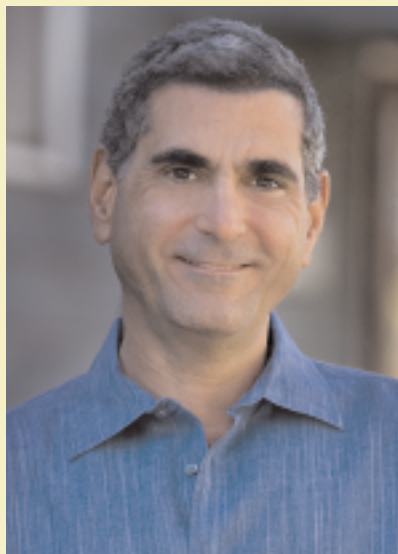


# The Seven Levels of Healing: A Leading-Edge Model of Integrative, Multidimensional Medicine

*An Interview with Jeremy Geffen, MD, FACP*

Interview by Matt Laughlin



## BIOGRAPHY

Jeremy Geffen, MD, FACP, is a board-certified medical oncologist, a Fellow of the American College of Physicians, and a renowned pioneer in integrative medicine and oncology. He is founder of Geffen Visions International and Director of Integrative Oncology for P4 Healthcare and [www.caring4cancer.com](http://www.caring4cancer.com). He is also author of the highly acclaimed book *The Journey Through Cancer: Healing and Transforming the Whole Person* (Three River Press, 2006) and integrative medicine program *The Seven Levels of Healing*®. In addition to his academic medical education and training, Dr. Geffen has more than thirty years experience exploring the great healing and spiritual traditions of the world. He lectures widely and offers seminars and retreats on

the multidimensional aspects of medicine, wellness, and life, and advises organizations on integrative programs for medicine and healing. To learn more about Dr. Geffen, visit [www.geffenvisions.com](http://www.geffenvisions.com).

**UH** (*UnifiedHealth*™): Reading your book, *The Journey Through Cancer: Healing and Transforming The Whole Person*, it seems that one of the most significant events in your life was your father's cancer diagnosis and death a few months later. Would you comment on that experience, and how it shaped the vision you hold today?

**JG** (*Jeremy Geffen*): Sure. Let me begin by putting those events in a bit of historical context.

**UH** It was over twenty years ago?

**JG** Yes. My dad was diagnosed with a very aggressive, advanced gastric cancer in 1985. I was 29 years old, and a senior in medical school at New York University. Over the previous decade I had spent a lot of time exploring Eastern traditions of healing and spirituality. I had lived in an *ashram* (spiritual community) for four years, studying yoga and meditation. I had traveled to India and Nepal. I was a vegetarian. I knew, from direct, personal experience about the power of diet, exercise, cleansing,

and meditation. I understood how these things can powerfully impact not only how people feel emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually, but also how they can impact one's physical health.

Nonetheless, back then, in the halls of mainstream academic medicine, anything other than a strictly conventional approach to cancer was regarded *a priori* as being completely without merit, if not dangerous. My dad and I were catapulted into what I call the medical Tower of Babel, where doctors and healers from different traditions spoke completely different languages, and would rarely communicate in a meaningful way. Conventional medical oncologists seemed to view my father as a dead man from the moment he was diagnosed. He had an incurable disease that had metastasized into his liver and his lymph nodes at the time of his diagnosis; they couldn't see or conceive of any possibility for cure. The treatments they offered him were very toxic and only minimally effective. And yet, they were openly cynical about him exploring any other kind of complementary, let alone "alternative" therapy, and refused to discuss, much less support, his interest in exploring any other options.

My dad was a vigorous, 61 year-old man. In many ways, he was at the peak of his life. He lived in Manhattan with a wife he loved, had work and friends he truly enjoyed, and a thriving business. In a heartbeat, his entire world was turned upside down. When he was diagnosed with cancer, like so many people, he was plunged into confusion, uncertainty, and even despair. And, yet, the medical system offered him nothing to deal with all this other than to prescribe chemotherapy, pain pills, sedatives, and antidepressants.

