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## A New Perspective

by Florence Ferreira



Three years ago, a doctor told me that I had three to six months to live. My breast cancer had spread extensively to my bones, my lungs, and my liver. Today, I am in stable condition. I was very upset at this doctor's insensitivity for a while. How dare anyone tell me when I'm going to die? But looking back, his gloomy prognosis paradoxically gave me a new life-giving perspective.

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Even though I had been dealing with this cancer for over six years, I never believed it would kill me. I kept going about my life as if I were eternal, procrastinating on important matters and making long-term plans. I lived in denial of the fact that our days are counted – cancer or no cancer. However, as uncomfortable and taboo as it is to talk about death in our society, I testify from experience that acknowledging your own mortality may help you live, not only a more meaningful and satisfying life, but a longer life.

*The problem with denying our mortality is that we don't give time its real value.*

In many cultures, death is seen as a natural passage, and people prepare for it their whole lives. When a person “makes his transition,” his life is celebrated just like any other life passage. In our culture, death often comes as a surprise. The person can be 95 years old, and we are still outraged, as if such an occurrence had never taken place in the history of humanity.

The problem with denying our mortality is that we don't give time its real value. We keep procrastinating, and we waste vital energy worrying and complaining instead of counting our blessings. We live with a distorted perception of life, conscious of what we lack rather than what we have, always wanting more, and missing out on the joy and healing power of appreciating what we do have.

After I emotionally recovered from my doctor's “death sentence,” I started thinking of what I wanted to do in those presumed last months. I did carry out some old dreams, like writing a book for my daughter, publishing, and traveling, but I realized that living life to its fullest is not necessarily about going bungee jumping. The most powerful change actually happened in the way I lived each individual moment.

I found myself appreciating everything around me. When I brushed my teeth in the morning, I acknowledged the privilege of having clean water at home. When I was in pain, I felt gratitude for all the parts of my body that weren't in pain. I found myself being more present, in other words, making every second more meaningful.

When you live as if every day were your last day, something magical happens. You realize that what really matters is not the actual but the perceived span of your life. Life is counted not in days, but in meaning. And meaning brings joy to the soul, which in turn brings health to the body.

Now that my condition is stable, my challenge is to not lose perspective again. And sharing this message with others is one way I stay on track.



*Florence Ferreira is a public speaker, storyteller, and freelance writer. A nine-year Stage IV breast cancer survivor, she draws on the life lessons learned through her healing journey to inspire, entertain, and educate others. For more about Florence, go to [FlorenceFerreira.com](http://FlorenceFerreira.com).*

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