



### Can our brains fight cancer through positive thinking?

Current BrainCandy topics always challenge familiar ways of life. But if we are interested in what our brains have in mind, then we must always question our knowledge. Even if it is with such unpleasant topics as cancer.

About half of all people suffer from cancer in the course of their lifetime<sup>1</sup>. This is the reason why cancer is one of the things almost everyone is afraid of. No wonder, cancer is often associated with age. And as we get older, more and more people are dying with or because of cancer. Although science makes tremendous progress in the treatment of cancer, any cancer diagnosis is a shock to the patient.

How do people cope with it? For many patients, a central need comes to bear: to understand why one is ill. It is too complex, whatever the doctors and science say. Who understands genetics, individual risk behavior and environmental influences? What is the real reason? Can we take action and fight the enemy? Or are we forced to hand over the full responsibility to the treating doctors? That would be a massive loss of control. Current research shows that the majority of our daily negative self-talk revolves around feared losses of control!

At this stage, patients look for additional help. And one of these possibilities is that one should be able to stand up to cancer with a positive attitude. Or even cure the cancer, as many affected authors claim. Just take a look at two book titles as an example:

- "You have cancer! The power of positive thinking, how I defeated cancer!"
- "... and dance through the tears: the process of healing."

This idea of proactively doing something against the cancer is tempting. This is why some many people take up this 'fight'. I also experienced this 'fight' in some extreme form within my family and circle of friends. One can also read about it in many death announcements: "fought to the end", "never gave up and yet lost".

In a representative survey by the Cancer Information Service of the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), 61 percent agreed with the statement that emotional burden and stress can trigger cancer. So, we feel emotionally responsible for our own cancer. Dreadful.

Wrongly. Quite the contrary, as Imad Maatouk, psycho-oncologist at the University Hospital Heidelberg<sup>2</sup>, explains: "The idea that someone is suffering from cancer because of one's personality characteristics, stress at work or because one lost an important person, is scientifically untenable." Also, there is no evidence for the thesis that a positive attitude to life can prevent the onset or recurrence of a cancer disease. And conversely, psychological lows do not worsen the prognosis either!

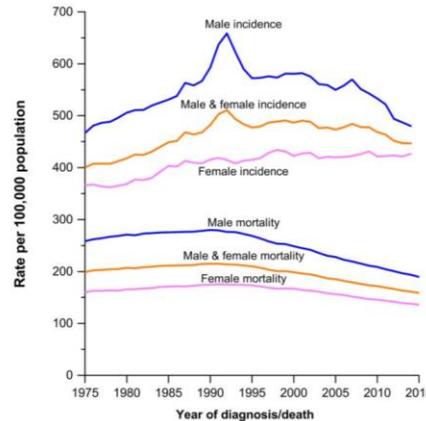


Therefore, Maatouk is critical of the concept of "positive thinking" which is propagated in many guidebooks. "It can put patients under extreme pressure, to stop admitting negative feelings, to conceal them or to stop talking about them." On the one hand, this could be a heavy burden on those affected and, on the other, it could be detrimental to social relationships. Nevertheless, psycho-oncologist Maatouk does not consider patients' subjective theories of disease to be bad. Although many beliefs are scientifically untenable, they do serve a purpose: they can provide a sense of control, especially at the onset of illness, and help to limit anxiety.

The mind then influences the well-being (a kind of 'placebo effect'). Messengers change the signal processing in the brain. But those messengers do not affect the growth of the cancer. Thus, a positive attitude can at least enhance well-being and quality of life. More psycho-oncologists would therefore be desirable for cancer patients.

Too bad - it would have been so nice if our brain could help us fight cancer as well. It is especially annoying that many self-proclaimed experts on the Internet are fueling the fears by going on and on about a drastic increase in cancer. Environmental influences such as the 'radiation' of our communication networks, radiation from our smartphones, the infamous glyphosate or the genetically modified food are just a few of the vicious triggers that one should fight with the expensive products of the healers.

Just to make sure that we do not leave this BrainCandy disappointed, we are happy to end with good news: The following chart speaks for itself. Decreasing mortality despite aging of the population <sup>3</sup>.



Fewer people die from cancer. Even though we are getting older. And even though almost everyone in the world has a mobile phone nowadays. Glyphosate has been used around the world for decades. Current research shows, however, that 'alternative therapies' statistically lead to a quicker death<sup>4</sup>. Often, it is because the therapy starts too late. The improved medical screenings and the constantly improving scientifically based therapies are having an effect. And more major medical breakthroughs are around the corner. Since we carry out market research in oncological areas for international pharmaceutical companies, we are able to witness the great progress virtually live. More and more frequently, doctors tell us enthusiastically that they can not only slow down some types of cancer, but often they can even bring it to a standstill or almost heal it.

It's time to relax, so let's conclude with a fun fact: As you know, superfoods are currently on the rise. Zealous advocates often market them as absolution for poor nutritional behavior. Even the big companies jumped on the bandwagon. Nestlé has just bought the South American superfood manufacturer Terrafertil, for example.



Scientifically, there is probably little to it. Of course, it is healthy to eat primarily foods that are high in nutrients. But so-called superfoods do not have the superpowers that one would expect in them. At least not in the amounts that a normal person would eat. The trendy Chia seeds, for instance, have a similar nutrient profile as our good old linseed – but cost twice as much.



Broccoli is also considered to be miraculous magic. Chinese researchers have now empirically proven that we cannot release the forces of this vegetable by cooking it the way we do. It needs oxidation so that the enzyme myrosinase can even produce the desired substance sulforaphane. So, if you want to unleash the maximum power of broccoli, cut the cabbage into very small pieces, just as diced onions (using a V-slicer), and let them stand for at least 30 minutes. Then sauté briefly and voila: Your food now contains almost three times as much sulforaphane. And if you treat your fresh garlic in the same way, it will be much more potent as well. Bon appetit!

### Sources:

1. <http://www.spiegel.de/gesundheit/diagnose/jeder-zweite-erkrankt-im-laufe-des-lebens-ankrebs-a-1182031.html>
2. <http://www.spiegel.de/gesundheit/diagnose/posives-denken-kann-krebs-nicht-heilen-a1189546.html>
3. <https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/cancer-deaths-continue-to-decline/>
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5. <https://www.sciencealert.com/best-way-to-cook-broccoli-sulforaphane-stir-fry-healthy>



## Book recommendations:

By Ralph Ohnemus:

**Markenerleben.** Die Strategie im Hyperwettbewerb und Informationstsunami > [order here](#)

**Markenstaunen.** Gewinnen im Informationstunami > [order here](#)



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