

In the past few Saturdays, I have been reviewing Dr. Gabor Mate's book, *When the Body Says No – The Cost of Hidden Stress/Understanding the Stress-Disease Connection* where the physiological mechanisms of how chronic stress would suppress our immune system and results in a variety of illnesses including but not limited to cancer is described in detail.

The author of *The Bio-Breakthrough*, Isabell Benarous has a different perspective on the mechanism. She believes as long as we find a solution for a stressful event in our life, we would be okay. The problem resides in the stressful events "if it is impossible to find a satisfying solution". Because in this situation our "cells will express a subconscious, archaic solution" to the issue. She calls this a "conflict".

Based on this triggering event, she says "there was a *before*, when your body was in balance; there is an *after*, when at a specific moment in time, your biology shifted." She then asks a very important question: "What do your *before* and *after* look like? What are the particulars?"

To assist you in finding the triggering event, she uses the following terms:

- Surface Structure: The illness or symptoms
- Deep Structure: The full linguistic and emotional definition connected to the illness; the personal meanings and feelings related to the illness.
- Referential Structure: The experience corresponding to the shock or struggle that is linked to the health disorder.

Jeanne's example:

Surface Structure: The words naming the illness.

Q: What illness or symptoms do you have?

A: Breast cancer.

Deep Structure: The personal meaning of the illness; the words and feelings associated with it.

Q: Think about your illness for a moment and connect with it. What does having breast cancer mean to you? What is it like for you to have this condition? What does make you feel?

A: Disappointment and sadness that my life will never be the same. It represents the absence of a future. It feels discouraging and lonely. It feels as if I can no longer count on anything.

Referential Structure: The event related to the words and feelings described in the deep structure.

Q: Go back in time, a few weeks or months before being diagnosed. When did circumstances represent disappointment and sadness? When did think your life would never be the same? What represented the absence of a future? What felt discouraging and lonely? What made you feel as if you could no longer count on anything?

A: Having to let go of my house when my ex-husband refused to help me financially after I was fired.

Interestingly, Jeanne had gone through multiple other stressful events prior to her diagnosis of breast cancer. These included a divorce, dealing with her 16-year-old son drug and alcohol abuse, having to care of her ill mother who eventually died, losing her job because she had missed many hours because she was the caregiver for her mother but she had been able to resolve all of those issues (had come to

terms with her divorce, her son had recovered, she had grieved her mother's loss and knew she could find another job). The one event she had not been able to find a solution for was the loss of her house.