**UH** There was a total absence of any other approach or view?

**JG** Yes, completely. As I wrote in my book, my father and I went on the same journey that many others do in this situation. We didn't want to abandon what Western medicine had to offer, but we felt there had to be more he could do than just lie there and take drugs. The question was: what else could he do? We started making the rounds to many complementary and alternative healers. We met a lot of practitioners who, while well-intentioned, were sadly misinformed -- and often very naïve -- about the realities of cancer. And there was often a real conflict between the different

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approaches we were exploring. For example, when we mentioned Chinese herbs to my father's oncologist, he emphatically said, "No, don't touch them. They might interfere with chemotherapy" -- even though he also openly admitted that the chemotherapy wouldn't cure him. At the same time, the Chinese herbal doctors we saw emphatically told my father not to take chemotherapy, saying, "It's poison and it will ruin your immune system!" It was incredibly frustrating and confusing. That's when I began to understand what people really go through when faced with a circumstance like this. What do you do? How do you make sense of it all?

**UH** What a difficult situation.

**JG** Yes, that's why this was such a life-altering event. Out of the pain and difficulty of witnessing my father's cancer treatment and his death less than four

months later, I understood more deeply than ever before the profoundly important human dimensions of dealing with cancer. Up to then, in all of my years of medical school training, the focus was not on what patients and families actually *experience*; the focus was on the diagnosis, the staging, and what drugs to use to treat the disease. Experiencing firsthand the utter lack of attention for the human dimensions of the process was a shock, and ultimately, an epiphany. My medical training had given me deep grounding in modern science but had not prepared me to address patients as whole people, with needs for love and connection that encompass and transcend their need for physical health -- much less the spiritual needs of people yearning for a deep experience of meaning and purpose.

A second epiphany that grew out of this was a clear understanding of how urgent and important it was to explore how modalities of healing from many different paradigms and cultures could be blended in a way that was ethical, appropriate, meaningful, and safe. The pain of this experience with my father was the crucible, or the womb, of the vision of what my life's work was going to be. In my first year of medical school I had already decided to become an oncologist. But I now felt compelled to devote myself and my career to an even broader, burning

question: "What does it take for a human being to heal and transform at the deepest of levels of the body, mind, heart, and spirit in the face of a major health challenge like cancer?" I mean, what does it really take? Not to just fix the body, but to help people heal, transform, and awaken on every level of who they are?

**UH** So that became the guiding question for your work?

**JG** Yes. And I think it is a primary challenge and question of our time. There is so much more that we can do to help ourselves and each other be healthy and strong, on all levels, and it's wonderful that we are now openly exploring these possibilities. At the same time, I think it's important for us to also remember that people can do everything "right" and still die from their disease. They can get all the right medical

and surgical treatments, eat the right foods, take all the right herbs, get all the right acupuncture treatments, have all the right positive thoughts, feel love and gratitude, connect with their spirit, and still die from their disease. It's humbling to remember this. We all have a desire to feel that we're in charge of our health, and can control what happens in our lives. But, at the end of the day, there is a mystery to who gets well, who lives, who dies, and when. So it's important to balance our heroic efforts to be "in control" with a spirit of humility and surrender, and an intention to find happiness, fulfillment, meaning, and joy -- here and now -- in the midst of whatever is happening.

This relates to what I call the "two purposes of medicine." The first is the *relative* purpose, which is, simply put, to "fix the problem" as effectively and efficiently as we can. But I believe there is also an *ultimate* purpose; to help people find meaning and purpose in their lives, and experience love, joy, and fulfillment along the way. I think this an idea whose time has come. We have come a long way in the last twenty years, especially in terms of Western medicine embracing complementary therapies. It's now acceptable to talk about diet, nutrition, yoga, massage, and support groups, for example, particularly in cancer care.

As great as these things are, they are still not the whole story. There's much more, and I think we're on the threshold of taking the next steps to consciously embracing not only the relative purpose of medicine, but the ultimate one as well. As we cross this threshold, we'll be moving from the conventional, "mechanistic" model of medicine, through the emerging "integrative" model, to what I call a truly "multidimensional" model that recognizes, honors, and cares for all dimensions of our human experience.

