



Suzanne Whang Victorious Woman – October 2011

When she first found out she had breast cancer, she shocked her doctor with her, “Wow, this will be great material for my comedy act! Are you sure? I mean, my tits are so small...” But as a comedian, Suzanne Whang’s mind naturally went for the funny. The former host of HGTV’s House Hunters decided from the get-go that the only way she wanted to face cancer was with humor and courage.

Early on Suzanne felt she didn’t want to burden anyone or ask for help. She also didn’t want to go public with the diagnosis because she definitely didn’t want to become “the poster child for tit cancer” or have to deal with unsolicited advice for cures. Much to her chagrin, Suzanne eventually needed help. Also she had so many things going on that it wasn’t possible for people not to find out. And advice for cures “definitely happened” and Suzanne found it “incredibly annoying.”

All Suzanne really wanted most was to get cured in private and go public when she was back to good health.

Much of that autonomous attitude goes back to her childhood. The daughter of loving Asian parents who supported and loved her, her upbringing gave her lots of self-esteem but also the subtle message that she was to be a caregiver to others.

As she grew, Suzanne rebelled against the passivity of her cultural background. Instead she fought to be strong, bold and to take care of herself. Suzanne was married once but the marriage only lasted about eighteen months. After getting divorced, she had other relationships but none of them ever lasted longer than six years.

The cancer diagnosis didn’t alter her feelings about taking care of herself: the journey was her own and she wanted to keep it that way. But the privacy and independence Suzanne desired wasn’t what life had in store for her. Instead, breast cancer became about finding a balance between healing, speaking her truth and “letting down her dukes” enough to soften and let go of the pride that surfaced as an obstacle to her recovery.

In 2006, Suzanne had a lumpectomy after which she decided not to have radiation and chemotherapy (“they cause cancer”) and chose instead a variety of Eastern medicine and alternative treatments. They felt good but they were expensive and unfortunately didn’t cure the cancer – as she learned in 2009 when she was diagnosed with the disease a second time.

Again Suzanne opted out of traditional treatment in favor of alternative treatments, including a topical black salve that was supposed to draw the cancer out. After applying the salve, a bump appeared and Suzanne thought the treatment was working. But when the bump became so large it looked like a third breast, and the cancer was still active, she knew something was wrong. Suzanne decided to have another lumpectomy.

After the surgery, the site became infected. The healing process, as described by Suzanne, was “excruciatingly painful” because it “involved gauze dressing being ripped out of my tit crater.”

Then, on Valentine’s Day in 2011, when her boyfriend’s mother gave her a big hug, she heard a crack. It was a fractured vertebra that required emergency surgery. That’s when Suzanne learned that the cancer was back and had spread to her bones and lymph nodes. It was Stage Four. She faced the news by joking, “Like most Asians, I am an overachiever.”

Because her bones were so porous, Suzanne first had to have a prophylactic hip replacement followed by radiation. Next she went for a new type of chemotherapy, which she took orally. When people said she looked good, Suzanne would joke, “It’s the radiation – I’m glowing.”

Between the cancer, hip replacement, radiation and chemo, Suzanne was bedridden for three months. Her boyfriend, Eric, took over. He created an online “care calendar” so that the people who offered could sign up to help. Suzanne was mortified. Not only did she hate being even a little bit in the “need help” position, but Suzanne needed *everything* from hygiene and meals to shopping and comfort-company. Yes, people said they cared and loved her, but like most women, she wondered...

Much to her relief and gratification, Suzanne discovered, “Every person I thought was my friend, actually *was!*” People showed up with food, DVDs, books, cards, gifts, and flowers. They read to her, sang her songs, did dances, made her laugh, visualized her in good health and walked her dog. They also scrubbed her toilet, rubbed her feet, and carried her to the bathroom.

When the help started coming, Suzanne acknowledges, “It was unbearable to receive all that love at first, since I was accustomed to always being the caretaker, superhero, savior, helper and healer to everyone around me.” Until then, Suzanne says she had always been “the fixer – making people laugh, never asking for help.” But by then, she admitted, “there I was, sick and broke.”

A turning point came one day when Suzanne had an epiphany. “Where are my mentors?” she wondered, putting out a new intention for her life. “I want to be surrounded by friends who are so highly evolved,” she decided, “I have to jump as high as I can to even have a conversation with them.” Her words acted in her life like a release from long-standing resistance.

It wasn’t long before the mentors showed up. They included spiritual teachers Reverend Michael Beckwith, author Marianne Williamson and Jerry and Esther Hicks.

One day Williamson asked Suzanne if she was rebellious. She explained to Suzanne that cancer cells were rebellious ones that went against the natural order of things. She told Suzanne that envisioning a fight with the cancer cells wouldn’t work and suggested that Suzanne give up fighting cancer and focus instead on receiving health.

While Williamson’s advice wasn’t an easy sell, after thinking about it, Suzanne decided to make changes. “I didn’t want my life to be about fighting. I wanted it to be about community, compassion, cooperation and receiving – receiving health. I had to learn how to ask for help. I had to learn how to receive love.”

Today Suzanne is still on her journey to healing, but she sees her challenges differently. “My heart has been cracked open,” she confesses. “After being humbled and my pride and dignity tossed out the window, I surrendered.” The most recent test results show that the tumors are either shrinking or disappearing and Suzanne says, “Now I’m happy to be creating a new role for my life.”

And there’s been a shift professionally too. Though initially afraid no one would hire her if they knew she had cancer, her experience has been very different. She is talking to people who want to create a one-woman show, a documentary and even a sitcom about her journey, causing her to joke, “Who knew cancer would be such a great career move?”

Suzanne offers a few suggestions for others who are also dealing with breast cancer:

1. **Whatever you resist, persists.** So decide you’re not fighting the cancer but instead releasing the cancer. Embrace your health, bask in the present moment, be constantly grateful for your good health, receive love, laugh a lot...and have the best sex of your life – *like I am!*
2. **It’s OK to allow people to take care of you for a change.** I was always there for others, but when I needed help, I didn’t want to bother anyone or burden them. Well, that wasn’t working for me, and I wasn’t getting better physically, so I decided to see what would happen if I came out of the cancer closet. I’m so glad I did. The people who helped me didn’t do it resentfully, but were glad they were finally able to reciprocate. They told me that up until now, I had gypped them of half of a friendship. *Who knew?*
3. **Let go of toxic people.** I stopped inviting drama into my life when I stopped getting together with people who loved the dramas. Those relationships left me feeling drained, exhausted, and resentful. I ended the toxic friendships and chose a new path for myself. At first it was hard to do, but now I don’t even attract toxic people into my world. They are not a vibrational match to me anymore. So I realized that I deserve to be surrounded by magnificent people who love me unconditionally, and that I must not settle for less.

Finally, Suzanne says, “grab life by the balls – this is not a dress rehearsal!”

Thank you, Suzanne, for including us in your journey and for such great guidance for healing cancer...and for life!!

Learn more about Suzanne Whang’s journey: www.suzannewhang.com
While there, if you want to, there’s a link for donations toward her medical bills.