Chemo Or Hospice? My Aloha Ma Story Transcript

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Introduction to Tara Coyote

Welcome to another episode of the Breast Cancer Breakthroughs Summit. Dr. Véronique Desaulniers, better known as Dr. V and I am the co-hostess for this summit.

So today I'm going to be introducing you to Tara Coyote Tara and I go way back and I've interviewed her many times. I just love her and love her story.

But Tara is a life coach. She's an equine facilitated learning instructor. She's a great facilitator. Most importantly for our summit, she's a stage four a breast cancer thriver.

She's written an amazing book, Grace, Grit & Gratitude. And this is her lovely picture with her horse. And she has a wonderful story to share. She you know, she talks about finding joy in adversity and her dance with cancer.

And it's a beautiful story. So welcome. Tara, so glad to have you on this summit and to share your experience with all these lovely women listening out there.

Thank you so much. It's such a joy to be here with you and see you again. I know. I know. It's time to catch up. So let's talk about the story everybody wants to hear the story.

And you have an amazing story to share, one that I was able to participate in initially. And I really, really admire your Grace, Grit & Gratitude in the face of severe adversity.

So let's let's get started with your journey. Great. Thank you so much. Yeah.

Diagnosis and Choosing a Different Path

So I was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer in September, 2016 hormone driven breast cancer. It was almost exactly one year after my best friend of 19 years died from leukemia, and I was one of her main caretakers for 22 months from her diagnosis to her very tragic death.

And I had a lot of trauma about being in the hospital world and the medical world, because I had spent months and months and months with her in the hospital.

And I was always a very natural girl and never really went to the doctor. So when I was diagnosed with cancer, they told me, of course you need to do surgery, chemo and radiation, which I was petrified to do and I was very confused.

Fortunately, I came upon your lovely book, Healed Breast Cancer. Naturally, I think within two weeks of my diagnosis, going through Amazon and I immediately ordered your book and it was like a beacon of hope to get your book to, Oh wow, there is other options here.

So I decided not to not to do the regular treatment, and I decided to work with you, which was such a wonderful decision to work with you. in the end. And I did that for several years and I did very well.

I had the wonderful opportunity to meet you things went on like this for many years. I ran a horse retreat center in Northern California called Wind Horse Sanctuary where I did equine facilitated learning work.

I was still working and juggling my health and then a very stressful incident occurred where I had to sell my ranch and my business. It was about a year of constant stress.

It was very challenging. And during that time the cancer spread to be from my breast to my lungs, my liver, my spine, my adrenal gland, my hips pretty much all over my body and I was pretty darn terrified.

It was around that point when I was selling my ranch that I decided to move back home to Kauai, Hawaii, which is where my dad is from, which is where I live now.

And when I moved back home to Kauai, it was about the winter of 2019, and I was referred to hospice because I was not doing well. I had so much cancer in my lungs, I could not hold a conversation.

I had to sit up to sleep for months. I was on oxygen all the time because I couldn't breathe. I was walking with a cane because my left hip was breaking.

I was losing weight. It was obvious to me that I was dying and I was on my way out. I was in pain all the time. I was on painkillers and the doctors here in Hawaii were very friendly, full, the aloha spirit.

And they said, we know you don't want to do chemotherapy, but you might want to consider it to save your life. At that point, my dear son Willow was 26 and I sadly see and so many friends pass And I did not want to leave him alone.

And so I took all my strength and my willpower. I said, okay, I'm going to do this. So I did nine months of chemotherapy. During that time, I almost died a few times.

I ended up breaking my left hip and I had to have emergency double hip surgery, which was very intense and hard. But then I finished treatment in February 2020 with amazing results.

The cancer had shrunk throughout my body. I still had cancer at that time, but it was remarkable. I mean, all the doctors were so surprised that I'd done so well.

And I just want to add to within all this time, the nine months of chemo, I still kept up my natural treatments. I still did vitamin infusions.

Cancer Progression and Turning to Chemotherapy

I still did as many herbs and supplements as I could during that time just to really keep my immune system strong. And since that time, since February 2020, the cancer shrunk within my body.

