up to varying degrees by their own thinking, which was usually fear based.

It is wonderful and very gratifying to work with patients and families. However, if you help one nurse, just one, have a deeper understanding of how to maintain his or her own mental health and balance, while dealing with the many demands of work and home, you have helped each person he or she comes in

contact with. This nurse will be more equipped to keep in touch with his or her positive feelings of caring and wanting to help. It is through these feelings that we touch the very soul of another human being.

To me this is most important area I will cover. Through our nature as nurses, we deal with a lot of pain, suffering, anger, fear and stress on a daily basis. If we do not have a good understanding of what mental health is and how it gets covered up with our own thinking, we will lose our balance at home, work or both. Therefore, it is vital that you learn it for yourself.

Just like the old saying goes, “Physician heal thyself.” You cannot save someone from drowning until you learn to swim well yourself. Being compassionate and loving does not mean that you take on

the pain and the level of consciousness that your patients may be experiencing. Just by keeping your own balance you assist those around you.

I can't reiterate enough how helpful the principles have been in allowing me, as a nurse, to do that as a daughter taking care of her mom dying of cancer, as a daughter-in-law taking care of her mother-in-law with cancer, and as a patient myself.

Another field I'm going to talk a little bit about is how these principles apply to working with co-workers. Often, the person having the hardest time is not necessarily the patient that we're dealing with, it might be your co-worker, and every person that he or she interacts with may be impacted. Sometimes our most important job is to be able to help that co-worker find his or her balance, so that

they can reconnect with the innate mental health that is inside all of us.

Another field we will touch upon is that of the caregiver. What is it like to keep your balance while giving care to another human being, without being overwhelmed by a lot of fear, anger and frustration?

The last area I will touch upon is my perspective as a patient. I went through cancer myself and was given a very poor prognosis. It was my first time to *walk the talk*.

Sometimes we lose our balance, but when we have a good understanding of how our thinking works, and are open to a change, or shift in consciousness, we are able to recover with more grace, ease and less stress. We develop less tolerance for our own negativity. This allows our immune system to work at an optimum

level. We realize that we can have a good experience of life regardless of our external circumstances. We just start seeing cancer or whatever it is, as another event or situation in life. We don't have to give it a lot of thought or energy. More importantly, we learn to live in the moment with gratitude just for that.

So I hope this book touches you in some area, because I feel that we all experience some of these things at one time or another. I hope that my experience with what I've gone through will make your journey easier and give you more hope and insight.

“We are learning how our thinking works to create our feelings of stress, and that we have the freedom to change our thinking and experience.”

~Drema

Chapter Three

Applications on a Personal Level

I would like to share with you how I evolved from seeing my patients as 'the open heart,' or 'the kidney transplant', to beautiful human beings that I had the privilege to care for. On the surface I may not have looked different, but the change or shift came from the inside. It allowed my heart to open up as it had been in the first few years of nursing, when I felt it was a privilege just to be taking care, of the patients that I did.

This change allowed me to see my nursing duties as vehicles that allowed me to spend time with my patients, so that I could connect and help them, not

just physically, but emotionally and spiritually. By spiritually I'm not referring to any religion, but a connection with that innate part, that is the source of inner wisdom, strength and well-being in human beings. This is done through a feeling and it's impossible to be consistent if you do not have an understanding of where that feeling comes from or how it gets covered up.

I would like to take you back in time to the late seventies. I was working in a VA Centre in Miami. Another nurse and I were the infection control nurses for this medical centre that had about 750 beds. So we had a big job!

I was divorced with a son. My father had just died. My nephew had just been diagnosed with a congenital heart defect, the same condition as my sister. My sister was still debating whether she

should have surgery. I worked with a girl who was divorced, had a son, and her own set of problems. We took turns sharing our stories of woe. Between the two of us we had plenty of them, and every other day we took turns crying.

My busiest unit was a surgical intensive care. I was very familiar with the staff. I'd worked there for six years prior to my current job and I had just returned from vacation. I'd been off for a whole month. There was always a lot of stress and activity on the unit, as well as friction. Many of the nurses were trying to outdo each other, kind of a top dog syndrome, rather than working together.

I walked into the unit and there was something very different about the feeling there. The feeling was as tangible as the floor I was walking on. At first, I couldn't quite put my finger on what it

was, but I saw that everybody was smiling. They were getting along. That was unusual. They were really enjoying what they were doing. They were connected with their patients.

My mind started to question what had occurred, and of course, I looked at all the outside things. Maybe they had gotten a raise, or maybe that battle axe of a supervisor had finally quit. Maybe they all fell in love. My mind was racing. “What? What could have changed?” I pulled my friend aside because I knew she'd level with me. We were very close. I said, “Let's have a cup of coffee.” I could hardly wait to ask her what had happened.

