ReversingCancer Newsletter

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Let's Trash the Sh*t Sandwich

I read something recently that captures everything wrong with cancer treatment today.

Nadia Bolz-Weber is a pastor, author, and one of the most authentic voices I know. Last fall, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. What she wrote about her experience – particularly about the "choices" she was given – is the best description I've ever read of why we need to completely flip the cancer paradigm.

Read what she has to say. Pay special attention to the part about the "shit sandwich." Cuz that's where I'm going to pick up the conversation. (Excuse the French. Today's missive is extra edgy.)

A Prayer for Acceptance

By Nadia Bolz-Weber

On Sept 2nd, Eric and I stood on a beach in St. Bees watching the grey movements of the Irish Sea before taking our first steps of a 200 mile walk that would carry us clear across Northern England to Robin Hood's Bay on the North Sea. The tradition is to pick up a small stone from the first coast and carry it in your pocket until you place it on the second.



Before we left, friends had asked what they could pray for.

The only answer I could summon was "acceptance."

So that was the stone I carried in my pocket. That of a small, smooth prayer of acceptance. It was all I had that I thought might, maybe, perhaps slay the Goliath I was facing.

Because sixteen days before leaving for Wainwright's Coast-to-Coast hike, I was diagnosed with invasive ductile carcinoma. Breast Cancer. A treatable, survivable form of Breast Cancer, but breast cancer nonetheless.

“C.a.n.c.e.r.”

As a word, “cancer” could really use some synonyms.
How is it that we have but one word for such a wildly broad spectrum of implication? Cancer is the term for something as simple as a suspicious mole removed in your doctor’s office AND for Leukemia.

That one word, “cancer,” when spoken for the first time by your doctor is a gunshot. It’s footsteps behind you in a dark alley, a tornado siren, and your spouse saying “we need to talk,” all rolled into one.

The Shit Sandwich

Before leaving for the Coast-to-Coast, Eric and I sat in my oncologist’s office listening to our options. “It’s not like it used to be,” he informed us, “it’s important to remember that you get to make choices.”

The choice he was referring to was this:

A lumpectomy (you mostly get to keep your boobs) followed by a course of daily radiation treatment and a lifetime of scans – a breast MRI and then six months later a Mammogram, then 6 months later a breast MRI….

OR

A mastectomy (you do NOT get to keep your boobs) – but no radiation. And no lifetime of scans.
If you are thinking to yourself, what the hell kind of choice is that? you’re not alone.

It felt like being told cheerfully, “Nadia, you’re gonna have to eat a shit sandwich. But the great thing is you get to decide: do you want that on white or wheat?”

On October 27th I underwent a successful double mastectomy, reconstruction and sentinel lymph node dissection ON WHEAT, the recovery from which has been longer and more uncomfortable than I anticipated. But they got good margins and found zero cancer cells in the lymph nodes.

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What the Hell Kind of Choice IS That?

These aren’t real choices – they’re damage control options dressed up as freedom. And by the time Nadia was sitting in that oncologist’s office, cancer had already been quietly growing in her body for years.

Medical research shows that by the time a tumor is detectable on a mammogram, it's typically been developing for 8-10 years. That's 8-10 years of opportunity we're missing. 8-10 years when intervention could have been gentle, non-invasive, and effective.

Look at what Nadia describes: the "shit sandwich" is either disfiguring surgery or a lifetime of anxious scanning, wondering if it will come back. Why? Because we only know how to fight cancer when it's already grown into an army of billions of cells.

This is insane.

The Questions We Should Be Asking

What if… five years before Nadia's diagnosis… there had been a way to detect that something was going wrong in her breast tissue?

What if we lived in a world where early warning systems existed for cancer, the way they exist for heart disease or diabetes?

What if Nadia had received a call saying: "Your tests show signs of cellular stress in your breast tissue. Not cancer. Not even pre-cancer. Just stress. Let's talk about what you can do right now to address this before it becomes a problem."

The choice would look completely different:

- Nutrition changes instead of mastectomy
- Stress reduction, not radiation
- Targeted lifestyle interventions vs. lifetime of scans
- Monitoring and prevention rather than disfiguring surgery

THAT would be a real choice.

Why This Doesn't Exist (And Why It Should)

The cancer industry is built around treating late-stage disease.

Current model:

- 90% of cancer research funds go to stage 3-4 cancer (mostly futile)
- We test drugs on mice with artificially induced cancer (which tells us precious little about real human cancer)
- By the time we detect cancer, you're facing the "shit sandwich"
- We're chasing a billion problems instead of preventing one

What we could be doing:

- 90% of our effort should go to early detection (where 90% of the success is)
- Study how cells actually become cancerous in living organisms
- Define cancer as a communication problem, not a mutation problem
- Catch cancer when it's literally just a few hundred cells – not billions
- Focus on the FIRST cell, not the last billion cells

This approach threatens a $250 billion cancer treatment industry. Which is exactly why it's not easy to fund.

But it's the right thing to do.

The Thief That Doesn't Have To Break In

Nadia writes beautifully about cancer as a thief:

"It will always take something, cancer. It strips things away from us: our vitality, our money, our time, our futures, and sometimes even our lives... My cancer just sort of broke into my house, scared the shit out of me, took a couple beautiful things, then replaced all the comfortable seating with folding chairs and left with the decorating budget."