**UH** Your father's diagnosis and experience with the medical system wasn't the only influence for you; it seems you were also influenced by the experience of being with him in his final days.

**JG** Yes, that's true. As I mentioned, my father died less than four months after being diagnosed with cancer. His diagnosis was an incredibly difficult, deeply disorienting event, as was going through the maze of mainstream as well as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies we were exploring. His death really did change my life. I was young, just 29, and he was only 61.

As a medical student, I had been with a lot of people who were dying. But it's different when it's your own loved one, your own family member. It was a searingly painful experience for me, as it is for any-

one, to lose a loved one like that. It was especially hard to watch someone I loved go through such a heart-wrenching, agonizing time and to feel helpless to save him.

My dad's cancer profoundly affected my medical career direction -- propelling me to find meaningful answers to that question I mentioned earlier: "*What does it really take for a human being to heal and transform at the deepest of levels of the body, mind, heart and spirit in the face of a major health challenge like cancer?*"

I thought, "There has got to be a better, more comprehensive, more meaningful way to care for people. What is it? What would it involve? How would it look and feel?" I spent the following three years -- during residency training in internal medicine -- and the subsequent three years -- during fellowship training in hematology and oncology -- asking my patients what mattered to them most, what helped them heal, and what wisdom could they offer me from their own life experience. I traveled to Tibet, China, and back to India and Nepal. I spent time on a Navajo Indian reservation, learning about Native American healing traditions. I spent time with masters of Ayurvedic medicine, Tibetan Medicine, and some incredible spiritual teachers as well. I was on fire with a desire to learn everything I could about how to help people heal. I wanted to make sense of what had happened to my father. But I especially wanted to prepare myself as an oncologist. I wanted to have more to offer than had been available for my dad.

After my father died, I made a vow to one day build the cancer center that I wished had been there for him -- a place where patients could get the best possible treatments, conventional and otherwise, in an environment of genuine love and compassion. I also vowed to become the oncologist that I wished I could have found for my father; someone who could look as deeply into the heart and soul of a human being as he could look into an MRI, CAT scan, or a pathology report.

**UH** And through all your years of study and practice, you began to notice something?

**JG** Yes. I began to see a profound pattern in what people encounter when they are trying to heal, and this was another life-altering event for me. I recognized that all the issues, questions, and concerns that patients and loved ones encounter on the healing journey share some universal themes. I saw that all these questions and concerns fall elegantly and organically into seven domains of human inquiry and exploration, which I call *The Seven Levels of Healing*®.

**UH** I recall you writing that this pattern came to you suddenly one night.

**JG** Yes. I had been thinking about this for quite some time, and early one morning I awoke abruptly from a deep sleep. It was 3:00 a.m. In a classic “eureka” moment, I saw this powerful pattern -- *The Seven Levels of Healing* -- and I wrote the Levels down. As I began to work with the Levels, I recognized that they were like a universal map of how people seek wholeness and healing in the face of a challenge. When I started sharing this “Seven Levels map” with my patients, virtually all of them said that it mirrored their own experience; it clarified what they’d been intuitively trying to sort out on their own. In fact, it was like a “GPS system” for the healing journey. It helped people know exactly where they were in the process. It helped them consciously focus their time, energy, and attention to get the best possible outcomes and to have the most optimal experience along the way. Amidst the million things they had to deal with, people told me, again and again, *The Seven Levels of Healing* provided a crystal clear overview of the entire terrain. Having the map made a really big difference.

**UH** What happened next?

**JG** My discovery of *The Seven Levels of Healing* occurred in 1993. I had completed my oncology training at the University of California at San Francisco and moved to Florida to open the cancer center I had vowed to create. I began to develop the Seven Levels into a formal program, and started offering it to patients in 1994, when I opened the Geffen Cancer Center and Research Institute, in Vero Beach. Patients and family members loved the Program, and

found it to be extremely helpful. Many reported that it profoundly transformed their experience of the cancer journey. My staff loved working with it, too, because it helped them better understand what our patients and families were going through. It also gave staff members a language, and an entire set of skills and distinctions, that made them more effective and fulfilled in their work.