When I did, she assured me that none of the things that I gave credit for created the change in the feeling and behaviour of the staff. She looked at me, almost

embarrassed, as she said, “We just started to learn how not to use our thinking against ourselves.”
“What?”
“We are learning how our thinking works to create our feelings of stress, and that we have the freedom to change our thinking and experience.”

Well, I didn't know what she was talking about, but it was obvious that it made a difference in their nursing care. Plus they were having a good time at their job. I mean, a couple of them were even singing to their intubated patients. Well, I'm not stupid. I also wanted to learn what they were learning.

At first, as I listened about the principles, I wasn't able to comprehend what they were trying to say, but I did feel better and I realized that this was a new way to learn. You don't worry about

the words. You listen for a feeling. It's like listening to classical music. If you sit and analyze all the notes, you miss the essence behind them.

So I learned to do that, and as I listened, I felt a little calmer, a little less anxious, a little more peaceful, and more helpful.

I started to see there was a connection between my thinking and my experience. I realized I could change my experience by changing my thinking. So now I could see what had happened in my friends. The change I had seen occurred from the inside, or out of a shift in their level of understanding or consciousness.

The circumstances in my own life were the same. I was still divorced. I still had the same set of situations to deal with at home and at work, but my experiences were totally different. My family

especially my mom noticed the change in me. I no longer played the negativity game. Even though the change was positive, it made her concerned about me. She loved me very much and felt the need to see for herself what was going on.

My mom hated to fly, so coming from West Virginia to Florida to see me was a real act of love. It just so happened that at the time she chose to come, Sydney Banks was having a seminar. She was very eager to check things out.

That day she got more than she bargained for. I was amazed that she was so open and touched. After the seminar there was a gentleness and softness that I hadn't seen in her for a long time. I cannot tell you how wonderful I felt seeing the shift in her.

The change did not stop when she left. She continued listening to tapes and

reading Syd's work. We talked on the phone a lot, and I felt as though I had to get to know her all over again. She lost weight, went back to school, and was seen as a bright ray of light in the community.

She taught me that anyone could change regardless of age or years of bad habits. I felt very grateful for both of us.

As a health care provider, the closer we are to someone, the more vulnerable we are, trying to give care. Sometimes we lose our balance and are out of touch with our inner wisdom. We lose the objectivity which we have when we are dealing with patients that are not connected to us via family and familiarity. As a nurse, my biggest fear was that if my family became ill, or needed my help, I wouldn't be able to help them due to my other family and job

obligations. It just so happened that it was mid February, and I almost had my bags packed, as I was moving to another city. The reason for the relocation was a new job. I'd be working with a psychiatrist as a mental health counsellor, using the principles of mind, consciousness, and thought.

Although I knew better, my insecurity caused me to spend many hours of thought trying to figure out the future. “Would I like the new town? Could I do my new job? How would I get along with my new boss?” And so on, and so on.

The phone rang as I was closing my last suitcase. It was my mom, “Not to worry”, she said, “But tomorrow I'm going for a CAT scan to check out those headaches I've been having.” Not to worry! As soon as I hung up the phone, I started making arrangements to fly back home. After

travelling for almost eight hours to West Virginia, I got to the hospital just as the doctor was telling my mom that she had six brain tumours and a large tumour in her lungs. We both hardly got our breath, when he decided to keep her for further tests.

It was late by the time I finally got her settled in her room and got a ride home. When I finally made it to bed, I was overwhelmed by thoughts, most of them based in fear. But, there was a part of me that was really connected to my inner wisdom. A part that realized I couldn't contaminate my mom. I had to drop any thoughts of fear and insecurity, so that I could help her to the best of my ability, and to make the time we had together wonderful.

As I laid there something happened. A shift occurred, a feeling that was very

strong and solid, a calmness and peace of mind, a feeling that had been missing, as I got lost in my worries about my new job.

I laid there in awe, and then for a few brief seconds, I almost felt guilty for feeling so good after just admitting my mom to the hospital with cancer. Then I had an incredible insight. This is how we are meant to go through situations like this. When we are in this state of consciousness, we are truly present and can better access our own innate wisdom and common sense to assist us through the most difficult situations.

Wow! I experienced such relief! I really knew there was an inner strength and wisdom that would guide me through this. I only had to be willing to do one thing to access it. I had to be prepared to

drop any insecure thoughts when they got triggered.

I stayed with my mom throughout the next three months. She remained ambulatory and alert until she died after a wonderful family picnic. I can't tell you what a loving and positive experience it was for both of us, and I am grateful that I had the knowledge to go through it the way I did. Without this understanding we would have spent this short time together in fear instead of love. I will always treasure that time and see it as very special, because it was filled with love and had nothing to do with the fact that she was even going through cancer at the time. When she died, the minister shared how mom had been depressed and hopeless after losing her husband. However, she had taught him how we can change our minds and have a different

experience of life. He went on to talk about the impact she had had on others with her positivity.

