



The Journey & Through Cancer

The Seven Levels of Healing®

BY JEREMY R. GEFFEN, MD, FACP

As a medical oncologist, I have learned a great deal from many heroic people who have taught me about living courageously in the face of enormous challenges and the unknown.

Through my work, I have come to understand the experience of cancer as a *journey*—filled with ups and downs, periods of calm as well as tumult, and tremendous opportunities for healing and transformation. I have also seen how cancer can often challenge the mind, heart, and spirit of patients and family members as deeply—if not more deeply—than it challenges the physical body.

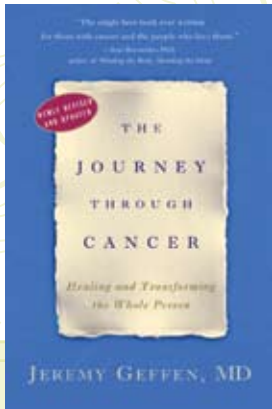
Over many years of clinical practice—and through the personal experience of cancer in my own family—I have observed that when patients and loved ones find themselves facing a cancer diagnosis, they generally focus their energy in a similar way as they proceed through the experience.

At first, the urgent and primary focus is on understanding their disease, finding the very best treatments available, and organizing the practical and financial aspects of their care. However, in most

situations, there comes a moment when the most essential medical and clinical issues have been clarified and a treatment program is underway. Now, for almost everyone, the focus shifts. At this point, I am repeatedly asked (as are most oncologists): “Doctor, in addition to surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, *what else can I do to help myself?* What should I eat? What vitamins should I take? What alternative therapies should I use?” And quite often, “How can I deal with the mental, emotional, and spiritual challenges that my family and I are experiencing?”

In searching for meaningful and practical answers to these crucial questions, I saw an important pattern. I recognized that all questions and concerns encountered by patients and their loved ones fall elegantly into one of seven distinct, but interrelated domains of inquiry and exploration. I call these domains The Seven Levels of Healing, and I describe them in detail in my book, *The Journey Through Cancer: Healing and Transforming the Whole Person* (Three Rivers Press, 2006).

The Seven Levels of Healing program is a comprehensive guide for navigating all aspects of the cancer journey. It provides a crystal clear map of the entire terrain. It also gives you a powerful, user-friendly tool, like a “GPS” (Global Positioning System), which enables you to know at every moment exactly where you are in your journey and where you need to put your focus and attention to maximize your ability to arrive at your desired destination.



Detailed information about The Seven Levels of Healing and *The Journey Through Cancer* can be found at www.Caring4Cancer.com.

Here is an introduction to the program:

LEVEL 1 Education and Information

LEVEL ONE provides basic knowledge and information about cancer and current treatment options. It empowers you and your loved ones to actively participate in and obtain the greatest possible benefit from your care. Understanding your medical care is a fundamental part of achieving the best outcome. Feeling clear and confident about your treatment plan is important to put your mind at ease. It can also greatly enhance your ability to enter the deeper dimensions of healing. Find an experienced oncologist who you trust, who answers your questions fully. Take the time needed to make decisions based on knowledge and understanding, not on fear.

LEVEL 2 Connection with Others

LEVEL TWO explores the importance of finding support and connecting with others on the cancer journey. The poet John Donne famously said, “No man is an island,” and this is especially true when dealing with cancer. Connection with others is an enormously important component of the healing process. Studies have consistently demonstrated the numerous benefits derived from support groups and other psycho-social and educational programs. Remember that family members cannot satisfy all your needs. Seek support from friends, clergy, or self-help organizations. Join a support group. Talk with others who are navigating the journey through cancer and are finding positive solutions.

LEVEL 3 The Body as Garden

LEVEL THREE invites patients and family members to regard the human body as a precious and wondrously complex *garden*—rather than a machine. This level explores the full spectrum of safe and effective complementary and alternative approaches to healing. Conventional treatments remain the foundation of leading-edge cancer care. However, taking an active role in caring for your body also includes good nutrition, exercise, massage, relaxation, and other nonconventional therapies. These soothe the body and mind, and invigorate the heart and spirit. Explore the myriad options available to support yourself in these ways.