I started refining the principles of how the Seven Levels worked, and writing the stories of what patients and loved ones were experiencing. My book, *The Journey Through Cancer: Healing and Transforming the Whole Person* emerged organically out of this process. The first edition of the book came out in early 2000. The reviews were quite remarkable, from sources ranging from *The New York Times*, to the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, to a variety of other mainstream as well as complementary and alternative medicine publications. In 2006, a fully revised and updated second edition was published which includes updates on many of the important developments in science and medicine that had occurred over the prior 6 years.

**UH** Would you offer a description of *The Seven Levels of Healing* for readers unfamiliar with your work?

**JG** Sure. I’ll start by describing three fundamental concepts that underlie the Program and its philosophy.

The first concept is that we actually live, simultaneously, in two domains of human existence: the domains of *doing* and *being*. The domain of *doing* is largely the focus of Western medicine and modern life. It is also, frankly, the focus of many CAM therapies which are oriented primarily towards fixing problems or relieving symptoms. There’s certainly nothing wrong with this; in fact, it is a noble endeavor. But



there's another domain of existence that is just as real and important: the domain of being. This domain is sadly overlooked, especially in Western culture. We are constantly busy. We almost never sit still. We rarely take time to be silent, or find peace or contentment, let alone the source of love and healing that lies within. The Seven Levels of Healing fully embraces both domains, and shows how we can skillfully honor each of them -- within the context of modern medicine and modern life.

I commented earlier on the second fundamental concept, that there are two purposes of medicine: a *relative* purpose and an *ultimate* purpose. Of course, we want to be as skillful and effective as possible at treating disease, relieving symptoms, and reducing suffering, using every modality available. But these efforts all lie in the relative dimension of life. It's "relative" because everything is always changing and is, ultimately, beyond our control. What works for one person often doesn't work for another. An illness or symptom may be relieved, or even cured, but new problems inevitably arise. And once again, as a physician you can do everything right and your patient may still die. Or as a patient, you can do everything perfectly and still suffer. Or, as a family member, you can be the perfect, loving support person and still not achieve what

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you want. "Fixing problems" is intrinsically a relative process, and if we only focus here we'll always, eventually be frustrated or disappointed. That's why it's so important to recognize and understand that there is an ultimate purpose of medicine, as well as the relative one. I believe that the *ultimate* purpose of medicine is to help patients, loved ones -- and ourselves -- find meaning and purpose, peace and contentment, and the experience of love and joy, as fully as possible, here and now, today, even in the midst of cancer or any other illness. *The Seven Levels of Healing* is designed to help people do just that, whether they are patients, family members, doctors, nurses, acupuncturists, or practitioners of any kind.

The third fundamental concept underlying *The Seven Levels of Healing* is that we are multidimensional beings. As humans, we each have a body that needs care and attention, but we also have a mind, a heart, and a spirit. Our physical bodies are,

in fact, the "tip of the iceberg" of who we really are -- as important as our bodies may be. So much of who we really are lies beneath the surface of what can be seen, or measured, and these dimensions are critically important to our health and wellbeing. Moreover, we are profoundly interconnected with each other and with the world as a whole, and this is another essential aspect of our multidimensionality. So, if we want a deeper experience of health, healing, and transformation, we must openly acknowledge that all of these dimensions are real, and they all deserve our focus, attention, and skill. That is what *The Seven Levels of Healing* is all about.

UH: Could you share a bit about each level?

JG Level One is called "Education and Information." We start here because in today's world, knowledge and information are incredibly important -- especially when dealing with an illness like cancer. Most people today want to understand their illness and know what mainstream medicine has to offer that could help them. This is the focus of Level One. We also start here because, for most people, it is impossible to fully relax until their mind is comforted, and has a sense of confidence and clarity about what is happening to them. Until the mind is satisfied, it is hard to explore the deeper levels of healing.

