

An Attachment to Gratitude

Category: A Fresh Start

written by Roz Levine | January 3, 2019

After my lumpectomy, I walked around with a sore arm but also with gratitude for my good report. I knew the pain would diminish as I inched my arm up the bedroom wall each morning, gaining strength and mobility. The sky would be the limit. Even though I was one of those one in eight women who receives a breast cancer diagnosis, gratitude was going to be my mantra.

That fresh start boomeranged as my arm became more and more swollen and I discovered I had lymphedema, a chronic condition that became an albatross I carried for over a year.

My calendar was cluttered with regular appointments with a lymphedema specialist for specialized massages and arm wrappings. My days were spent online viewing pictures of elephant-like limbs caused by lymphedema.

The condition reduced me to a state of overwhelming depression. Wasn't breast cancer enough? Why me? Why did I have to get this lifelong condition? I read stories of women who had managed this condition, who wore a compression sleeve, who did daily massages, who moved on with their lives. Their stories buoyed my spirits, lifting me out of my doldrums and my fixation on my "why me" thinking.

I made a fresh start once again, carrying my enlarged limb to my writing group, to poetry readings, learning to love it for all that it still could do. I learned to be cautious about lifting heavy objects and to care for my cuts and bug bites with the antibiotic cream and bandaids I always carried in my purse. It all became as natural as breathing.

I once more attached myself to gratitude for having lived long enough to be blessed with the beautiful title of "Grammy."

Roz Levine

Los Angeles, California