He stopped, looked at the congregation and said, “If any of you are feeling sad, you can choose to change now.” I couldn't stop smiling. My mom told me she sure wanted to share what she had learned with her friend, the minister, and she did.

“The feeling you exchange with your patient is probably the most important ingredient in facilitating a change from a stressful state, to a more positive calmer state.”

~Drema

Chapter Four

Hope and Applications to Patients

After returning to Florida, I worked on a research project with the University of Miami, with patients who had head and neck cancer, stage three and four. Although it was a research project looking at stress and nutrition, my real reason for taking the job was to see if I could help patients experience less stress, more hope, and peace of mind, by applying and teaching the principles of mind, consciousness, and thought.

Prior to accepting the job, I talked to the two research directors. They were

both well known published physicians and very caring people.

When they heard my idea, they smiled and said that whatever I could do with the patients would surely be helpful, but not to expect too much, as the patients, who were all veterans, might not be open to help of this kind. In fact, I might find that some were angry and very difficult to work with.

This didn't discourage me, as I'd seen the results of this in my own life and that of my family. I had moved from being sad and overwhelmed in my life, to being happy and positive more of the time. I had also seen the results of this understanding in other staff, in their ability to work together and give better patient care.

My question was simple, “Could this help across the board with patients and

their families, regardless of their circumstances?”

So, I was glad when they told me it would be a challenge. This meant it was a true test of the impact this understanding could have.

My first duty was to get the approval of the chief resident, Dr. Mike. It was made clear that this would be no easy task. He was open to the basic research project, as he saw it would be beneficial to his patients. As he listened to my project, I wasn't sure what was going through his mind. When I finished he simply said, “Before you do anything, I want you to talk to Fred Thomas. He's an outpatient, but he will be here tomorrow.
Then get back to me.”

Wow! I had no idea why he wanted me to talk with Fred Thomas, but I was happy he didn't turn me down. All I knew

was that Fred had stage three or four head and neck cancer, and was no longer a patient in the hospital.

The next day I saw this wonderful man. Although it was difficult for him to talk, as he had had surgery that left his face disfigured. He still had a radiant smile that made you pass the outer form to the beautiful person inside. He was very comfortable greeting me and suggested we go someplace to talk. As we sat in a quiet corner of the hospital, Fred began to share his experience.

"Before I had cancer, I missed most of my life. I was always thinking and worrying about the future, which didn't even exist, or lost in the past which is now only a memory. When I was told about my cancer, my world as I knew it stopped. I realized that I had missed living in the present moment, the only

thing that truly exists. I began to enjoy things I had never had time for, like nature, raising roses, and sharing with people. I would take walks and pass out my roses to my neighbours.

One day during a routine check-up my chest x-ray showed a suspicious area, and I was called to schedule a repeat. My thinking started to go crazy, as my worst fear was to have metastasis somewhere. At that moment, I was to experience the most important choice of my life; to get lost in the fears of metastatic disease, or to hand out my roses to my neighbours. I decided to do the latter, and I chose not to think or spend much time lost in my fears.

The next day I returned for my repeat chest x-ray, and waited for the results in the waiting room. I watched the clock and tried to distract my thinking by

reading. When the doctor came out he had a big smile on his face. 'I'm not sure what we saw on the first x-ray but this one is perfectly clear.' Tears of joy ran down my face and I went back home to continue to care for my roses and hand them out.

I guess the doctors like me to share my story as it gives people hope. It shows them the importance of focusing your thinking on the positive, regardless of the circumstances you may be going through."

After hearing Fred talk, I was very touched and grateful for the opportunity to meet such a wonderful man. All I wanted to do was to assist other patients to shift their thinking in the midst of a crisis. My meeting with Dr. Mike went extremely well. I thanked him for

introducing me to Fred and the wisdom he had shared with me.

I started my project the following Monday. Instead of the patients being resistant to learning the principles of mind, consciousness, and thought, they were extremely open.

These men started off frustrated and depressed. They had been through a lot of pain and uncertainty. There was a general feeling of hopelessness, and there was little, if any family support. Most of the patients had had laryngectomies, so they could no longer communicate through talking, but only through writing.

One day after being on the project for about three months, Big John, a man with a lot of inner strength and wisdom, approached me with a big smile. He wrote, “Does your boss know what you're

doing?" I just smiled and said, "I don't know." I wasn't quite sure what he meant. He looked deep into my eyes and wrote, "He needs to know. Bring him here so we can meet with him and share how our lives have changed." Wow! I was so touched by this man, I had tears in my eyes.

I found my boss, and together we went back to meet these men. They were all smiling, but one patient named James, who looked very upset. He wrote me that the night nurse had yelled at him for watching TV too late. Even though this had happened hours earlier, he still felt hurt, because she had treated him with such harshness. He didn't sleep at all after that. I felt sad that the nurse had been so insensitive to this beautiful man.

The TV program was over 15 minutes after lights out, and his roommate didn't mind staying up late.

