

# LOVE SAVED ME AFTER DOCTORS SAID I'D SOON DIE

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In 1986, five neurologists told me I had six months to a year to live. Saving my life fell onto my own shoulders. Following my grim diagnosis, I spent two days in the hospital being tested. No one mentioned the elephant in the room, which only increased my fears. A neurosurgeon leading a group of young medical students came into my hospital room. "Finally, someone is going to talk about the brain tumor. I might learn something that could save my life," I thought as he read from my chart until I saw the blood drain from his face.

Gesturing with one hand held high over his head to encourage their rapid departure, the doctor instructed his students to meet in the next room. Before he could exit, I yelled, "My doctor thinks I'm going to die. Do you have any ideas for me?"

"Since the MRI has recently been invented, in a year from now they might discover something that could save your life."

"A year from now?" I asked feeling hopeful and excited.

"Do you really think I'll be alive a year from now?"

"No," he said. "I'm sorry."

After I was discharged from the hospital, I was home

alone, thinking about the artwork I'd recently created; what, being an artist, I might be leaving the world. I had painted a bouquet of dead carnations, a woman holding onto a grave, a dead fish, and a sepia-colored portrait of my fraternal grandmother who had died of a brain tumor before I was born.

To my surprise and horror, I saw that death had been following me! I gasped and panicked. I couldn't breathe until I felt pure love envelop me and my body relaxed. Everything in the room brightened. I decided I'd rather follow this than go along with my doctors who said I'd soon die.

I've used love as my guide ever since that day. To avoid interfering with my ability to feel love, I have strived to be as authentic as I could be. Knowing we wouldn't have been given all of our emotions if we weren't meant to feel them, I made myself stop and feel whenever an emotion arose, including anger, pain, grief, and frustration no matter how uncomfortable this was.

## Keep Your Heart Open

Our body never stops trying to protect us. It's our most loyal friend. By keeping my heart open - even





under the most frightening circumstances - instead of reacting out of fear, I was able to feel as each of my emotions surfaced and transformed into love.

By using love, the most powerful tool every person has been born with, and taking responsibility for my thoughts and actions, I taught myself to think and act in a way that strengthened me. Whenever we get upset, it is always about something in our past or future. Keeping my heart open has helped me to live in the present and avoid putting additional stress on myself. Before my diagnosis, I had lived my entire life listening to a judgmental, harsh, and condemning inner critic, believing I had no choice. Afterwards, I learned our inner critic is one of the most difficult and persistent trauma responses most people experience following a life-threatening illness. Every time mine spoke harshly to me I could feel my already wearied body grow weaker. I knew I had to stop this, or I wasn't going to be able to keep myself alive.

I cultivated a supportive voice in my head that was much like a loving and nurturing mother. I asked my inner critic what it wanted, and patiently listened. Once it received the attention it craved, there was no longer a reason for it to be cruel. To my delight, as it grew silent, I could feel my body growing stronger.

#### **Love Yourself**

I also cultivated a loving relationship with myself. I spoke to and treated myself lovingly. When we are frightened, we tend to hold our breath. Taking long soothing exhalations (that are at least six seconds long) signals to our bodies that we are safe, and our muscles will automatically unclench and relax.

I built a stronger, more resilient nervous system by meditating every morning. (I now do this with a group that makes meditating easier and fun to do that's led by Lynn Fraser [www.lynn-fraserstillpoint.com](http://www.lynn-fraserstillpoint.com).) I also stop and just breathe for a few minutes throughout each day. My hypervigilance and catastrophic thinking have been vastly reduced, and I've been able to form the habit of grounding myself before becoming hijacked by my fears. After I learned that we cannot heal what we do not feel, I paid strict attention to how my body responded to everyday occurrences as well as frightening ones.

Because I'd developed the practice of following love and listening to my loving Inner Wisdom, my whole body never stopped giving me information that my mind or any doctor could. And because of this, I'm alive, healthy, and happy today.

For those who wish to learn more about how love helped to save my life, I've written a book titled **I Chose Love: How to Thrive After a Life-Threatening Illness Using Love to Guide You**. Get Your copy and start choosing LOVE! It can be purchased on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and on my website [www.sandigold.com](http://www.sandigold.com) in softcover, eBook, and audio. To keep yourself updated, sign up for my free newsletter while you are there.