Finding Light in the Dark: How Humor Heals the Soul with Cara Lockwood Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Welcome

Hey friends, I'm your host Dr. Elizabeth Samantha, the intuitive psychiatrist and you're listening to Stepping Into Soul Power. Friends, friends we are, we're having an interesting time here in the world.

We're on the struggle trade and for many of us, for quite a few of, us we, are going through tough health challenges and And and there are many ways to cope but but our next guest has found a way to Culp that that speaks not only to the heart But I feel like she speaks to this soul.

She is a best-selling author of over 35 books she is just Truly truly truly invested in in empowering other people and use this humor in a way that is raw, witty, and deeply healing.

Kara Lockwood, welcome to the show. Oh, thank you so much. I'm so, so glad to be here. So happy to have this conversation with you. Yes, yes. So you have been incredibly prolific.

You've written 35 plus books. And this book is special. Like this more recent book, it is is, special, you are in many ways the protagonist in this healing story.

For those people out there in our audience who don't know the story, could you give us a taste, pin us, a picture of what that has been? Yeah, absolutely.

Well, I'm a two time USA Today bestselling romance novelist. So normally I write happily ever afters about fictional people.

Breast Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment Journey

But in 2023, i was diagnosed with breast cancer. and just turned my world upside down as any cancer diagnosis really does. It just bombs into your life and blows things up pretty much.

So after 16 months of treatment and a double mastectomy and chemotherapy, a whole lot of prayers, and whole a lot positive thinking, I went into remission.

And after that, I wrote a memoir and self-help book called, There's No Good Book for This, but I Wrote One Anyway, The Irreverent Guide to Crushing Breast Cancer.

My husband and I and my whole family and friends, we love humor. And I really felt like humor got me through the worst parts of breast cancer treatments.

I wanted to share that with others to show that a positive attitude isn't always just uplifting, it can also be salty and sarcastic. It's however humor can kind of fuel your engine.

So I was hoping to share that story with others so that they, you know, feel less alone because I don't know about you, but I like company. I love it.

I, you know, it strikes me human as humans. It can be tough to get in touch with our humor when we're going through something like that. What helped you?

Yeah. Yeah, I think first and foremost, i just love humor. Humor runs through all of my books. There's rom-com. there's always a comedy with the romance for me because i think humor is so quintessentially human.

We laugh in ways that other species don't laugh. We find joy and humor and kind of the most absurd sometimes situations. And for me, finding humor in a difficult situation, partly was about giving myself permission to find things funny, because I think even as little kids, we're sort of taught, like, if something's serious, then be serious.

Don't goof around. But sometimes goofing around is the exact thing we need at that time. To break the tension, so, you know, feel more relaxed, not to be as scared.

Because when we're laughing at something, we are taking back our power. We're in fear and cancer and horrible things, where it feels like they're reaching all the power from us.

And when, when laugh, and we find joy, brings our prower back to center, back, to us, And I think that's so important. And the first step is just giving yourself permission to laugh because some things are funny.

Even in ridiculous times, there is such a thing as gallows humor. It exists for a reason. So give yourself, permission the lab. Um, look for the things that are.

Sometimes, uh, it's hard, but humor can, can uplift you so much that the search is worth it. I. Anyway. Wow, wow. Are there particular moments as you were going through your journey that you felt like having this strategy really helped pull you through?

Yeah, I would say there were two things in which it really, really helped me. First of all, the whole process is just so, for me, i was just afraid all of the time, which really we don't talk about as much with cancer patients because I think As we should, we'd put them on a pedestal.

We're like, you guys are warriors or fighters. But when you're diagnosed, I was just like I'm not a fighter. I don't like conflict. Like, what do you mean?

I've got a warrior. It's true, right? I like to garden and I watch the Hallmark channel sometimes.

Using Humor to Cope with Fear

What are you saying about me? So I think that it was just so fearful for me. I was so afraid a lot of the time. But humor helped me find my footing and that really helped when I went into chemotherapy.

Because for my, my cancer was found during a routine mammogram. So side note, go get all of your routine checkups. Early detection can save lives. I found the tumor relatively early, but it was still large enough that it in that sort of frame of reference where the doctors are like, we think you really should consider chemotherapy.