I realized, that our inability to be compassionate and understanding as care providers, affects the health and well being of our patients to a deeper degree than we may realize. After James finished talking, Big John took the lead and started sharing through his writing, how different his experience of life was, since our sessions began. He then wrote, “I know it sounds crazy, but I'm happier now than before I had cancer.” The rest of the men shared similar thoughts and feelings. My boss simply smiled and shook their hands.

Walking down the hall, he turned to me and said, “Don't you recognize denial when you see it?” At first I couldn't believe what he had said, and then I

realized that he could not conceive and therefore could not believe that such a shift or change in someone's thinking or consciousness was possible. So, he was trying to label it with something familiar. He looked to me for my response.

I just smiled, realizing that he did not understand at this time what had occurred. But then I turned to him in a playful way and said, “If that's denial, let’s teach it to the night staff.”

A thought kept burning in my head.”What would a unit look like if we could not only teach the principles of mental health, but also model it for our staff? If we helped only one staff member function more of the time from a more balanced state of mental health, then we would be helping every patient that we came in contact with, and each of their families.” The idea was powerful!

Before moving on to the next step, I'd like to take some time to review points that have proven helpful to me. The feeling you exchange with your patient is probably the most important ingredient in facilitating a change from a stressful state to a more positive, calmer state.

This requires that the caregiver is functioning from a state of love and compassion, and that is quite different from one of commiseration or judgement. It is important to gently help the patient to be in the present and not to be caught up in thoughts and worries about the past, or the future.

Being in the now becomes easier as we learn to quiet our thinking down. There's no magical way to do this. A lot of people have tried meditation, yoga, music, working in the garden, walks on the beach. It varies with the situation, and

the patient. Each person finds what works for him or her. The goal is to quiet the mind and thinking. Remember, ” The patient may be caught up in a negative, thought created reality, but as they try to think their way out, they will probably use the same thoughts that created the problem, and this will begin a downward spiral.”

As people quiet down their thinking, they are able to access their own wisdom. This is when they can have insights or sights from within. From this level of understanding, they can better see how to deal with their situation from a healthier and more positive perspective. Don't forget the basic needs of the patient, food, rest, and pain relief.

If patients aren't sleeping right, if they aren't eating properly, or they're not getting relief from pain, it will affect their

physical and mental health. It is important for the caregiver to be open to seeing change in patients and not develop a fixed way of seeing them. In other words, you've got to keep an open mind and realize that they're changing moment to moment, and as you see the changes, talk about them.

Talk about how the mind and body are always moving towards a state of health, and that helps them reach that state.

Last but not least, include the family in any way you can. They're going through their own pain, and their own fear. The more we include them in the situation of the patient, the more we help that patient's support system, and the family as a unit.

“I realized that when one professional loses their balance, or gets burnout, the way to help them is by keeping our own balance. Reacting to their negativity will only bring out more negativity, but reacting with love and compassion will help bring out these feelings in them.”
~Drema

Chapter Five
Applications to Staff and Co-workers

Not long after knowing I wanted to work with staff, I read a great job description in the newspaper for the position of staff and patient education coordinator.

The hospital was located just across the street. I wasn't sure what would occur, but at the interview I described my idea of helping staff. Education was the key to helping them understand how to keep in touch with their own mental health, more of the time. This understanding would help them keep their balance even in the midst of adverse circumstances.

The head nurse was very young. She emanated positivity and love for her staff

and others. She smiled as I talked and said, “This is wonderful, I have some of the best nurses I know. But I feel helpless when I see them in a low mood, or working against each other, rather than working together as a unit.” She went on to explain that there was always friction between the RNs and the nursing assistants. The latter felt they did most of the work, or that they got dumped on. To add to the situation, she had a variety of races and cultures, each with a very different set of beliefs and backgrounds.

She summarized by saying,” I know that the moods and interactions of the staff directly impact the quality of care that patients receive. This is my major concern.”

I felt very humbled and honoured to have the opportunity to work with such a wise and caring woman. I told her

honestly that I didn't have a clue how to accomplish this task but knew we had the understanding to make it possible. We decided that I needed to bond with the staff so that they could get to know and trust me.

Morning Report seemed like a wonderful place to start. In addition to hearing about the patients, I was able to scan the mood of the staff. The person who appeared to be having the hardest time was the one I offered to help.

The first day it happened to be a nursing assistant. Even though she was grateful for the help, she was a little uncomfortable with my offer. I was sure she was wondering what was going on. By lunchtime, we were having such a good time with our patients, and with each other, that she dropped her thoughts of insecurity.

Each day the staff became more comfortable with my presence and help. They saw how you could gently interrupt a patient stuck in negative thoughts, or help shift their level of understanding, while doing your routine patient care. Sometimes you did this by talking, sometimes just by listening, and always, always with the feeling of unconditional love.

