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Lightning At The Gate



Synopsis

Jeanne Achterberg is an internationally known authority on the use of imagery to heal the body. She is best known for developing the technique known as guided visualization, and she was recently featured in Time magazine as one of the top innovators in the field of alternative medicine. In 1999 she was diagnosed with ocular melanoma, a rare and often deadly form of cancer of the eye. *Lightning at the Gate* is the remarkable story of her illness and healing—•a deeply personal memoir that is at turns haunting, humorous, biting, and exhilarating. This engaging and entertaining book demonstrates how a combination of critical thought, creativity, inner vision, and friendship can lead to profound healing. In *Lightning at the Gate*, Achterberg writes, "The only way one stays alive after a serious diagnosis of cancer is to find one's vision." This captivating memoir documents her process of doing just that. Choosing to view her cancer as a metaphor, she draws on dreamwork, shamanism, healing imagery, prayer, rituals, songs, immune-stimulation therapy, and the loving care of friends to cure her illness. *Lightning at the Gate* ends in affirming Achterberg's core belief that we are healed not by medicine but by the bonds we create with each other: care, love, trust, hope, belief, and all the other invisible facets that have lost favor in modern health care. Readers will benefit from seeing how a leader in alternative medicine approaches her own illness: how she weighs the information and choices presented to her by the Western medical establishment; how she advocates for herself; and how she finds her own, individual path back to health. *Lightning at the Gate* also offers fascinating first-hand accounts of cutting-edge alternative therapies. Also included is a valuable resource section listing books, websites, and organizations offering information on holistic methods of healing. This book is sure to become a must-read for anyone interested in alternative medicine and the healing arts.

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Customer Reviews

Jeanne Achterberg (*Imagery in Healing*) has been researching mind-body medicine in the treatment of cancer since the 1970s, and developed the now well-known technique of guided imagery, a widely-practiced alternative therapy. When she was diagnosed with cancer of the eye two years ago, she refused all conventional treatments. *Lightning at the Gate: A Visionary Journal of Healing*, is a frank and intimate account of her own experience with cancer, which she has so far kept in check by having those around her practice guided imagery on her behalf, as well as a variety of other alternative treatments she discovered along the way. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Achterberg has devoted much of her career to teaching the inner vision in shamanism, psychology, and modern medicine. Her early life was unpleasant, but she obtained a solid education and some research experience, and her knowledge and understanding of alternative medicine is broad. Some two years ago, she was told she had an ocular melanoma, although the diagnosis was not confirmed. The book deals primarily with the development of this time-bomb disease, which kills not by itself but by means of its metastasis. She expands on her, her husband's, and her friends' reactions to the disease, showing that the support of almost numberless women friends has been supplemented by that of such others as Larry Dossey and other well-known experts on healing. If a few graphic descriptions of her tumor and possible treatments may be too much for some, as a whole her highly personal, at times emotional book is a strongly appealing, heartfelt account of important years in the life of a woman well able to express herself. William Beatty Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

A respected authority on the use of guided imagery to heal, Dr. Jeanne Achterberg writes an engaging story about her harrowing and year-long journey through physical pain and spiritual darkness into wellness. She uses her suspected diagnosis for uveal melanoma - a rare and potentially deadly cancer of the internal layer of the eye - as the literal and symbolic theme to anchor a story that is part thriller, memoir, medical mystery, self-help resource and alternative medicine advocacy. In about 50 short, distinct chapters, Achterberg guides the reader through the

impact of this catastrophic disease on relationships in her "orbit" - herself, others, the alternative healing community, as well as with the mainstream medical profession. Achterberg, as reflects her background, credits shamanic and prayerful influences with healing her eye. Unfortunately, since her diagnosis was never medically confirmed, it's not possible to establish that cause-effect relationship. This gap reduces her compelling story to an anecdotal account. The promise of alternative healing to transform people's lives has not been realized on a broad scale due to the lack of cross collaboration between the alternative and scientific communities. Achterberg was uniquely positioned to bridge the alternative/mainstream divide. Instead, a story of triumph uncomfortably comes across as an "us vs. them" contest. However, *LIGHTNING AT THE GATE* is the only book out there that talks about uveal melanoma from a personal perspective. For many diagnosed with this cancer, that's the only story that really matters.

Dr. Achterberg annoys the Hell out of me. I have what she has, Choroidal Melanoma -- eye cancer. While I find her other work on imagery quite useful, in this book, she comes across as a total flake prone to hyperbole. Every headache she has is "the worst of the century," every girlfriend she has is seeming super-human and always available to her; her marriage is bizarre and her kids are a mess, although one apparently has "movie-star" good looks. The targeted plaque radiation therapy I had she refers to as "burning out the eye." Proton beam treatment, available at several hospitals, she mistakenly lists as "only available at 3 nuclear reactors." Huh? What is your PhD in again? Those readers looking for a genuine road map of alternative therapies will be discouraged by the text, which contains no footnotes, but should. There is a resource list in the back of the book, but most of us would find it difficult to follow exactly in her path. Dr. Achterberg has the professional connections and financial means to spend a week at this spa or that hotel, order up custom mistletoe injections from Germany, boatloads of supplements from their sources, and can just ring up "Andy" Weil or Carl Simonton for free consults. NONE of that is even remotely accessible to us other few thousand CM survivors working with insurance referral networks and co-pays. Find yourself an ocular oncologist, which seem to number about one or two per state. Check out the eye cancer sites, and the CM yahoo group for survivor recommendations, and get your radiation or other conventional treatment done, then go get an MRI every 6 mos for a few years. Yes, you should revamp your diet -- I recommend "The New American Plate Cookbook" and "Anti-Cancer," both from . Yes, you should exercise. Yes, you should do some sort of mind/spiritual work, be it meditation or imagery or prayer in whatever form. Once you have a program in place, sure, get this book, but it should NOT be your first book.

Jeanne Achterberg breaks the mold of illness memoirs and healing tracts with her searing honesty, wit, fresh prose style, insight, and sheer spiritual brazenness. What a joy to read, a powerful investigation of the sorrowful, tough, often elevating experiences of this wounded healer going deeper to try to heal herself, and the personal losses and gains that occur along the way. Bless her for being so nakedly honest in sharing the hard truths about her marriage and personal life in a way that doesn't make the reader feel like a voyeur but like a dear friend who needs to know about the intertwined tentacles of her life as she lives it, and as she tries to extend and expand it both by turning within and by reaching out. Achterberg helps us understand that illness can be a metaphor; it all depends on what metaphor we construct, what truths it holds, and what we do about it.

I agree with Tom's assessment. In addition since she died in March I guess she didn't manage to heal herself fully - or maybe there is something in the difference between healing and curing. The subtlety is lost on me. If you have ocular melanoma I would urge you to get timely treatment of your primary tumour together with full body scans to stage the disease. If you are clear of metastases get good surveillance imaging and know where you will go if you get spread. Good luck to you all.

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