And so then it sort my choice and I was a difficult choice to sort voluntarily poison yourself as I put it. It was very difficult to march myself into that room and have the needle and with all the hazmat chemical signs on it and know that was going to make me feel bad.

doing it for a greater long-term good, but it was hard to get a handle on that fear, walking yourself into a room like that. And my husband, who has an amazing sense of humor and who keeps me laughing all the time, thankfully, on the way to chemotherapy, the first time I told him, I'm going to need a pep talk.

I'm going to need a pep talk. Like I really scared. I don't want to do this, but I know I should. And when it came down to it, he says, okay, I am going give you a PEP talk and in my mind I thought it was going be very serious.

Very serious, very solemn, you know, dry. Instead he hooped and hollered and he started yelling like, yeah, let's go do it. And I was like, why are you so happy?

And he said, well, you said pep talk. And by the way, he's a little league soccer coach. So that was in his DNA. He's like well this is a peptalk. Let's get amped.

Like let's play some rock music. like let go do this. You know? It just made me laugh. Then just sort of released that balloon of fear. Just that, all of that.

stress just kind of evaporated in that moment, and it was light. And there are, despite what you think, there ARE light moments during cancer. They're joyful moments, just like in every other stage of life, no matter what sort of illness or grief or hard thing you're going through.

Sometimes they're just little bright Lights of joy where it's just the burdens a little less and I think when you're going through something difficult Looking for them is harder but more important.

I Think I don't know if that makes sense or not. No, it straight looking for. Them is. Harder but. More important yes Yes You said a lot there. Something that you said earlier on is that, you were afraid all the time.

And for someone that hasn't had a cancer diagnosis, can you tell us a little bit about that? What was behind the fear? Yeah, you know, I was lucky enough to have a wonderful counselor that I went to during this time.

And I felt it just really helped me. I had a counselor and I have wonderful friend who's very much an empath and intuitive and also helped help me unpack a lot of my emotions around it.

For me, you know, on the face of it, fear is like, oh, no, I might die. You know? I mean, that's, the cancer is deadly if it's not treated and I may die before that, before death, it will be painful.

That's going to hurt. You know, I don't want pain. I Don't like pain, you know i'll go to great lengths to avoid it.

Facing Vulnerability and Asking for Help

Um, You, know it's not my favorite um and then even deep even like Another layer is i'm gonna be so embarrassed i've got to lose all my hair and people are gonna pity me and that's so embarrassing and i'M gonna Be embarrassed, it was like it, was all of the from the most serious kind of fear to the most adolescent, teenager-y kind fear.

Or other things like, I'm going to have a double mastectomy and then am I still a woman? If my anatomy is different, will my spouse still find me attractive?

There was just a whole bundle of anxiety around cancer, what it means from the most shallow thing to the to most deeply human fear of death and dying.

So any given day, any one of those fears could pop up, but they just came like, there was never any like oh, that's the embarrassment fear. Fear was just at one level, which was like on a scale of one to 10 and 11. It's just like, in my head, it was just fear.

Hello, this is terrible. We're anxious. This is horrible. The being embarrassed fear and the dying fear just got melded into just one ball of anxiety and fear, and just the icky feelings that come with it.

Wow. Well, so it… It sounds like a multi-layered bundle of fear. And what is challenging is it came all at once. Yeah. Yeah. And I think, you know, in, there's no good book for this.

I spend a lot of time talking about fear because I, think it's something that we really need to unpack. First of all, humor helps undermine it, but, fear is sort of what keeps us, many of us like frozen.

Like we can't make a decision or we feel like we're making a bad decision, or, we make an knee jerk decision based on what we think based on the survival fear that's going on because we really keep our fear is there to warn us.

It's why we're alive all these thousands of years later after saber-tooth tigers and everything else that was hunting

us when we were roaming the plains.

So I think it's there as a warning, but it a lot like my 95 pound golden doodle who sits by the window and barks at everything that comes by, whether that an Amazon truck or a dog being walked or baby stroller and his volume is just a 10 or an 11. There's, there's never a, Oh, this is kind of worrisome.

It's all like, This is the end of the world. Horrible. You know, the worst. risk, you know, this is the most dangerous thing out there, and I think for many of us, fear feels like that until you unpack it, until challenge it.