One day I was assisting a nurse who was having a particularly hard time. One of her patients, who had bone cancer, had been on the unit for a long time. It was really beautiful watching this nurse go from being abrupt and a little harsh to being very sensitive and caring. The nurse was called away and I finished the patient's care. The patient startled me when she said, “I see what you're doing.” I wasn't sure what she meant. Then she

added, “I could not believe the change in that nurse, and we the patients, are grateful.” The staff were changing and offering to help each other regardless of patient load, status, or race.

Sometimes our case loads would drop and we would be floated to other floors. The staff hated it, when this occurred. They usually got dumped on and were assigned the toughest patients.

One day the assignment for one of the RNs was extremely hard. The nursing assistants while on break, heard about the situation. Instead of laughing they all went back to their units to finish up as quickly as possible. They asked their head nurses if they could go and help this nurse as she was extremely overloaded. The news of this occurrence was immediately noticed by the administration, and they called me down

to discuss the situation, and how the barriers had been broken.

I was asked to assess another unit in the hospital shortly after this situation. It happened to be the oncology unit located on the very top floor of the hospital. It did not take long to feel the friction between the staff and one of the main physicians. This created an atmosphere of stress for the patients and the staff.

Since I was new, I decided to introduce myself to this physician trying to make a connection, I mentioned that I had just met one of his patients, and commented on how nice he was. His reply almost took my breath away! “That guy's not nice! He's a pig! If you think he's nice, you're stupider than you look!”

I wasn't thinking, but a response came out of my mouth. I said, “You're right.

I don't know Mr. Gomez, but I guess I just love all of my patients."

I think he must have felt that the statement was made, not in a negative, or confrontational way, but out of love. It triggered the feeling in him. He turned to me and said, "I owe you an apology."

This was the beginning of a wonderful story of change. I would make rounds with this doctor every day because no one else wanted to. He always had many complaints and many were valid. Nurses didn't call reports when they should, out of fear of being yelled at, which he did.

Gradually the communication improved. One day as we started to make rounds, I realized that he had gotten into the habit of starting the day off with a joke instead of yelling.

On this particular day, he was so funny. We were both laughing as we entered the

first patient's room. Remember, this was the doctor who used to yell not only at the staff, but also at his patients. He looked at this man with love in his eyes and said, “I guess you're wondering why we're laughing.” He then sat down and with the most gentle voice, told the patient the joke, and shared with him how much he had enjoyed taking care of him. This was very powerful for me to watch.

I realized that, when one professional loses their balance, or gets burnout, the way to help them is by keeping our own balance. Reacting to their negativity will only bring out more negativity, but reacting with love and compassion will help bring out these feelings in them. This doesn't mean we let people walk on us, just observe their behaviour from an impersonal perspective, as a reflection of

their own thought created reality. This allows us to see their own innocence. After this, other nurses started making rounds with this physician and they were able to function as a team.

I have another story about a physician, Dr. Mark, who shared about himself as he started to learn about the principles of mind, consciousness, and thought, and how they affect interpersonal relationships at work. He smiled as he told the following story.

"I was on the phone the other night and the phone didn't stop ringing. I was tired when I made rounds the next day, as I got very little sleep. My first patient had pneumonia, and I ordered respiratory therapy treatments for him. I was relieved to see him looking so much better. 'I guess the treatments helped you.' I said. He smiled, 'I didn't get any

treatments and I didn't need any. I rested well.'

I'm sure I ordered these treatments QID. I was shouting by the time I made it back to the nurse's station. 'Where is that charge nurse?' You could hear a pin drop as she walked out of her office. 'I'm really tired of your incompetent staff that doesn't carry out my orders.'

The charge nurse remained calm and positive. As I explained my frustration, she pulled the chart, and found the order that read QID PRN, or four times a day as needed. I walked off in a huff, and hit the button for the elevator. But, while waiting for the elevator I had time to calm down.

I had a big insight about how powerful and helpful it felt to have someone stay positive and calm when you were caught off balance.

It helped neutralize my anger, which I would have imposed on my staff and maybe my patients. The elevator came, but I didn't get on. Instead, I returned to the nurse's station and thanked the charge nurse for keeping her balance when I'd lost mine.

She simply replied, 'No big deal.' I couldn't help but think what a different day it would have been if she had made it a big deal. She probably helped more patients that day by simply keeping in touch with her own mental health, and it allowed me to do the same.
Maybe I can help her out someday."

Currently, I'm not working in the hospital, but I love the opportunity to help other health care professionals. Recently I met a young physician that had just started working at the hospital. I asked how things were going. She told

me a colleague had been giving her a hard time, making negative comments about her in front of the other colleagues. As we talked, she realized that her colleague was under a lot pressure, as she was going through a divorce, but she felt the actions of this person were very hurtful.

I told her that the other doctor must have been having a bad day, and she was catching the fallout. I said, “How wonderful to have a team member that keeps her balance when you lose yours.” This was a very caring and compassionate physician. The patients were always her main concern. We talked about how keeping your balance or mental health directly impacts, and affects patients, and other staff.

