

Laughing at Cancer

How to Heal with Love,
Laughter and Mindfulness

Ros Ben-Moshe



“Laugh at cancer... Really? Why would you do that? Simple really. When you laugh, there is no room for anything else. Laughter brings its own natural mindfulness that in turn brings our mind into connection with our body, and connects us joyfully with others. In doing so, laughter effortlessly transforms some of the darker emotions that can accompany cancer, enabling a deeper level of healing. So how do you laugh at cancer? Read *Laughing at cancer!* It’s full of personal experience, useful facts and great tips. And the smile will come from deep within.”

Ian Gawler OAM

Author of *Meditation - an In-depth Guide*
and *The Mind that Changes Everything*

“Being diagnosed with the big “C-word”, CANCER, is discouraging. Still, the author of this book has found a couple other “C-words” to help her, and you, navigate that journey. Those words are “compassion” and “comedy.” The former consisting of techniques in mindfulness and positive psychology and the latter which embraces life with laughter despite the disease. Filled with healing ideas, provocative questions, and lots of heart, this book is a must-read for anyone facing a life-challenging issue.”

Allen Klein, MA, CSP

Author of *The Healing Power of Humor*
and *You Can’t Ruin My Day*

“Standing back from and seeing the funny side of life, even cancer, can be profoundly therapeutic. It is for this reason that I suspect this book will be as healing for those who read it as it was for Ros Ben-Moshe who wrote it. Read it, cry and laugh, and, having read it, live every day with greater wisdom, passion and intention.”

A/Prof. Craig Hassed MBBS, FRACGP

Mindfulness Coordinator, Monash University
Author *Mindfulness for Life*

“It is rare that a book has such a strong impact on my spirit. Ros describes her life-changing cancer journey so vividly, that I felt like I was right beside her every step of the way. Her journals transcend routine narratives and provide a powerful and poignant message of how one can find strength during the dreaded “C” diagnosis. Anyone living with chronic illness will benefit from the description of how a focus on positive energy can create healing techniques. Of special interest was how laughter became a form of mindful practice leading to her enhanced well-being. The creative questions at the end of each chapter stimulated additional personal insights. This book is a must read.”

Mary Kay Morrison

Director Humor Quest. <http://www.questforhumor.com/>
Educator, Speaker, Author of *Using Humor to Maximize Living*.
President of AATH (Association for Applied
and Therapeutic Humor)

“This is a supremely captivating, inspiring, and penetrating book. Ros Ben Moshe explores the panoply of emotions that accompany a diagnosis of cancer, its treatment, and rehabilitation. She documents in engaging prose the process of coping with a universal vulnerability that affects millions of people around the world. The writing is exquisite, the story is powerful, and the message is compelling. This is more than a book about cancer. It is about how human beings can cope with frailties through laughter and love. The book will enrich your life and help you set priorities. Read it and recommend it to friends and loved ones. They will thank you.”

Professor Isaac Prilleltensky

Author of *The Laughing Guide to Well-Being: Using Humor and Science to Become Happier and Healthier*, Dean School of Education and Human Development and Vice Provost for Institutional Culture, University of Miami.

“Ros Ben-Moshe has encapsulated the true meaning of ‘laughter as medicine’, demonstrating that even in your darkest moments you can choose to laugh and reap the health benefits of laughter. This book eloquently describes how when you laugh, you change and when you read this book your world will change as well.”

Dr Madan Kataria

Founder Laughter Clubs Movement

Author of *Laugh for No Reason*

“An honest journal unfolds the daily truth of our lives with all its complexity--its interwoven strands making a whole. Sharing such truth is a generous gift. With her offering, Ros has revealed to us that laughter lightens the loads which we bear. She has reminded us of what we all once knew as children: laughter IS the very best medicine. Walking along Ros’ way for a time may help each of us find our own.”

Dr Rick Hayes

Former Head of the Department of Community Health,

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

“In time to come, the healing professions will conclude that belief, mind, attitude, and emotional mastery are the key ingredients for health and wellbeing. They will turn to this very approachable first-person read and point to Ros as being a prime example of how one person’s determination to rise beyond victimhood of disease, contributed to recovery. If positivity is the doorway, and self-mastery the lock, then laughter is the key. If Ros does nothing else through this book than to inspire us to laugh at one’s incipient and growing fear of the ‘big C’ then she will have contributed hugely to our wholeness and wellness.”

Rabbi D. Laibl Wolf

Author of best-selling *Practical Kabbala* (Random House)

and Dean, Spiritgrow Wholistic Centre, Australia.

