

The Art and Essence of Alternative Cancer Counseling

By Verne Varona

“You cannot travel the path until you have become the path itself.”

— Buddha., 563-483 B.C.

A State of Personal Imbalance

In this present moment, you are the culmination of acquired health, genetics, life experience, developed intellect, emotional sensitivity and personal philosophy. Rarely, are these qualities equally developed. When we place excessive focus on certain areas and neglect others, we run the risk of imbalance in character and physiology. I have acquaintances with very developed minds, but sickly bodies. I know others with strong athletic physical presence, yet have minimum intellectual faculty. And, I’ve met many individuals who seem intellectually astute, but are in fact, highly immature emotionally. Clearly, we are the sum total of varied and unequalled parts.

Alternative cancer counseling that I’ve developed is a time-tested art of offering body, mind and spirit inspiration through multi-cultural dietary suggestions along with lifestyle recommendations. It also offers practical mind and spirit technique for personal transformation that originate from numerous religions and ideologies. The noble goal of such counseling is to help clients strengthen their weaknesses, heal their deficiencies and learn practical strategies for enhancing and balancing their lives.

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Ideally, an “alternative cancer consultant” should be a developed soul that offers practical and proven solutions for individuals with cancer to improve their immunity and health—as well as emotional and spiritual insight that supports such healing. Foundationally, we initiate this journey by offering traditional principles of nourishment—tasteful dietary suggestions thousands of years-old that are now being validated by science and disease reversal research.

Prompt results can confirm that this is a healthful direction for your needs. I’ve seen clients regain a sense of control about their bodies; they discover bowel improvement; their energy increases; sleep quality deepens; endurance thrives; they experience greater mental clarity; and they manage to find a peace that may have been previously illusive.

The Trinity of Despair: Pain, Boredom and Stress

“The two human foes of happiness, are boredom and pain.”

—Schopenhauer

Being in constant pain colors our ability to enjoy life. It devours our energy and diminishes the will to live. Boredom has a way of fueling depression and often shrouds the individual in a cloak of meaninglessness—about all aspects of their life. I’ve seen these characteristics in many cancer patients. Come to think of it, I’ve equally seen these characteristics in healthy people, as well.

Making sure we understand the source of our personal pain is therefore, a priority. Of course, there are many kinds of pain. Some people are in constant physical pain, which can be due to internal inflammation, structural flaws, or unbalanced chemistry. Others might be in emotional pain from years of suppression, an inability to communicate, or self-generated fear. You only have to speak with someone for short time to assess the degree of their emotional pain; it’s difficult to hide. You can see it in their eyes, hear it in their voice pattern, their posture or conversation thread. You can observe it in their movement and style of animation. Some are in philosophical or spiritual pain; they have a lack, or conflict of meaning, a profound fear that pervades and paralyzes their faith, or insensitivity to the energetic, invisible world.

Often, people who are bored have less meaning and driving purpose in their lives. I’ve seen many wealthy clients who’s initial life goal was to make money, and then having made money, entered the darkness of boredom only to look back and suddenly discover that their life is no longer fulfilling; the challenge is gone, their attitudes cynical and life inspiration dulled.

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For whatever pain or conflict people live with, it represents a subtle and sometimes, not so subtle, stress. It is a stress that permeates our lives. It’s not only with us during our waking

hours, it's with us when we sleep, as often revealed by dream symbolism. There is really no escape, only resolve. You can attempt to distract and numb yourself with compulsive behavior or food and substances, but unless you're willing to work at core levels, this stress remains constant. Eventually, it has the potential to result in physical or mental breakdown—the state we know as, dis-ease. Through the combination of acquired knowledge, good health and focused intuition, a conscious consultant can offer many ways for people to challenge themselves that usually proves beneficial in brief span of time.

12 Essential Self-Diagnosis Questions

There are some standard questions that I use which can yield tremendous information for evaluating a client's current health. These questions, particularly for long distance counseling, can offer solid insight to a person's condition if the practitioner understands what each question reveals:

1. How is their appetite?
2. Is the bowel movement regular?
3. How is sleep quality?
4. Is the patient moody?
5. What kind of food cravings (sugar, oil, flour, meats, salt, etc.) or specific tastes (salty, sweet, sour, bitter pungent), do they have?
6. How's their energy level?
7. Are there current stresses that the client cannot resolve?
8. Is there any body pain or abdominal tightness?
9. Do they exercise regularly? Aerobic, Strength-Training or Stretching?
10. How's their primary relationship? Do they have one? Do they want one?
11. Do they enjoy work? If not, what kinds of passions do they have? What do they do creatively, if anything?
12. What's really important to them? (a question that is centered around life purpose)

Helping people requires we offer them a whole platform of restoration. As with any condition, always look for a pattern. They're either getting worse or better. Rarely, is it the same, consistently. A counselor really needs a bit of compassion and patience to effectively counsel. In meetings, email queries, lectures, pot-lucks, business keynotes and via counseling, I've interviewed great numbers of individuals that at one time or another received alternative counseling but failed to keep consistent. The most common response was:

- “I'm just not crazy about eating healthy food all the time.”
- “I couldn't do it, there was just too much to do.”
- “The food was tasteless.”
- “My counselor looked like death warmed over— why should I listen to him?”
- “It seemed like the “No-No Diet,” everything was prohibited.”

And, the most common:

- “I didn't have the patience to prepare, chop and cook so many hours a day.”

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It's the responsibility of a counselor to tailor his recommendations to fit the individuals condition and lifestyle making it practical and do-able, rather than just theoretically sensible. As a counselor, if you recognize that they cannot possibly do all that your personal ideal holds valuable, find ways to bring them, at least, one or two steps closer to a healthier, more balanced approach. In the long run this can open many doors for them and become a more sustaining and positive influence.