Level Two is called "Connection with Others." It relates to the idea, once again, that we're all deeply interconnected. As the poet John Donne famously said, "No man is an island." Most people instinctively understand this. From my perspective, connection with others lies at the very heart of healing. So, in Level Two, we want to honor the need we all have for love, support, and connection. A big mistake many people make is they try to get everything they need from their spouse, or immediate family members. But very few human beings can meet all the needs of a loved one, much less when the loved one is facing a serious challenge like cancer. So Level Two encourages people to broaden their social and support networks, and to deepen their experience of connection.

Level Three is called "The Body as Garden." Here, we begin to regard the body as a garden, not as a machine. And not just a garden, but a *precious*,

sacred garden. These distinctions are huge. In the current, bio-medical paradigm, the body is regarded as a machine, and doctors are mechanics. The solution to health problems is to take this pill for that symptom, or have this surgery for that problem. This approach definitely works to some extent, and sometimes even quite well; but it isn't the whole story. If we can learn to honor our bodies as precious gardens -- rather than just machines -- we can learn to cultivate genuine health over the long term. The Body as Garden is where complementary and alternative therapies find their natural, proper home. What I have come to understand about the pantheon of CAM therapies is that they, fundamentally, are oriented do one of four things: they either nourish the body; nurture the body; strengthen, balance, or tone the body; or cleanse and detoxify it -- or a combination of these. These therapies can also work on the energetic, mental, emotional, or subtle body realms. The beauty is that, when you recognize this, you can use a variety of CAM therapies to cleanse, nourish, strengthen, or nurture the garden of your own being.

**UH** You were saying that these first three Levels of healing are, more or less, culturally acceptable today?

**JG** Yes, and this is a big advance over the last twenty years. But there are actually four more Levels that we can also explore. Level Four is called "Emotional Healing." Here, we begin to shift our focus from the outer world -- and all the questions related to drugs, surgery, support groups, diets, CAM therapies, and exercise -- and enter the realms of our inner experience. Here, we explore the human heart, and the feelings and emotions that accompany any illness. In Level Four we help uncover and release whatever deeply held emotions we may be experiencing, some of which may not even be conscious, that are impacting not only our emotional state but our physiology as well.

Level Five is called "The Nature of Mind." This is about understanding how our thoughts and beliefs -- and the *meanings* we give to events -- consciously and unconsciously influence our experience of life. They influence every choice and decision people make about what's possible or not, what treatment they'll seek, or what treatment they won't even consider. It's very important to understand how the mind works, how it influences us on every level, and how we can harness its power to promote health and well-being.

Level Six is called "Life Assessment." Here, we explore and clarify the deepest meaning and purpose of our lives, what our most important goals are, and

how we want to be remembered by the people we love. This inquiry liberates enormous amounts of energy for people because, as they reconnect with their deepest purpose in life, they discover and clarify *why* they want to live, what is truly most important to them, and where they want to put their focus and attention.

Level Seven is called "The Nature of Spirit." This level is an unabashed swan dive into the realm of spirit, into pure, non-dual consciousness. It is about embracing the domain of *being* in our lives, as opposed to focusing only on the domain of *doing*. In Level Seven we stop focusing only on what to *do* and sink into an appreciation of the beauty, magnificence, and truth of who we actually, already, *are*. The realm of spirit, as far as I'm concerned, is our deepest essence. It is also the doorway through which everything we want in life appears, including physical health, healing, love, and wellbeing.

So *The Seven Levels of Healing* covers the entire spectrum of what people encounter in their quest for wholeness and healing. When you understand what the Levels are and how they work, you can consciously direct your attention, and give yourself or your loved one the very best chance of having the outcome you want, and experiencing the optimal quality of life along the way.

It took the twenty years since I was in medical school to reach this time, when we can openly talk about these first three Levels in mainstream medicine. In the growing movement of integrative medicine, hospitals, cancer centers, and physicians all over the country are now openly exploring how a variety of CAM therapies can be safely and effectively integrated into mainstream care. This is, of course, the essence of Level Three of *The Seven Levels of Healing*. Support groups and other psychosocial interventions -- which are at the heart of Level Two -- are also now routinely offered to patients and families. And there are now more resources for patient education and information than ever before, which is the core of Level One. All this is wonderful, a big evolutionary step forward. But mostly, it's still focused on these first three Levels.