About a year ago, I was declared NED, no evidence of disease, which was a wonderful celebration, something I never thought I would hear, because the cancer was everywhere in my body.

I mean, it was eating my bones. My bones have grown back. I'm thriving. I take care of two horses here in Hawaii, and I'm just so grateful to be alive.

So I just so people people usually wonder, but I still keep up with my natural treatment is very important to me to do the self-care. I get hormone-blocking shots once a month, Faslodex because it's hormone driven breast cancer and once every three months I get Activa shots for my bones.

So that's my story in a nutshell. Wonderful. Now, I know you tell this story a lot, and when we tell the story, sometimes we can just tell the story. But I want to I want to hear how you felt like what were you feeling?

What were you thinking when the doctors said, you know, you have a choice here, hospice or conventional treatments and what how did you prepare yourself emotionally to go through those those treatments?

What was that? I know you talked about your son, but what was that like for you to make that decision to turn around and do that? Yeah, that's a great question.

I was terrified. I mean, whenever I even walked into a hospital, I would have terrible PTSD. Memories of being with Deb when she almost died a few times.

I witnessed some horrifying scenes with her, so I really had to work with my mind because in my mind I viewed chemo as poison. I was actually in the public eye and talking about how chemo kills.

So it took a lot of humbling of myself to be able to say, okay, I'm changing my mind, I'm going to try this to save my life and I really had to shift my thought process around.

The chemo is poison, chemo kills. I work with Bethany Webb, who, you know, author of My Guru Cancer, with The Work of Byron Katie to really work with my thoughts and turn it around from chemo kills the chemo is healing nectar.

So it took a lot a lot of inner work to shift my thoughts. So when I went in and was receiving the chemotherapy that I could think this is what's healing me.

And I really had to work with what was in front of me too, because I had so many traumatic memories of being with my friend Deb to really recognize that the nurses there were loving and they wanted to support me.

And I fortunately had a wonderful oncologist at the time and they were all cheering me on. So it's like I had to really become present to what was in the moment rather than what I had experienced in Northern California, which wasn't a positive experience and my experience of being with my friend in the hospital.

So yeah, and it just really required a huge amount of strength to know that I had the strength to get through it, through the challenges. And, and often our anxiety is often worse than the actual experience.

Aloha Mu0101 and Radical Self-Love

And I'm not just not saying that experience was easy because it wasn't, but I drew on a deep wellspring of strength that we all carry within us. Every one of us. Yeah.

Now, that's so good to separate the past and what we think may happen to what we want to believe will happen. You know, that's a that's a big shift in your thinking.

So you talk a lot about Aloha M? So for those of us who are not from Hawaii, what does Aloha M? mean? Yes, I love the word Aloha M? I'm actually writing a book about it, among many other things at the moment.

So around that time, winter, spring 2019, when I wasn't doing well, I heard about this beautiful man on the island of Maui, a native Hawaiian man called Keoni Honolua, who also has a remarkable healing cancer story of being referred to hospice, I believe, 12 years ago, and having a remarkable spontaneous healing like radical remission story.

And so I reached out some I said, how did you do this? I'm in this situation. And he talks about aloha AMA is Mahalo Botanicals on Instagram if you want to check them out.

It's an incredible being. An Aloha mom means self-reflective love loves so it's at the highest term like this deep, deep self-love and self-care we give ourselves.

And I realized when I was in the depths of my shadow realm of treatment, I'm having a hard, horrible time that I really needed to find that sense of aloha law and extreme fierce self-love for myself that I wasn't going to heal otherwise, which means I had to let go of relationships that weren't feeding me any sort of toxicity at the time.

Two weeks after I broke my hip, my partner and I of four years split up, which was very difficult, but it ended up being a great decision because there was unhealthy elements to it.

So I believe that helped me heal. And just calling in what brought me joy, basically what really fed and nourished me, because so often we as women and especially going through breast cancer, we tend to be nurturers because a breast is all about mothering.

So we tend to give and give and give, which was definitely my situation. So it was really tuning into what I needed to do to heal what were the steps I needed to do?

So that's what Aloha Mom is. And that's and also to in Hawaiian, there's so many words that have multiple meanings. So aloha means love. And love is such a powerful way of thinking.