Like, what am I really afraid of? Is it actually a legitimate fear? is it someone trying to break into our house? Or is that the UPS guy? We have our logical parts of our brain that can balance out that knee-jerk reaction, that instinctual survival fear that takes us over sometimes.

Do we need to pat our dog on the head and say, thank you. Thank you for warning us for the UPS guy, but we're okay. Yes, yes. In the world of psychiatry, I think there are many ways of coping.

And there's like catastrophic thinking. Humor is a very healthy way of of coping. But you've got to be able to vulnerable. Yes. Yeah, it's kind of like the toll, right?

To get the E, you have to open yourself up because you're making a joke that may or may not be funny, even if it is funny to you. You have be vulnerable to laugh and find the humor.

That's so true. It's a really good point. For people who struggle with that, with sharing their pain openly or even with humor, what might be helpful to them?

Yeah, well you know what's interesting is that because my husband and I have talked about this too because we both use humor in a lot of different ways.

And humor is a great coping mechanism and you do have to be vulnerable to share. In the book, I share silly stories about things that happened to me during MRIs where my mind was just not in the moment.

I like self-deprecating humor. Some people feel, that maybe have trouble with it, feel like, oh, you know, i don't want anyone to laugh at me. And personally, for me, it's almost like wearing a protective vest.

Like I'm making a joke. First, on my terms, I'm sharing what I would like to share and I'd like invite everyone in to laugh, but it's what i feel comfortable sharing and what would I like laugh about.

So it gives you a measure of control, at least for me. Like I feel like if someone is gonna laugh at me, i would set the tone. I want to control what's being laughed at.

So in some ways it's vulnerable and in other ways, it is like sharing what you want share. How you wanna share it. You don't have to share the things that are the most painful.

A good example of some way to use humor where it vulnerable but also not vulnerable. One of the hardest things I had to do was tell my 15-year-old daughter who was a sophomore at the time that I have cancer, that it was malignant.

She is an overachieving straight A student. And she had been really worried about her college essays at that time. Me delivering the news just You know, it was very difficult for her to hear.

There were a lot of tears, you know. I felt like a terrible parent. That was like putting more stress on her that she did not need. And let's go back to you.

Lessons, Legacy, and Closing Remarks

You felt. Like a. Terrible parent? Oh yeah, I know. It's well, because parents aren't supposed to get sick. Oh come on. I don't, we do. We do, you know, but it felt like my, the caretaking roles were being reversed far sooner than they should have.

You know, I see my parents are getting older, but I'm in my 50s. So that's when you're supposed to sort of that caretaking role sort switches over. And, and for me to ask a 15 year old, even if it's just like doing dishes and, you know.

But then to be worried that the, your parent is supposed be the your rock and foundation, the person that there and stable and steady and not going to the hospital for a bunch of tests and losing their hair and being sick.

That's when you're 15 and you are just trying to figure out your own stuff. It just, that's where it felt like I was unfairly placing a burden on her.

But I also wanted to make her see that it wasn't all doom and gloom. So I did crack a joke and I said, well, you've been worried about your college essay, but I just handed you the best subject possible.

You're welcome. Use the cancer card, play the Cancer card. You are welcome." And she's like, oh, Bob. I mean, she did laugh though. So you reframed it, used humor to reframe it.

There are a lot of sins as you've gone through this journey. And one of the big questions I have to you, like, how did this change how you viewed yourself as a human being?

Yeah. I mean, oh, in a lot of ways before having cancer, I've always been, very, independent. Um, my, uh, was a single mom for eight years. Yeah, but also managed to have a job that was working from home when people weren't working, from trying to just be there for them and, and also work and pay the bills.

And so I, always, been just very independent and asking for help. was very hard for me. It just really, you know, it just felt like I was a burden or somehow it was defeat asking for help, asking people to pitch in.

I just so committed to this idea that I independent and I didn't need it and that was fine. That was kind of a core feeling about my identity. And when I got sick, I realized I needed help.

I need help from my doctors, help for my friends, need to help my family and my husband and everyone in my life because we're not out here alone. We're on islands.

You know, we all need health. So for me, learning to ask for help and accept help. It was a big part of my personal growth throughout all of cancer treatment because I needed it.