**UH** And we have yet to embrace, in a larger cultural context, the remaining Levels you speak of?

**JG** Yes, and I'm excited to play a role in this evolutionary process. Our generation now has the opportunity to ask, "How can we create and experience deeper healing on *all* levels? How can we fully honor and care for ourselves, and each other, as multidimensional beings?" Part of the answer will be to understand that, as doctors, nurses, and healthcare

practitioners of all kinds, we must fully embrace and embody this new paradigm within ourselves, and reflect it not only in what we are *doing*, but in how we are *being* in the process. As the saying goes, you can't give what you don't have. That's a huge shift, but it's coming.

For example, Level Five of *The Seven Levels of Healing* is about understanding the nature of mind; how one's personal thoughts and beliefs impact one's experience as a patient. But it also addresses how the thoughts and beliefs of a nurse, a physician, or a CAM practitioner impact the experience of patients as well. Thoughts are powerful, and our bodies are not separate from our minds. Even more radical, however, is the emerging recognition that our minds are also not separate from each other. This is another exciting area to explore.

As another example, Level Six is also really important. When patients and families focus on the "Life Assessment" process, and gain real clarity about the meaning and purpose of their lives, it's inspiring to see the choices and decisions they make, and how profoundly, and positively, those choices impact their experience of being alive. The same thing happens when I facilitate this process with physicians, medical staff, administrators, CAM practitioners, or entire organizations.

This brings to mind two of the saddest things I encounter as a physician. One is to see a person with a dry heart; someone so wounded by life, so hurt, perhaps, by their life experience, that they can't cry, or feel gratitude, or experience love and joy. Another very sad thing for me as an oncologist is to take care of patients who are dying, and hear them say, "You know Dr. Geffen, I made millions of dollars, or built this business, or did this, or accomplished that. But I never found or fulfilled my deepest purpose in life, and I feel so empty inside." As a physician, I want to do all I can to help patients and loved ones understand their deepest purpose in life, and encourage them to make it their highest priority. My hope is that, one day, all of medicine will understand this, and that physicians and other health practitioners will not only understand it, but embody all these principles in their lives and work.

**UH** Are healthcare organizations beginning to embrace this?

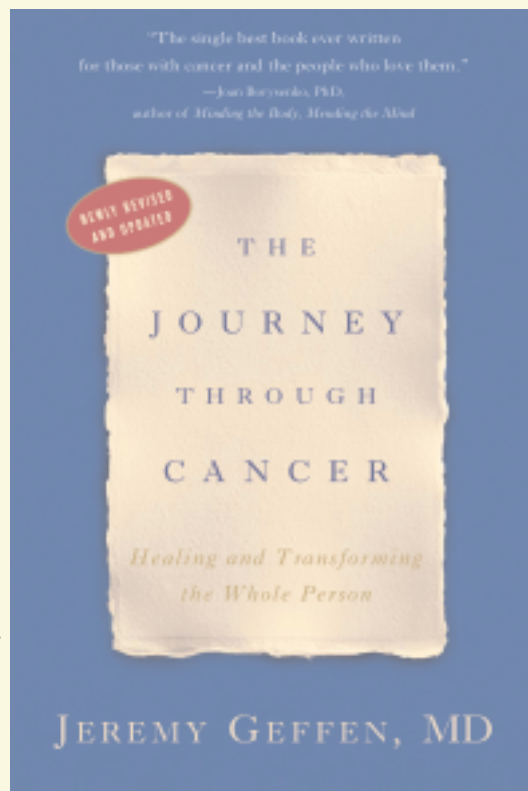
**JG** On a practical level, many integrative medicine programs are springing up all over the country. Again, while this is a wonderful advance, most of them are still focusing primarily on the first three Levels: Education and Information, Connection with Others, and The Body as Garden. Having built and run a full-blown integrative cancer center for ten years, however, I believe that medical centers of all kinds are going to soon encounter the importance of the remaining Levels. The fact is, that the culture of medicine is going to have to change if we want