One of my philosophies is choose love over fear. And so really choosing that time and time again, which is a little different from Aloha Moffitt, has a similar frequency and resonance.

Beautiful, beautiful. So, so what? What did you discover about yourself and your needs? I mean, you talk about self-reflective love. So what exactly did you do to create and build that inside of you?

It was truly examining and looking at everything. Everything I did at that point, I was not doing well and I was in bed most of the time and recovering from treatment.

But it was every little choice point I made, even to what book am I going to read? Who am I going to be around? I was looking through a microscope lens at every single relationship I was in, and if there was excessive drama or something didn't feel right, I thought, okay, is this really healthy for me to be around this person?

I love this person, but I don't think it's necessarily that nurturing for me. So really fine tuning, that choice point of who am I going to be around who really meets me, where I need to be met at this point?

It's also, like I mentioned, just choosing every little thing I chose to do. Am I going to choose to be stuck in traffic for hours or am I going to go out in nature and do something that truly feeds my soul?

So that was what I had to switch within myself.

Self-Care, Joy, and Parasympathetic Healing

And of course it's a daily habit. I still face that because we're so programed to do, do, do, do, and that's society. But to really place time and relevance for finding joy is so important.

I really believe joy can heal us if we allow ourselves to feel it. Mm hmm. That's very, very powerful. And I read think this name, the name of the book, he was a radiation oncologist back in the eighties.

Getting well again is the name of the book. And he talks about do more things that bring you joy and lessening things that bring you pain. Because he really saw that in his clinical radiology oncology practice where patients who dreaded life and had nothing to look forward to didn't have a supportive community.

Those are the ones who didn't do well. And so he really encourages patients to find joy. So some of the things that you do for your self care, you know, you talk about the importance of self-care.

So what's a typical day for you where you feel like you're really giving yourself that self-care? That's a great question. Well, as anybody with horses knows, my life is revolving around the care and feeding of two horses, which I love.

Absolutely. It keeps me grounded. So I feed them three times a day. So it's always about, okay, what time do I need to feed them? And making that a priority, which is great for my soul.

It's something I love to do. It's also caring for my dog, my cat, and the land that I live on, or the very close to the land. Well, coffee enemas, that's something that we've spoken about for vitamin IVs once or twice a week.

That's very important to keep my body healthy. Yeah, I do horse sessions with people. You know, it kind of depends on the day I'm writing a lot. I'm writing a few new books.

I try to get out in nature. I mean, just being with my horses feeds my soul and just living where I live. One of my new loves when you talk about joy is more mating.

Actually, in the last year and a half, two years, both my parents have passed and it's been a very painful incident. So I discovered my love of mating about a year ago, which means wearing a mermaid talon swimming in the ocean.

And it's very, very something that's been healing that I don't necessarily do every day, but I love to fit in when I can. And then of course, meditation patients. Yes.

I'm sorry to cut you off, you said. And then, of course. Oh, no, no, no. It's okay. Just, you know, the daily stuff we all do laundry, emails. I love to dance.

To dance is a very healing form of releasing stuck emotions within the body and finding joy. Very good. So let's talk about the relaxation or the parasympathetic response.

And that was really big for me because I discovered the hard math. And even though I'd been meditating for years, I realized when I use the hard math, I was still in sympathetic mode in my meditation.

I wasn't really getting down into the parasympathetic mode. So how important is it to get into that parasympathetic mode and what do you do to do that?

Yes, it's a vitally important thing to do. I tuned into that when I was in the depths of cancer treatment, actually, to tune in to how when my body was in the parasympathetic sense and really allowed the healing to occur, the parasympathetic is the rest and relax and restore a way of being sympathetic as fight flight fully, which we're all trained to do.

And, you know, we all have to unwind on some level. So I realized when I was in the depths of healing that I had to tune into that deep, deep, deep place of relaxation within myself to do the actual healing.

And it's not that I'm walking around every single day like that. It is an effort, but I think it's different for every person. For me, it's being in nature, being with my animals, reading a book, taking a bath, just being very quiet and still.

