

The Light Side of Darkness

By, Carrie Host

Seeing the outcome we want, rather than the mess we are in, is a lot like gardening. I never really understood the similarities between choosing my thoughts and planting seeds, until I was immersed in the gritty, bleak and frozen world of cancer. At least that is how it looked when I first arrived on a grey November morning in 2003.

Surveying the horrid plot of land I was given, I dropped to my knees and began to weep. It's wide stretch and seemingly borderless landscape of grief was unbearable to me. Also, I was sure that I could never expect to see anything even remotely green, ever again. How would I tame so unruly an environment, much less tend to or coax it back to health? I think this is pretty much how we all feel about having cancer at first; lots and lots of weeds.

Thus is our plight, so we begin. We can make it easier on ourselves at any point, if we choose to envision the final garden even as we are mired in the weeds. As you might know gardening is mostly a continuous endeavor, done mainly alone. For me at least, setting out to garden it is quite a lot like the process of healing. It is slow going, but deeply rewarding. We are going to see changes, but they take place imperceptibly.

For me, all of this talk of "healing" and having "positive visions" felt overwhelming, so that is right where I would mentally "throw in the trowel," if you will. I was once back there in a place where I was just coping. Even just the *idea* of healing was not inviting. It sounded like a ton of work. Oh, and did I mention that I have three kids, or that the youngest was just 10 months old when my story began? I know the catatonic state of extreme exhaustion.

I found myself thinking more, and less, about the whole “Healing” deal. I came up with an approach that made sense to me. It was logical. It had no bells, and a whistle that was busted.

It seemed that healing began with a state of mind. It involved dim shadows and even darker places. This dark place was somewhere that I had been running from, yet when I allowed myself a peek, it felt like a place I might learn from. Yet this was not a place I wanted to know about. This made no sense. I was afraid of this dark. Or so I thought.

So asking myself both, what it was that I was trying to run to and from? I could see both answers. Where had I wanted to end up? Way out there in the future that I hoped would be there, I could see a springtime garden complete with blossoms, offerings of texture and luster and even color so magnificent that butterflies might draw near. As for what I was running from? The darkness, which I imagined would begin to absorb me until I disappeared. Turns out, I needed only to absorb it. Like every seed that has ever been planted, in time I too would crack through my own shell and imperceptibly creep my way towards the light, poke my head out and adjust to life in the sunshine. Slowly.

Finding strength in the “light” that we are told will “heal” us, perhaps means that we should take time to examine the dark that surrounds us. We may want to consider absorbing what we need from our temporary isolation, before we begin our journey back to health. What could be more inviting than the solitude and quiet of darkness? This is a place for us to gather energy to ourselves, energy that we need to heal.

Nature has long held the power of a single seed. She shows us that all which will one day behold the sunshine, must first spend some time emerged in total darkness. Why did I think that my own return to sunshine filled days would be any different? After all, spring comes all by itself.