This lady loved to surf. I didn't see her for several days, and when I did see her,

she made a point of saying the following, “I thought about what you said, and it really makes sense. It's like when you're on a surfboard, waiting for that big wave and it finally comes. If you react to it, you get wiped out, but if you stay calm and go right through it, that's a great feeling.”

“It is important to know that each person has the potential for real mental health. It is a natural state that is always trying to surface. It just gets covered up by varying degrees, when we get caught up in fearful, insecure thoughts.”

~Drema

Chapter Six

Applications to Being a Patient

In June of 2000, I was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. At first, I couldn't believe it, and on top of the shock, I was taken off my hormones. My emotional state was up and down. I went from feeling okay to bursting into tears. I was told the news on a Friday, and on Monday, my husband and I met with friends and their husbands for dinner. We had all studied the principles of mind, consciousness, and thought. They were all in the field of mental health, and they had a good understanding of what was occurring. One was a doctor, one was a nurse, and one had a son who died at 20 from cancer.

As we ate and laughed, my eyes went to my husband. He looked so relieved as he laughed at one of the jokes. What a preparation! These people were skilled in love and understanding, as well as helping others facilitate a better level of understanding, or consciousness.

The next day I was still tearful at times as the oncologist had told me I would have at least three months of chemo, surgery, then more chemo, followed by radiation. Then that shift in consciousness occurred. Like the time my mom got sick and I felt calmness and peace in the midst of chaos. My emotions were okay. My husband said, “I can't believe you're off your hormones, honey.” My focus was no longer on myself and the pain and fear I was having. I realized there were many people having a lot more pain, without going through cancer.

I was grateful that I had been given the understanding and knowledge that allowed me to experience the condition of cancer in a more positive way.

I did quite well maintaining my balance for the first two months, and then I hit a snag. In a moment of vulnerability, I asked the doctor about my chance of having a five year survival rate or longer. I really knew better than to talk statistics, as they are only medical probabilities with a lot of variables. In my experience working with patients I always told them not to get into numbers. As I had seen patients diagnosed with stage four survive, and patients diagnosed with stage one or two, not do as well. Their outcomes seem to be related to attitude. However, you are more vulnerable as a patient. There are thoughts of pain, disfigurement, loss of independence,

financial worries, family, and death. Being off my hormones seemed to make me more vulnerable to these fearful thoughts.

So in my moment of fear and concern, I asked my doctor for that statistical guess. At first he hesitated, but then he looked me in the eye and said, “Five percent.”

Five percent! I must admit I wasn't ready for this news. I thought I was smart enough not to be affected by questionable information, but it does affect me when I get tired and vulnerable, especially during the second week of chemo.

I get chemo every three weeks, and the second week is the time when your immune system hits rock bottom. Your white blood counts go down, and they give you shots to help elevate them, but the shots they give you also seem to

contribute to putting your system out of balance, both mentally and physically.

At this time, I would get very obsessive and negative in my thinking. I took things more personally. I didn't sleep well. I cried very easily. I was aware of my actions, but I couldn't seem to be able to prevent them from occurring. I knew I was using my thinking against myself, but I was not always able to see how to stop the action.

My son had assisted my husband and myself less than a year ago in the care of Katie, my mother in law. She had died of breast cancer several months prior to my diagnosis. We took care of Katie at home and saw her through some very difficult situations. At one point she became agitated and had visual hallucinations. Her electrolytes were okay and there was no metastasis to the brain.

So I asked her oncologist if these hallucinations were related to depression. Katie was a very intelligent and independent person going through a lot of physical and emotional changes. He smiled and said," None of my patients get depressed." I was amazed at his answer, and realized that he was being very serious. I then asked him if he would order a small dose of an antidepressant and anti-psychotic. He reluctantly agreed.

Medications helped her clear up most of the time, but there were times when she would get caught up in a lot of fearful thoughts. Then she would have visual hallucinations and get agitated. Once this happened while my son and husband were there, and I called her by name, "Katie! I'm talking to that healthy part of

you, the part that can hear and understand me."

Please know this is not a technique, but a knowing and an understanding that the caregiver needs. It's not necessary to say this. I usually don't, and I don't recommend it. Maybe it was for the benefit of my son and husband. However, it is important to know that each person has the potential for real mental health. It is a natural state that is always trying to surface. It just gets covered up by varying degrees, when we get caught up in fearful, insecure thoughts.

Patients that are going through physical conditions are very vulnerable as they are usually dealing with a lot of unknowns and fears. As caregivers, we can facilitate bringing out health in our everyday interactions with patients, by focusing on the wellness and wisdom that lies within.

They pick up a feeling from us when we stay loving, calm and positive. We're communicating on a higher spiritual level and are assisting them to shift to a higher level of consciousness or understanding.