Meditation, like you mentioned, can be also watching a movie, just letting the body slow down can be with loved ones. That's something also I pay attention to as well.

When I'm with certain people, do I feel relaxed or am I feeling stimulated or guarded? So I really to that that's very, very, very important. I think. Yeah, that's that's very important.

You know, and there are studies that show that the stimulation of the vagus nerve, which is, you know, the longest never the body parasympathetic nerve, that the health of the vagus nerve is actually a reflection of outcome prognosis that women who, you know, who have that parasympathetic response on a regular basis do much better than those who do not.

Emotional Healing and Message of Hope

And I've seen that time and time again, you know, carpool moms and school moms and, you know, career women who do their healing on the side, you know, and they're still in that fight or flight mode.

You know, they don't do as well as those who put everything aside and say, you know, this time is the most important time and this is for me and this is going to facilitate my healing and I will get well.

So. Right. And good job on doing that. Thank you. All right. Now, our emotions healing our emotional wounds? There's a lot of messaging behind our emotions.

And I know you you talk about that. So let's let's go there for a minute. Sure. I love talking about this. It's involved with the horse work that I do.

I learned from Linda Kohanov She created something with Karla McLaren called The Emotional Message Chart. It's something we teach with the horse work where every emotion has a message behind it.

So pay attention to like, say, for example, anger. If we're feeling angry, it means that our boundaries have been crossed in some way, either by ourselves or by somebody else.

And so the purpose of Emotional Message Chart is to really tune into the message behind the emotion and then to do something about it. So in the case of anger, if your boundaries been crossed, you need to think about, okay, well, it's good to think about what can I do in the future to have a firmer boundary or make my intentions a little bit more clear within myself or with another person to protect myself.

So I don't feel that anger so I can have a productive outcome. And then if that message is not attended to, it can the emotion can exaggerated so it can turn into fury, frustration, rage, that sort of thing.

So with every emotion, there is a message, and then you receive that, and then you let go of it. And then, metaphorically speaking, in horse terms, you go back to grazing, which means being in that parasympathetic state. So it's, you know, emotions are meant to be temporary.

They aren't meant to be held on to for days and weeks and months and years. There's supposed to teach us these messages, whatever that may be, and then to let them go.

So this has been a very useful tool for me to understand different emotions that I may feel, whether it be sadness, grief, frustration, anger, whatever it may be.

So yeah, I think especially in the case of healing cancer, we all I'm not going to say we all have stuck emotions, but we can tend to have stuck emotions.

So just feel it and release it and let it go from our body because it can create blocks in our healing. So what do you do to release those emotions? Well, it's tuning in to why I'm feeling frustration, what happened to understand it, and then to do something about it, have clear communication with a person there was a misunderstanding with and say, hey, these are my needs.

And to try to communicate in a loving and clear way and hopefully there's resolution. But it's not really looking at, well, can I find my way with this person?

I mean, also, too, it's it's very important to do movement, get it out of your body, whether that's through jogging or walking or dancing or swimming, whatever it may be, to really allow whatever it may be to move through your body, to release it, screaming, no writing, whatever it takes, really.

It's varied. To release it. Yeah, that's very good. All right. So if you had a breakthrough message for the women that are listening to this, these are women that maybe have breast cancer or they're fearing a recurrence or maybe their friend is dealing with breast cancer.

What's the message of hope would you share with them? I would say two things. I love to share how you are so much stronger than you think you are. We hold such a wellspring of strength within us, and I do feel that cancer can be a great opportunity for growth to find the beauty in the path.

Not that it's going to be easy, but to find the beauty. And then going back to Aloha M?, what do you need to do to really love yourself, to find your healing because you deserve that you are worthy of that and it's so important to

touch into.

So that's what I would say. That's so beautiful. Well, Tara always loved spending time with you, and I'm just so proud of you. And I know your journey was not an easy one.

And you've shown the world that if you can do it, others can do it, too. So you're a great inspiration for many, many women. So thank you for all you do.

Thank you so much. And thank you for all you do for me and the world too, so grateful. You're very welcome. All right. So this is Dr. V and until next time, we'll see you then.

Bye for now.