

ATTITUDE AND KNOWLEDGE ARE CRITICAL!

by Jim Graham

Sun Tzu wrote:

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained, you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War* (ca. 600 BC)
Chapter 3, paragraph 18
Lionel Giles translation, 1910

Sun Tzu's words apply to far more than battles on the battlefield (I have applied these very concepts in computer and network security). However, if you're fighting cancer, you **ARE** in a war...a war for your life and health. The enemy in this case is your cancer. It does, however, take more than just knowing your enemy and yourself—it takes a strong, determined attitude on your part, a strong, positive attitude on the part of the family and friends around you, and of course, good doctors.

This document deals with the emotional side of the battle—the stubborn, determined attitude required to win against the cancer, drawing strength from friends and family around you, and so on. It does not address the physical/medical aspects, as those will vary from one person to the next, and also with the type of cancer and treatment. Your doctors/nurses, the American Cancer Society, and other national and local organizations, are far more likely to be helpful in this area.

Strength

Sun Tzu wrote:

Therefore the clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him.

Sun Tzu, Chapter 6, paragraph 2

In my fight against my own cancer, I have drawn upon all of the strength that the Lord has given me and applied it to not only strength to fight in the physical sense, but also to the stubborn, determined attitude that I **AM** going to beat this thing, and that I **WILL** be around for a long time, despite the “terminal” diagnosis and despite how the cancer has basically turned my life upside down and inside out. My mom, my sister, aunts and uncles, and a bunch of good friends have also been a tremendous source of that “inner” strength, and I know that I need every bit of it that I can get....

Sun Tzu wrote:

(3) He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks.

Sun Tzu, Chapter 3, paragraph 17.3

For those who are family members or close friends of someone with cancer, remember that they need your strength and emotional support, not whatever negative thoughts you may have—always try to keep those to yourself when your sick friend/loved one is around. Try to maintain a positive stance at all times, or you may end up doing more harm than good.

Fighting cancer is hard, but it’s a fight you have to win (as I type that, I’m reminded of a favorite quote from *Babylon 5*: “Never start a fight, but always finish it.”) Think of yourself as the victor from day one, and never turn your back on that thought. If you give up, your body will, too. It’s hard to do sometimes—believe me, I know (I’m so stressed out these days that, even with medication, my “fuse” is extremely short at times).

As far as physical strength goes, well, each person and each cancer are different, and I’m not really qualified to say much of anything on that subject, other than to listen to what your doctors tell you. If they tell you to rest, then **REST**. But be open and honest with the doctors about any symptoms you experience—they may be far more important than you realize, and they may also have a direct bearing on their instructions. On the other hand, if your doctors tell you to run ten miles a day while on chemotherapy, you might want to ask them if they’re on crack (or better still, get a second opinion!).

One very important final note about strength....

Always remember that strength does not mean never asking for help. I've had to ask for a **LOT** of help, including financial assistance, rides to/from the hospital, general assistance just getting around at times, a place to live when I didn't have one, help moving, and so on.... You name it, I've probably had to ask for help with it at some point, and my friends and family have all chipped in and helped in countless ways (**THANKS AGAIN EVERYONE!**), and so far, I haven't been able to do much to return the favor, but one day, I hope to find a way....

Sun Tzu wrote:

We can form a single united body, while the enemy must split up into fractions. Hence there will be a whole pitted against separate parts of a whole, which means that we shall be many to the enemy's few.

Sun Tzu, Chapter 6, paragraph 14

Never be afraid to ask for help.

Knowledge

The American Cancer Society has a tremendous amount of downloadable material about cancer, both specific to certain types of cancer and more general information. There are other agencies with lots of useful information and support, as well—see the links page for an incomplete (**VERY** incomplete) list. Get to know as much as you can about the type of cancer you have, its typical progression, symptoms to watch for to catch signs of the cancer spreading between doctor visits, and so on. Also learn everything you can about what you/your family need to do to make sure you stay as healthy as possible.