What was interesting too is talking with my counselor. I felt like I I also got to the point where I felt like I deserved the help. I think there was part of that insecurity from wherever it came from when I was younger and throughout my young adult life.

Like I can ask for it, I could accept it and I deserve it. Those are the three big lessons I learned about help and getting help which we all need. Such an important point, because I think, especially if you are in a caregiving role, it can be very difficult when the tables are turned.

Yes, It is. It's like, no, I'm the one that's giving the care. I've not supposed to take it. Yeah, is such a switch, but also it's also a wonderful transformation too, I think our identities are so complex and they don't have to be one thing.

The core part about being a caretaker is like love and kindness and empathy. And those are the core elements and you can use those to take care of yourself as well as others and that means accepting help from others.

I just think it's when we think of ourselves, we can think ourselves in positive ways that don't necessarily have to be certain roles that we've been, that that, think about ourselves as like the, the Core Kindness and Empathy and

Love.

can be there, you know, sort of regardless of the role you might be playing or what's going on with you at the time. So it's been an interesting journey in that way.

And there are very few upsides to cancer, but I do feel like clarity is, can't be. Okay. Said very. Few. Upsides. Yes. Very few. Very few. There are a couple.

What are the couple? I mean, you talked about one. Well, for me, anyway, there are couple there's an amazing community of cancer warriors out there who are inspirational and awesome.

And the community is so strong. It's wonderful. So I encourage anyone going through something, tap into groups out there, find your people. They're amazing.

I also think though that for me, cancer was in some ways a wake-up call. It was that I'm mortal, that my time is finite, and my end might come sooner than I want and most definitely will come So in that way, now I see the world like I'm living in bonus time, because if I hadn't gotten that mammogram, if hadn got diagnosed and I didn't get treatment, I wouldn't be here right now.

My time would be done. So I feel so strongly that now is just a second chance, bonus, time. And I also feel like even before the cancer, it was all bonus because no one knows when we're going to go.

So because of that, every hour, everyday is like a brand new start, like extra time. And so I've been thinking very intentionally about how do I want to spend that time?

Where do i want put my energy? where do you want my focus? If I know that I only have a few days, a year, or a couple of years, how do I want to live that?

So that at the end of the time, when it is up, I'm like I did what I wanted to do. I spread the love I needed to spread. I think when you're given, you know, a kind of a shove by the universe that says, hey, your time is limited, how do you want to use it?

You can do some really incredible things with that time that's left. Oh, lovely. Lovely. You could really focus and think about your legacy. Yes. And so I want to ask you that question.

Yeah. Now that you've gone through this, you had the wake up call. What do you want your legacy to be? Yeah, I would love my legacy kindness and connection, you know.

Helping others is just what I feel like we're supposed to be doing. I, I fell like helping others in difficult times, everyone has a light inside them and sometimes during difficult time it's dim.

And so for others who can shine their light a little brighter to show someone the way out when it feels like everything's dark, I just feel like that's what I want to do.

That's why I wanna do with my family. that what i wanna to at large with writing. I'd just wanna shine a light and be bright when I can. Sometimes I'm gonna be dim and I need other people to light my way and lead me out.

And then when I'm feeling better, I'll light a path and let other people through. So if I had a legacy, it would just love to be remembered as a person that helped.

Yeah. And you are, you're doing it. Oh, so I know that our audience is going to want to get in contact with you. How can we do it? Yes, absolutely. Go to KaraTheAuthor.com and that's Kara with a C, KaratheAutor. Com.

You can connect with me on all the socials, you can drop me an email, or you could look at the book. I'm happy to give anyone who needs it a pep talk.

So if you want to reach out to me, I'll give you a PEP talk because there's no good book for this. Every chapter ends with a pep talk, because we need more of them.

We don't get enough. I promise I won't scream and cheer and play rock music like my husband, but it'll still be pretty good. Oh, wow. Thank you, thank you.

thank thank for being that light. It has been such a pleasure to have you on the show. Yes, Thank You. And thank You for all the amazing work you are doing because I feel like you're a light as well, helping others find their way, which is all we can do.

Wonderful. Many blessings to us. If you haven't heard it yet today, I appreciate you. The soul in me honors the soul you if you want to see more episodes like this, please subscribe or click here.

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