LEVEL 4 Emotional Healing

LEVEL FOUR enters the inner realm of the human heart. It explores the transformative power of releasing fear, pain, and anger on the journey through cancer. It also demonstrates the healing potential of self-love, forgiveness, and embracing all parts of one’s self with compassion and tenderness. Cancer can be an emotional roller coaster. There can be feelings of doubt and depression, as well as gratitude and contentment. Keep a journal to explore and release hidden feelings. Work with a counselor or therapist. Do not neglect your emotional self.

LEVEL 5
The Nature
of Mind

LEVEL FIVE looks carefully at how our entire experience of life—including life with cancer—is profoundly influenced by our thoughts, beliefs, and the meaning we give to events. It also shows how we can escape the tyranny of the mind and move forward consciously on our healing path. Anxiety is a common part of the cancer journey. To prevent feeling overwhelmed, examine the thoughts, worries, and beliefs that are troubling you the most. Once fear is replaced with knowledge and understanding, anxiety can be profoundly diminished. Focus on the positive. Ask yourself, “What are the blessings in my life? What am I learning? What am I grateful for?”

LEVEL 6
Life
Assessment

LEVEL SIX explores the aspirations, goals, and purposes of our lives. It is very empowering to discover the real purpose of your life, especially in the face of cancer. Answering three essential questions can make your priorities clear and liberate enormous time, energy, and resources for healing.

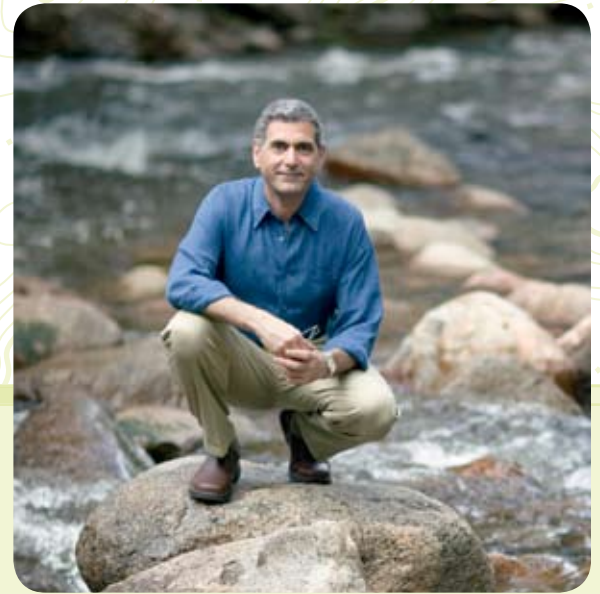
What is the meaning and purpose of my life?

What are my most important goals for the coming year?

How do I want to be remembered by those whom I love and care about?

LEVEL 7
The Nature
of Spirit

LEVEL SEVEN explores the spiritual aspects of life and healing. It embraces the non-physical dimension of our being that exists beyond time and space, and even beyond illness and health. There is no better time than now to fully honor and embrace your spiritual essence. It is the source not only of the love, joy, and fulfillment that we all seek, but of physical healing as well. Explore this through meditation, prayer, reflection, time in nature, and sharing with loved ones. Remember that just as your body, mind, and heart need care and attention, so does your spirit.



Kevin Moriko

ABOUT JEREMY R. GEFFEN, MD, FACP

A renowned oncologist, Jeremy R. Geffen, MD, FACP is recognized as one of the nation’s leading pioneers in blending state-of-the-art conventional medicine with safe and effective complementary and alternative therapies in the treatment of cancer. He is a *summa cum laude* graduate of Columbia University and received his medical degree with honors from New York University School of Medicine. Dr. Geffen is a Fellow in the American College of Physicians, Founder of Geffen Visions International, and Director of Integrative Oncology for Caring4Cancer.com. To learn more about Dr. Geffen, visit www.Caring4Cancer.com or www.GeffenVisions.com.



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Take The Seven Levels of Healing program to the next level by logging on to www.Caring4Cancer.com. Click on The Seven Levels of Healing under the Your Wellbeing tab to participate in Dr. Geffen’s online community message board and to see if Dr. Geffen is speaking near you.