“Ros has bravely combined two human experiences that are usually on different ends of the spectrum we call life. And braver still, decided to share her very personal experiences so others can benefit from her insights. If you or your loved one is facing cancer, and you have an inkling that laughter, mindfulness, relaxation or even a smile could somehow help, this is the book for you. Certainly, laughing in such circumstances isn’t easy, but not laughing doesn’t make it any easier either. May you find some hope and inspiration through the words in this powerfully unique approach!”

Shamash Alidina

Author of *Mindfulness for Dummies*

Laughter is an untapped science. We didn’t really know until now how to use it as a reliable therapeutic tool, but we do now and the results are amazing. In this book Ros Ben-Moshe takes you through her journey healing from cancer and the insights she gained along the way. Laughter is not the whole prescription, but she shows you how it made everything whole for her and how it can help you too. It’s a message of hope and a valuable source of inspiration for people facing adversity.”

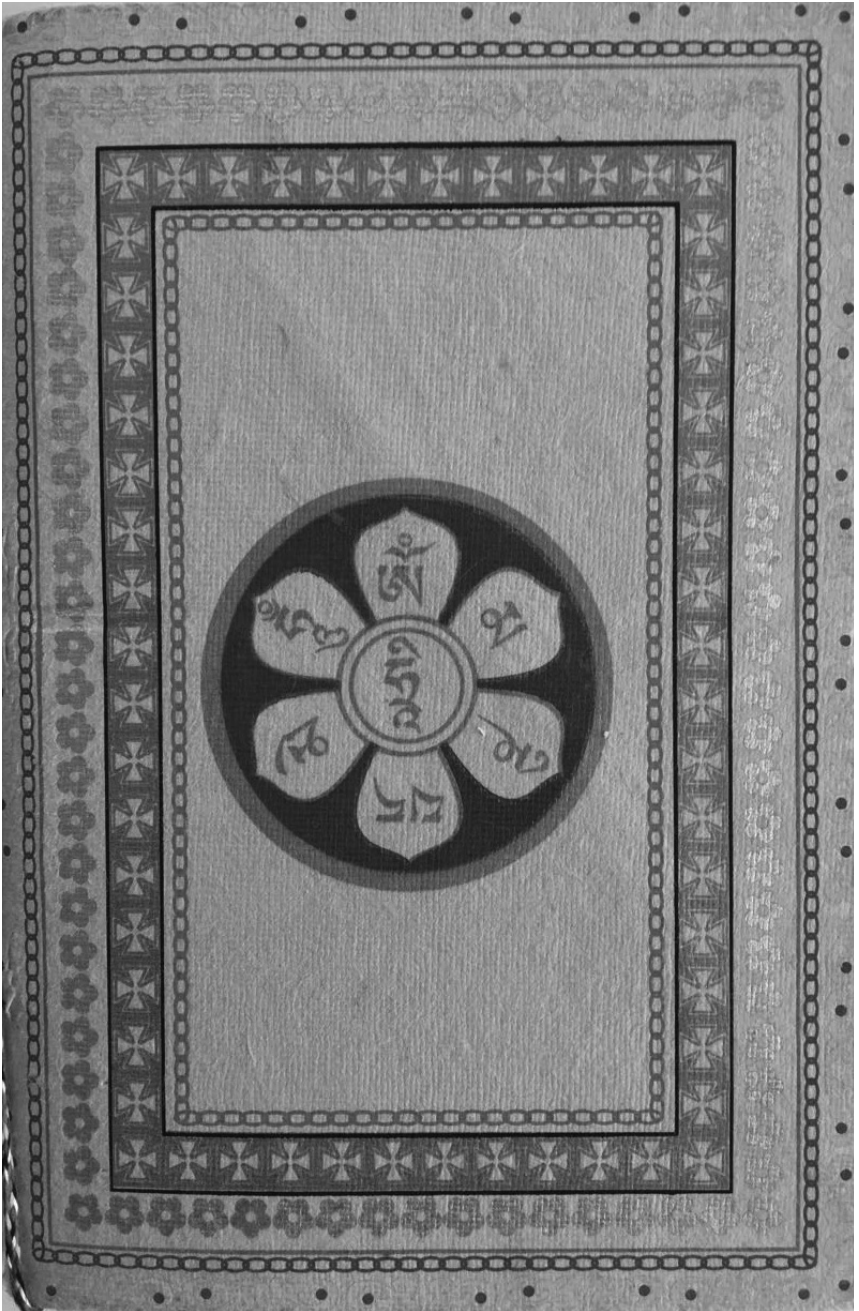
Sebastien Gendry

Creator of the *Laughter Wellness* method

Acknowledgements

To my beautiful family: Danny, Josh and Zak. I penned this book fuelled by your love. You are my love, my light, my everything. I am so grateful that you are my family and from the bottom of my heart I thank you. To my extended family and friends – you complete my world. To the international laughter community, one word: Wow!