“I Hate My Life...”

I once had a client whose response to my question, “How can I help you?” clearly illustrated the power of a change in perspective. He was in his early 50s, formerly a successful business man and now in the throes of an early prostate diagnosis. While his prognosis was favorable, his disposition was not. This was a semblance of our conversation:

“I hate my life...”

—“What do you hate about your life?”

“Everything. My kids don't respect me; my wife filed for divorce; I can't stand my job—everyday I wake up dreading to go to work; I have no hobbies; very few friends; I'm fat; and my family--brothers and sister--all seem to self-absorbed to care. I'm depressed—and, on top of all that, I'm lonely. I just hate my life.”

I was relieved that he was so forthcoming about his circumstances. I said the following:

“—So, let me clarify: what I'm hearing is that you are unhappy with your life—as it has unfolded for you. Right?”

“Correct.”

“—Here's something to think about: You don't *hate* life. You just hate the life that you are living; the one *you* had a part in creating. Would you agree?”

He thought for a moment, turned to the window and then as he turned back, I could see him fighting back tears. He nodded.

“I never thought of it that way...”

“—Well, what if you could *recreate* your life? Make it entirely different. If you were able to live a *different* kind of life and find a positive way to look at circumstances that were previously overwhelming or difficult, do you feel that make a difference?”

He thought for a moment.

“Probably. But I wouldn't know where to begin.”

—“I suggest beginning with your largest stresses. Maybe, you have to change your job. At the same time, we know your responsibilities demand you remain employed. So, you have to find something that you can gradually transition to; perhaps you could take a course in something

that seizes your interest; something that you can continually learn while developing your level of ability. See, just knowing that you are creating work-related technical skill, will help you patiently navigate through the murk of your current job in those times of frustration. The act of creating another opportunity will give you a sense of mental comfort. It nourishes your hope.”

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“Change is inevitable, resistance is optional”

I like to explain this quote to clients this when I first meet with them. What counseling represents to most people, is simply, change—and maybe a bit of suffering on the side, for some. This is where the biggest resistance lies. Humanly, we find soothing comfort in what is familiar, in our daily or weekly rituals that help us mark time and bring a sense of reverence and regularity. When these are taken from us, when we have to suddenly acquire new tastes and learn new styles of cooking, we can lose the feeling of stability. From familiar territory, we’re suddenly adrift in a foreign sea of options that have less appeal. We also find ourselves feeling separate from others who do not support our new path, and in is in this separateness that we feel suddenly feel a growing isolation.

A long time friend and associate, physician, Terry Shintani, MD, made a great point in a conversation we had during a break in our filming of a documentary I was directing about disease reversal. We were filming a disease prevention program for a 21-Day period where we monitored 24 people who had been on numerous medications for their varied degenerative conditions. In previous programs that Dr. Shintani had done, he found that when offering people whole food choices such as grain, vegetable bean and even seaweeds, the key to getting participants enthusiastic, was making the food familiar to what they had been previously eating.

So, in our program, we made delicious salads with healthy dressings, bean soups, grain “burgers,” spaghetti with mock meat balls and roasted vegetables. For breakfasts we served oatmeal with cinnamon and some raisins with a slice of whole grain toast and thin spread of jam, or nut butter. We tried to duplicate many dishes that people were already familiar with and the result for participants was a tremendously positive one. People embraced the food and even wanted more. Participants revealed that taste appeal was an important in the food they were eating. If what they were eating had some familiarity, enthusiasm was higher.

For this project to work, we realized that we needed to find unique ways of creating more value for participants to remain motivated; inspire them to make exercise goals and wear their program issued pedometer’s participants in order to keep track of their daily steps. In our evening talks to the group, we needed to find positive ways that would reinforce their confidence and faith while stressing the need for self-challenge and discipline.

The art of counseling should ideally generate excitement and enthusiasm. Attempting to motivate people by fear had very limited success and often resulted in the release of the inner rebel. However, inspiration can be short-lived. We needed to educate our participants.

For anyone on a self-improvement path, the experience of a counseling session allows you to avoid time-consuming mistakes. You experience less frustration and results come quicker.

Learning from small mistakes and discovering what works best for your new sensitivity is an enduring lesson.

For the counselor, your clients are your personal mirror. If you look deep enough, you will see a little bit of yourself in each client.

For the counselor, clients are always your personal mirror. If you look deep enough, you will see a little bit of yourself in each client. I know from experience that whenever a client provoked a strong reaction in me, it was usually because I was seeing something in them that reminded me of myself—as much as I might have wanted to ignore that. While I had the chance help an individual, that individual, in turn, inevitably ended up helping me.

We need to remember that many people have strong emotional investments in their food as comfort substances and simply emphasizing food changes is rarely enough. Everything we put *in* our mouth, and conversely everything that comes *out* of our mouth, has a direct influence on our health and happiness. For what goes in we can apply dietary rules of balance. For what comes out, we need to broaden perspective and sensitivity.

“Real healing is about challenging our fears; expanding what has been constricted and making what is rigid more flexible. Ultimately, healing is about opening to trust and recovering faith.”

— Verne Varona



For over forty years, Verne Varona's lectures, workshops and media appearances have motivated thousands of people to take better and more conscious care of their health. His book, **“Nature's Cancer-Fighting-Foods,”** originally published in June 2001, (Penguin Books), was **updated and completely revised in May 2014, from Perigee Books** –Division of Penguin/RandomHouse. Verne's second book, **“Macrobiotics for Dummies,”** a part of the famed “Dummies” series by Wiley Publications, was released in May, 2009. Currently, Verne is involved in a number of diverse media platform projects centered on wellness.

<http://www.vernevarona.com>