patients -- and ourselves as practitioners -- to have a fundamentally different experience. We're not only going to have to change what we *do* in health-care -- which includes the *content* of care -- but also how we're *being* -- which includes the *context* of care. Where all of this is going, in my opinion, is that not only individuals, but organizations as a whole, will have deeper conversations than ever before about embracing our multidimensional nature -- as practitioners, as well as for our patients and their loved ones. This model of truly holistic, integrative, multi-dimensional care is what *The Seven Levels of Healing* is all about.

As challenging as it may seem to accomplish this, I know it's possible because my staff and I did it in our cancer

center. We said, "If we're going to teach these levels of healing, we have to address them in ourselves, as individuals and as an organization." We asked ourselves: "What is the body of this organization? How do we care for it, the physical environment, so to speak? What is the mind of the organization? What is its heart? What is its spiritual essence? How do we honor them all? What is our mission, our vision, and our deepest purpose? What are the values and agreements we need in order to best support the process?" And, "How can we communicate most effectively with each other, and take care of ourselves and each other, along the way?"

These are exciting questions to explore, and this



is a big part of my work and focus now, leading workshops, seminars, and retreats, and consulting with hospitals, cancer centers, and medical practices that are trying to understand and implement these principles in a deeper, richer way.

**UH** Showing other cancer centers how to expand from just *doing* to being more fully with themselves and their patients?

**JG** Yes, exactly. And on a practical level, I am happy to report that *The Seven Levels of Healing* -- a seven-week program, one evening per week -- is now being offered at the Rocky Mountain Cancer Center in Boulder, CO. It is up and running, and getting really positive feedback. I am hopeful that this Program can be replicated in many other centers throughout the country. Little by little, I believe that doctors and healthcare administrators will recognize how *The Seven Levels of Healing* can help both them and their patients in a powerful, cost effective, and efficient way.

**UH** Reading through your work, I was reminded of the spiritual tenet which holds that when true healing occurs, whether or not the physical body is cured is no longer the singular focus. In other words, people can truly heal despite physical decline. What is your experience of how this works in real life, in working with people with cancer?

**JG** When I lecture or speak around the country, I often ask my audience if they have ever known someone who was facing a very challenging circumstance -- something horrific like a terminal illness, metastatic cancer, or a severe disability -- who was nonetheless filled with love and joy, had light in their eyes, and emanated a deep sense of inner peace. Someone who you feel better being around, even though they might be physically dying. Almost always, everyone in the audience raises their hand. We've all known someone like this. They are important for us to notice, and pay attention to, because they are living proof that the principles I'm describing in *The Seven Levels of Healing* are not just some airy-fairy, new-age concepts. These people are teachers for us. They show us practical, real-life demonstrations of grace. They

remind us of what is possible for all of us.

Having said that, I also know it's often not so easy. As human beings, we tend to be profoundly identified with our bodies, our egos, our social masks, and our possessions. This seems to be the human dilemma. Even though we are fundamentally spiritual beings -- connected inseparably with God, Spirit, the Universe, the Cosmos and each other -- we often live in the experience of being separate, lonely, hurt, or afraid. In this context, the cancer journey is a mirror of the larger human conundrum: how to find meaning and purpose, and feel love, joy, and fulfillment, in the midst of any circumstance.

