

# Daily Survival Kit for Serious Illness

by

Thomas L. McDermitt

Long-time cancer patient and skeptic

*(You don't have to agree with all of this all of the time. But if it generally speaks to you, try to read all or parts of it every day, or have it read to you. Part of the help is in the doing, regardless of your attitude or emotions on that day. On some levels the help is gradual and often not evident.)*

1. Today I am going to try to live through this day only, and not dwell on or attempt to solve all my problems at once; just focus on the piece that is today. I can do something for several hours that would be difficult to even think about continuing for several months.
2. Just for today, I am willing to accept the possibility that there is a purpose to this suffering; that it can be a source of meaning and growth for myself and others, though I may not always recognize the ways. And it seems that this suffering will not be in vain, because of what may be some kind of existence beyond.
3. And just for today, let me remind myself that I am basically a worthwhile person, worth loving, despite my fault and limits. I deserve the effort of others to help me through my illness.
4. Just for today, I want to be aware that it is all right to want too much from others at times. Illness brings out and intensifies the small child in all of us. And if I feel hurt when those who care for me cannot be there, it may help to remember that they have needs, frailties, and limitations of their own. A lack of response does not mean that they are personally rejecting me.

5. Today I may feel to complain a great deal; I may have little tolerance; I may cry; I may scream. That does not mean that I am less courageous or strong. All ways of expressing anger over this mess, of rightly mourning my losses. Endurance itself is courage.
6. It is my life at stake now. So maybe today I can allow myself to be a little less concerned about the reactions or impressions of others. Maybe I can allow myself to feel a little less guilty or bad about what I did not accomplish or give. Perhaps today I can be a little more gentle toward myself.
7. Surviving this is all so difficult. At times it seems impossible-that I have enough. Down the line I will know if and when I have had enough, when I cannot push the limit any further. I will have the right to choose to stop, without feeling that I am "giving up." But today I think I can deal with this illness. Sorrow runs very deep, but I think I can rise again.
8. Just for today, maybe I can give healing "the benefit of the doubt."The drugs are powerful; the natural healing capacity of my body is powerful. And who knows, perhaps there is healing power in my will to struggle, and in the collective love and will of others.
9. Just for today, perhaps I can take heart that we are all connected. And I may still have some things left to contribute to the family of man; some light to add to the light. Even now my endurance (however imperfect) is a gift, an inspiration for others in their struggles.
10. It seems reasonable that there is a season for everything, and a time for every purpose. Pain, Weakness, and exhaustion may distort my senses and spirit. Today, however, I can at least find some hope in nature's way, if not in some master plan. The chance are fairly good, and it seems worthwhile to hope that I will have some cycle of wellness yet.