My husband and son are both good observers, and were amazed to see the change in Katie. She calmed down and talked with us in a very appropriate manner. It was not what was said that facilitated the change, but the knowing and feeling behind it.

I did not realize the impact this made on my son. He took this understanding and made it his own, when he was visiting with his father. His father was helping take care of my son's grandfather. Together they were having a difficult time communicating and getting along. He was able to pass on to his dad, the suggestion to focus on the good and

talk to the healthy side, even though it may be covered up at times. He said what he had learned with Katie shouldn't be wasted. His talk helped, as they are now getting along much better.

This understanding helped me the whole time I worked on the mental health unit. I have stories of how it helped patients from escalating to out of control behaviour, and also helps them to de-escalate. Again, it was not in what was said, but in the knowing that the negative behaviour was just a manifestation of fearful thoughts.

To facilitate a change in behaviour, the caregiver needs to always understand that there is a place or state in every human being, of mental health. Our focus needs to be on health, not the dysfunction. Last but not least, the caregivers have to be in a state of

positivity themselves. We cannot give what we do not have.

Well, back to my situation, I was having compulsive thoughts that were fear based. My son saw my situation with love and compassion and non-judgment. This allowed him to connect with that place of wisdom in me. He said, “You know, I'm sure it's been hard dealing with everything and it is quite understandable that it would affect your thinking and your mood. Remember how you realized that, with Katie, when you got her started on anti-depressants, and how helpful that was for her?”

I felt embarrassed at first that I wasn't stronger. I have helped a lot of people, but it’s very difficult to be on the other side of the fence. I felt that I should be able to think my way out of this, but I

realized that I was not thinking correctly and I needed more help.

I checked with my doctor and told him that I wanted to start on a very small dose of SSRI's, or a fast acting antidepressant. I knew they had found this medication helpful in severe cases of PMS and hormone imbalance, even for a short period of time, and the results were quicker than with depression. Since I could never go back on hormones, I was open to trying this for the menopausal symptoms I was having. He agreed and within the first day I felt better. Even though the dosage was one sixth of the therapeutic dose used for depression. I felt like my old self. I still had fearful thoughts triggered, but I was able to disengage them before I got lost in the reality they created. Medication did help, but it was only part of the solution. The

other part, was for me to see that I was using my thinking against myself, to create a hopeless illusionary reality. Next, I had to be willing and open to change. Like my mom, I could change my mind and drop the thoughts that were causing me pain. We all want to feel happy, and as our mood goes up, we are more willing to drop thinking about things that cover up this natural state of well being. Please realize that not everyone in my position would need medication. I only bring it up because many people have negative thoughts about taking anti-depressants and suffer needlessly.

It is important to have hope that your experience in life can change. Being open to change is the first step in facilitating that shift in consciousness that comes from inside. The external events may look the same from the outside, but your

perception and experiences will be different.

Treat yourself with love and kindness. Don't take yourself so seriously. Get plenty of rest and try to slow down mentally and physically. This helps to recharge your spirit so that if your mood drops down, you will know this is just one of life's moments, and it will pass.

If you're in a low mood, it is not time to make major decisions or act on thoughts that feel compelling. Start seeing the low feelings as friendly reminders that you're going the wrong way mentally, and that you have just taken a detour. To get back on track, simply allow yourself to be interrupted so that you can set aside the thoughts creating those feelings. You can always go back to them.

Well, now that I've had three months of chemo, and I've had my surgery, I'm in

the latter part of my six month plan of chemo, and I still have to go through radiation, but life has been wonderful. I'm very grateful for this experience because it's made me appreciate things that I took for granted. I find myself filling up with gratitude for the love that family, friends, and even strangers have sent my way.

This has allowed me to get in touch with that inner strength and peace at a deeper level than I have ever experienced before. It reminds me that feelings of positivity come from the inside, and that they are accessible, even when we are going through a crisis in our lives. As we tap into them, they are our protection. They are the life-vest that keeps us from going under. Since feelings are the products of thought, I find that I can't

afford to waste time on negative thoughts.

A pilot studying the principles once told me that when flying a small aircraft, it could go out of control and go into a tailspin. If this occurs, they are taught to let go of the plane, and it will naturally straighten itself out. This occurs because there is a built in mechanism that allows it to happen. The hardest part was teaching the new pilots to let go of the controls. Their tendency was to hold on tighter. The same analogy applies to us, when we are faced with problems in life. Our tendency is to think about them until we feel better, or have it worked out.

However, this approach usually just sends us into a tailspin of irrational thoughts. When we have the courage to let go of these thoughts, our thinking slows down. This allows us to shift in our

consciousness or understanding, to a place of our own wisdom and insight.

It is however very difficult to change gears, or shift when we are going at 100 miles an hour. This is why it's very important to be rested, and slow down, not speed up our thinking in a crisis.

