

Book Review

"Healing with Words"

Author Diana M. Raab

"That which does not kill us makes us stronger," these famous words coined by Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche a 19th Century German Philosopher could perhaps be viewed as the mantra of Diana M. Raab's compelling book "Healing with Words" a must read for anyone suffering a traumatic life changing event. In Diana's case, the words proved to be true as she dealt with the diagnosis of breast cancer at the tender age of 47.

I sat down planning to take a quick skim through her book, after hearing some wonderful reviews of a book highlighting how a fellow writer, and young mother of three, handled one of the scariest diagnosis a woman can hear, "breast cancer." Instead I could not put the book down. It kept me up late into the night reading word after word, feeling every bit of fear that penetrated her body as she thought about what would become of her children and a husband she loved dearly. A nurse by profession, Diana was not ignorant to her diagnosis or the long road she would have to travel in the hopes of coming out at the end, somewhat whole and hopefully disease free.

Certainly, there are many books out there on this subject and Diana's situation is not unique. According to the American Cancer Society every three minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. In fact the National Breast Cancer foundation estimates that over 200,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year and over 40,000 will die from this disease. Perhaps even more enlightening is the fact that one woman in eight either has, or will develop, breast cancer in her lifetime. So why is "Healing with Words" such a unique book? With a disease of such momentous proportions, and so many sufferers scared and unsure what to do next, having a book like Diana's is truly a Godsend. Healing with Words, takes us through the entire event from original diagnosis to surgery, to trips across the country for second opinions, to the feeling of loss of femininity, to dealing with the return of a feared disease.

This beautifully written book is a riveting account of Diana's ordeal and how she dealt with it in one of the most comfortable ways she could, through her writing. Each chapter captures yet another moment in the process and touches upon some hard hitting issues, certainly the life or death issue, but also a women's loss of a part of her body due to a mastectomy, a body part that for many women defines their sexuality and sensuality. Diana, not only looks at her feelings, but how these feelings and this disease impact those around her. Would her husband still desire her, could she live without the familiar and pleasurable sensations of having her breasts stimulated, would she ever be the old Diana

again? All of these questions permeate the minds of the breast cancer patient, even if many are afraid to voice their fears, even to themselves.

As a writer Diana uses journaling to help deal with the voices in her head and the fears that she needs expressed. For many these fears exist but, they will often suffer in silence not to burden their loved ones, who they know are frightened as well. She reaches deep inside and pulls those feelings out and onto the pages of "Healing With Words" As a reader, whether you have been diagnosed with a similar medical condition or have a dear friend or family member who has, you can feel the fear, the pain, the depression, the exuberance, and the reality of this devastating situation. Like a close friend living through every moment of her ordeal, the reader is elated by the good news and devastated when her life is again shattered by a second diagnosis of another unrelated cancer, multiple myeloma.

The format of Diana's book is unlike any I have come across before, imploring the reader to not only become invested in her story, but to find their own answers to the questions that follow each chapter. Page after page asking poignant questions such as "What was the first thing that you thought of when you were told that you had breast cancer," "How has breast cancer affected your personal relationships?" "Describe how you feel when you are undressing and looking at yourself post mastectomy?" All of these hard hitting questions encouraging fellow sufferers to express what is deep in their hearts. Diana has found a way to teach those who may not be journaling to learn the art, while dealing with the emotions at hand. This book not only educates, and informs, but it comforts the soul and helps readers to deal with and live through a very scary diagnosis. Healing with words is a must read for any breast cancer sufferer, spouse, family, or friend. Even those who have not been touched by breast cancer can learn the concepts and tools to live through any live, altering situation through the power of words, which can not only heal the heart, but calm the soul.



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