The great yogis of the East, and many Western saints and mystics as well, were people who broke through the illusion of separation and found their connection to God, or spirit, in the midst of their often-challenging human experience. We can learn much from these beings. This is not to suggest that we should take our eyes off the task at hand -- which is

I am hoping that when we're old and gray, and sitting in our rocking chairs looking back on our lives, we can say, "You know what? We did something great. We expanded the vision of what is possible in medicine and healing, and made it real."

to do everything we can to be healthy, and to address and fix the problems before us. I am not talking about minimizing those efforts at all. I am talking about expanding our view of what's important, and essential to our nature, to include ideas and principles that are much broader and deeper. Again, I know it's easy to talk about, but often not so

easy to accomplish. But that's alright. (laughter)

**UH** Thank goodness! (laughter)

**JG** Yeah (smiling), we're human! *The Seven Levels of Healing* is, ultimately, about honoring the fullness of our humanity, on every level, including our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions -- and our interconnectedness with each other, the world, and the universe as a whole. When my father was in his final hours, he had a clear understanding of this; an experience of so-called "awakening." He was in a lot of physical pain, but was filled with radiance and light. He could barely move or breathe without difficulty, and yet he said, "Jeremy, I'm so happy, I'm so happy." I asked him, "Why?" And he said, "I'm so happy because now I finally understand. We're not our positions and we're not our possessions. All we are is love, all that exists is love, and all that mat-

ters is love. Now that I understand this, I'm so happy."

My hope is that more of us experience this deep, inner happiness without having to go through a terminal illness. That is the point. Let's consciously aspire to cultivate this in ourselves, here and now. I am hoping this will be part of the flowering, if you will, of *The Seven Levels of Healing*, and a multidimensional approach to medicine and life. My deep wish is that as a culture we'll learn to fully honor all these dimensions, and recognize them as worthy of our time and attention. Everyone benefits by putting some energy, attention, and resources into all these Levels. I am hoping that when we're old and gray, and sitting in our rocking chairs looking back on our lives, we can say, "You know what? We did something great. We expanded the vision of what is possible in medicine and healing, and made it real."

**UH** This reminds me of an inspiring quote you used to close one of your articles, and I wanted to ask you more about it. It is a quote by Nisargadatta Majaraj, who said "When I see that I am nothing, that is wisdom. When I see that I am everything, that is love. And between these two my life moves."

**JG** I love this quote from Nisargadatta. It is one of my favorites, and I refer to it often. I love the quote because, more clearly than any other I've encountered, it addresses the many paradoxes we've been discussing today. It tells how we can live more fully in the domains of *doing* and *being*, simultaneously. It points to how we can fulfill both the *relative* and the *ultimate* purposes of medicine, at the same time. And it speaks to how we can embrace our multidimensional nature as human beings with skill, love, honor, and integrity, within the context of modern medicine and modern life.

Nisargadatta says "When I see that I am nothing, that is wisdom." I understand this to mean that -- in the face of the infinity of the cosmos -- we're tiny, impermanent creatures. There is wisdom to understanding this. It helps us to surrender and let go, recognizing that we're not all-powerful beings who can simply impose our will upon the world. As we've discussed, whether you are a patient, a loved one, a doctor, or a healer of any kind, you can do everything perfectly right and still encounter death. In the face of the infinite cosmos, we're actually quite small and powerless. Knowing this is wisdom, and embracing it can bring a deep sense of humility and release, and a special kind of freedom.

But Nisargadatta also says, "When I see that I am everything, that is love." I understand this to mean that we really are all inseparably interconnected, and we are also very powerful creatures. We are not sep-

arate -- from ourselves, each other, God, spirit, or the infinite cosmos itself -- and we can envision and accomplish great and wonderful things. There is a tremendous power and majesty in honoring this, and owning it fully. And that is love.

Finally, Nisargadatta says "And between these two, my life moves." All of us can benefit by understanding these profound truths that he is pointing to, and learning how to navigate between them. We are humble servants facing a huge mystery, and we are also deeply powerful beings, responsible for how we are *being* with each other as much as for what we are *doing*, or trying to do, in the world.

**UH** So, being with patients and loved ones in this way is an expression of love, as much as what you are doing for them.

**JG** Yes. No doubt about it. This becomes explicitly clear when you, or a loved one, is sick, or afraid, and in need of care, especially in a life-threatening circumstance. In this context, chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery -- just like acupuncture, reiki, and massage -- become vehicles for the expression of love. I think that, in the big picture, that's what all these modalities really are. Fundamentally, they're vehicles to express our love for each other as human beings.