So what if we could catch the thief casing your house before they break in?

What if we could see them in the neighborhood, watching your windows, planning their crime – and stop them right then?

That's what early detection means. Not catching cancer early. Catching the conditions that CREATE cancer, before cancer exists.

The Research That Might Eliminate the Sh*t Sandwich

Over the past five years, Reversing Cancer has been funding researchers who are asking the heretical questions that threaten the cancer establishment.

Dr. Michael Levin - Cracking the Cancer Communication Code

Michael Levin at Tufts University has made one of the most important cancer discoveries of the decade, and almost nobody's heard about it.

He discovered cancer isn't just about broken genes – it's about shattered communication. Your cells are constantly talking to each other using bioelectric signals. When that communication erodes, normal cells can't tell cancer cells to stop recruiting them. Cancer spreads because it's hijacking your body's communication network.

Michael found a way to restore that communication. He's getting cancer cells to stop recruiting other cells to become cancerous. Not by poisoning them. By fixing the signals.

It's happening in labs right now. Tumors that should grow don't. Cells that should turn cancerous don't.

This doesn't fit the pharmaceutical model. Michael swings for funding fences while researchers studying the 10,000th cancer gene get millions.

Rethinking Cancer as Evolution

Five and a half years ago, I organized a Cancer Evolution Conference. Within six months, I was rubbing shoulders with cancer researchers almost every day, and I quickly discovered something shocking:

> The field is decades behind where it should be.

The treatments we're providing for cancer are absolutely horrific and in many cases haven't changed much since the 70s or 80s. The cancer research and medical field has turned into a racket where you endlessly play Whack-a-Mole, chasing "drug targets" and "cancer-causing genes" – *chasing a billion problems instead of preventing one.*

But there's a better way to think about cancer: as an evolutionary problem.

Cancer cells are adapting to a hostile environment. They're stressed, they're dying, and they develop survival strategies. Understanding cancer through the lens of evolution – how cells adapt, merge, and transform under pressure – opens entirely new approaches.

One researcher told me: "I hate applying for government grants, because I have to tell my grad students: don't let them know that we're doing anything remarkable, or we'll never get a dime. Just give Homer Simpson his donuts."

That's the state of cancer research. Innovation is punished. Conformity is rewarded.

The Researchers Making a Difference

Reversing Cancer supports scientists who are willing to challenge the broken paradigms:

- Researchers investigating how cellular stress triggers the first cancer cell
- Exploring bioelectric communication between cells
- Developing early detection methods that work at stage negative one
- Cancer as adaptation, not just mutation
- Investigating why cells merge and become immortal

Brilliant minds are working on breakthrough ideas that can prevent Nadia's "shit sandwich" from ever being offered.

Their work threatens too many rice bowls.

From "Acceptance" to "Prevention"

Nadia carried a prayer for acceptance across England. She needed it. When you're facing cancer, acceptance is survival.

I don't want acceptance to be the only option.

I don't want people to have to whisper "acceptance" as they trudge through rain, wishing things were different.

I don't want anyone else to sit in an oncologist's office choosing between two versions of loss.

I want prevention. I want early intervention. I want to eliminate the "shit sandwich" entirely.

Nadia's Closing Words

"I really do have everything I might want or need in this life.
…except nipples.

And that's not too bad."

Nadia is grateful her cancer was relatively "stupid" and didn't take more. Her gratitude is genuine and beautiful.

But she still lost treasures. She still had to make an impossible choice. She still had to pray for acceptance.

And that's not good enough.

Not when we have brilliant researchers like Michael Levin with better ideas who can't get funding.

Not when early detection technology exists but isn't being developed because there's no profit motive.

Not when the entire system is optimized for treatment instead of prevention.

Not when innovation is systematically suppressed because it threatens a $250 billion industry.

What You Can Do

Reversing Cancer funds research that addresses cancer at its roots – before it becomes the monster that forces impossible choices.

We support scientists who are:

- Discovering how bioelectric communication can stop cancer recruitment
- Developing early detection methods that work before cancer forms
- Studying how cells become cancerous in the first place
- Understanding cancer as an evolutionary adaptation to stress
- Finding ways to reverse cellular stress before cancer forms
- Challenging the broken paradigms that have failed patients for decades

Levin's work alone could transform cancer treatment. But he needs support to continue.

Donate at: www.evo2.org/cancer

All donations are 501(c)(3) tax deductible.

A Final Thought

Nadia ends her post with a question: "Is there something you might need to accept right now rather than avoid, deny or fight any longer?"

For cancer patients facing the "shit sandwich," acceptance is necessary and brave.

But for those of us working to change the system?

My answer is: No. We don't need to accept this anymore.

We can fight it differently – earlier, smarter, before anyone has to choose between white or wheat.

The researchers are ready. The ideas are revolutionary. The potential is enormous.

We just need the fuel.

Help us give people better choices.

Seize the day,

Perry Marshall
ReversingCancer.org

P.S. Read Nadia's full story and follow her recovery at thecorners.substack.com. She asks that well-wishers refrain from sharing natural remedies, anecdotes, or anything with pink ribbons. What she needs – what we all need – is a world where these conversations happen years earlier, with far better options.

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