I cannot end my story without talking about the understanding, love and support I've received from others, especially my husband. We have been married only two years, and for the first nine months we took care of his mom, who was diagnosed with breast cancer, just before our wedding.

After her death, we started building our new home. Prior to finishing it, we found out about my cancer. He has watched my body change. As I lost my hair, my weight increased, and I lost one breast. Yet you would think I had only become more

beautiful and sexy in his eyes. He says that he has realized that we are not our bodies, but they are only the external shells of our true essence. I feel very grateful to have a person in my life that sees me for who I really am.

We have had our ups and downs, especially when I was first diagnosed. We were going through the biggest unknown of our lives. I must say that without the understanding we both have, this would have been a far more difficult journey.

Know that within yourself there is a place, or space, where peace of mind and wisdom are available. As we allow our thinking to slow down, we naturally access this place. A good analogy of this is floating in water. When I was a teenager I had a fear of water. A friend trying to assist me said simply, “Lie back and relax and you will float.” My thinking

said he was crazy, and I was going to prove him wrong. To my surprise, he was correct. It was the fear of the water that caused me the trouble. So, don't be afraid to set aside the worries, and thoughts that are making you feel bogged down. As you drop these weights, your mental well-being and wisdom will surface.

I used to think that in order to be responsible I had to focus on my problems until I arrived at a solution. I now realize that from this state, I rarely come up with solutions or insights. It's when I'm more relaxed that new thoughts and ideas surface.

When we first got together, my husband, being a retired lawyer was used to observing people. We called him Mr. Interrogator, as he would find out more about someone in 30 minutes than I could in days. What attracted me to him

was his wonderful heart, although he could be abrasive and stubborn at times. After being together for a short while, he noticed how differently I saw, and reacted, to life, and he was full of questions. He was so used to asking questions, he had to learn to listen.

At the first Sydney Banks conference that we attended together, my husband came well equipped with pen and pencil, so that he could take all kinds of notes on the talk. To his surprise, the first thing that he heard was “Don't try to take notes, as you will miss what is being said. In fact, don't listen to my words, but to the essence of what is being said, and the feeling behind it.”

It was like watching a computer crash. I thought he was going to break out into a cold sweat. My husband is a very intuitive person. He knew there was

something there for him, if he was willing to listen, and he did. The change after the talk was subtle, but a more gentle, quieter, and less abrasive man evolved. We were able to connect and talk on a totally different level.

This man who had no formal religious belief system had become very spiritual. By spiritual I mean beyond form. It is that universal place or space in us that knows no time, has no judgement, no set of beliefs, or boundaries. It is the common thread that is shared by all religions. It appears to me that as people develop in their understanding of life, it is natural to look inside, rather than outside, for their answers and happiness. My husband used to ask, “How do you get there?” It's a paradox, because when you quiet down your thinking, and quit trying to look for answers, you find they

were there all the time, only covered up by your thinking.

We started reading the book, 'The Missing Link' by Sydney Banks. Each night we would just open up any chapter, and take turns reading aloud and then discussing what had touched our hearts. This was a powerful time for both of us, as we helped each other with our blind spots. I noticed there was always a certain chapter that my husband wanted to skip. That was the one on forgiveness. He admitted that he knew that this was a blind spot, but not one that he was willing to look at yet. So we continued to skip it.

Finally, one evening, I opened the book at random to this chapter. I checked with him to see if we should just go ahead and read it. He answered, "I guess that won't hurt." All I can say is that when someone

is ready to change, move out of the way. It was such a relief for him. Later on, when I got stuck on this with family, he was able to help me. As we go through this experience of cancer together, we realize that anger and lack of forgiveness are related to fear and insecurity. We do what we can to help each other move out of this space, as soon as possible. Forgiveness is a full talk in itself, which I will expand on at a later date. I do however see forgiveness, as a gift to yourself and a relief of pain. It is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of inner strength and peace.

Cancer is still a part of my life, but it's in the background. It's like a chronic condition, such as, diabetes or hypertension. I'm aware of it, but I don't have to think about it, or focus on it. It

doesn't have to be the centre of my thinking, or life experience.

The understanding I have gotten from the principles of mind, consciousness, and thought, has made the experience of my life a meaningful and positive one, and I am very very grateful!

I hope that this book has been helpful in some way to you, whether you are a patient, a family member, or a caregiver, and that it helps you on your journey.

Have a wonderful journey through life!

Much love to you all!

Aloha! Drema Odum Bleitz

About the publisher

James Beck (publisher) is a retired teacher. He lives with his wife on Saltspring Island and is devoted to sharing The Three Principles of Mind, Consciousness, and Thought. He met Sydney Banks in 1974 and knew him well.

Today he shares as a 3PGC practitioner, coach, and teacher.

Please visit saltspringconsciousness.com to learn more about the principles and how his services can help you in your personal journey through life particularly in situations of anxiety, stress, depression, addiction etc.

Aloha!