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Introduction

Dear Readers,

Laughing at cancer, How to Heal with Love, Laughter and Mindfulness is based on a series of journals I wrote following a shock diagnosis of bowel cancer days before my 43rd birthday.

Early into my writing I realised that as much as I was writing for myself I was also writing for other people who may be facing a significant health or life challenge. I aimed for my experiences and insights to assist and guide others on their own healing journey.

I share essential healing techniques, personal philosophies and professional insights as both a lecturer in health promotion and laughter wellness and mindfulness practitioner. Even though my experience was with bowel cancer, the healing strategies I employed in this book and much of what I went through are relevant to anyone living with a chronic illness or grappling with a significant life issue.

Laughter was integral to my journey to wellness. Not just laughter in the physical sense, but more broadly as a philosophy known as laughter wellness – a holistic practice positively orienting body and mind.

During this period of time my view of mindfulness expanded from that of a daily practice to a complete way of being. I derived so much benefit from daily mindfulness and experimented with different ways of sensing into and appreciating the present moment, far beyond any structured practice.

Increasingly I recognised laughter as a form of mindfulness: an anchor to the present moment. When you're laughing, you're laughing. It's very difficult to feel negative emotion. This is really

important in terms of healing, as optimal healing occurs when less stress and tension resides in the body.

While surgeons and doctors attended to my physical condition, laughter, mindfulness and other positive psychology techniques enabled deeper healing. So even when circumstances may have appeared less than perfect, these helped align my mind and body to a state where optimal healing could occur.

I hope this book awakens your inner smile and leads you down a path of love, joy and life fulfilment. These philosophies profoundly transformed my life, and my wish is that they transform yours. I dedicate this book to your good health.

Wishing you much love, laughter and wellness,

 Ros Ben-Moshe

25 May 2011

This is where it all begins ... well it has to begin somewhere!

Now this isn't too hard, is it? I mean it's only taken ten thousand hints from the universe, a bowel cancer diagnosis and a lifetime of thoughts bursting the lining of my exploding head to finally begin to write, journal, download, do whatever it takes and in whatever manner it spills out.

The ink seals my words as testimony to a covenant I make with myself. From now on, all chatter cramming every nook and every cranny of my brain will have a place to go: my journal; a dedicated and devoted outlet where I can pour forth the depths of my unvocalised soul. It will soothe my mind and provide a resting place for my profound (and not so profound) thoughts, releasing any undesired and negative emotions that hibernate within. It will flow its own course. I am merely its conduit.

My life's journey has taken a new direction. A new current is pulling me, more forceful than ever before. There's no sitting back today and ignoring it. Tough decisions need to be made. Taking a deep breath in, I am considering what needs to be done. Countless people, too many, have been in similar situations before, far graver than mine. My brain is filled with opinions, facts and fear. I am unable to switch off. I am dreaming of the moment it heaves to a silent pause and rests.

I fear if it doesn't, my decision-making process will be encumbered, adding even more pressure to my pulsating head. I try tuning out the brain and tuning into my heart, gut and intuitive capacities, but they're just not communicating today. They are ensconced in their own battles. In this deafening noise

I can't find any inner silence or space to make sense of this.

Is this really happening to me? After all I am a health promotion consultant and laughter wellness facilitator. Surely that should somehow absolve me of poor health? I live and breathe wellness, don't I? I am considering the mind-body connection and wondering whether something, somewhere along the way has caused a conjunction between seamed parts. I have tried to think positively. I really have done my best. So why then have I had so much sickness? Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), parasites, shingles, a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and now this malignant polyp: a mere 21mm in diameter, with a few pesky cancerous cells outside of its margin. It's hard to believe something so small can amount to something as life-changing as this. 'This can't be happening to me,' screams over and over in my head making me woozy. I will an out-of-body experience to free me from my own—not that I've ever had one!

Another solitary breath in and out, slow and deep. Time to close my eyes and contemplate my next step both in the written and physical worlds. Nothing makes sense. I wish I could stop thinking so much. The more I write, the more real it feels, and that is the last thing I want. I am too distraught to contemplate sleep. I pray that after I give in to sleep, I'll wake up and today's nightmare will have been just that.