

Anita Moorjani's "Dying to be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing"

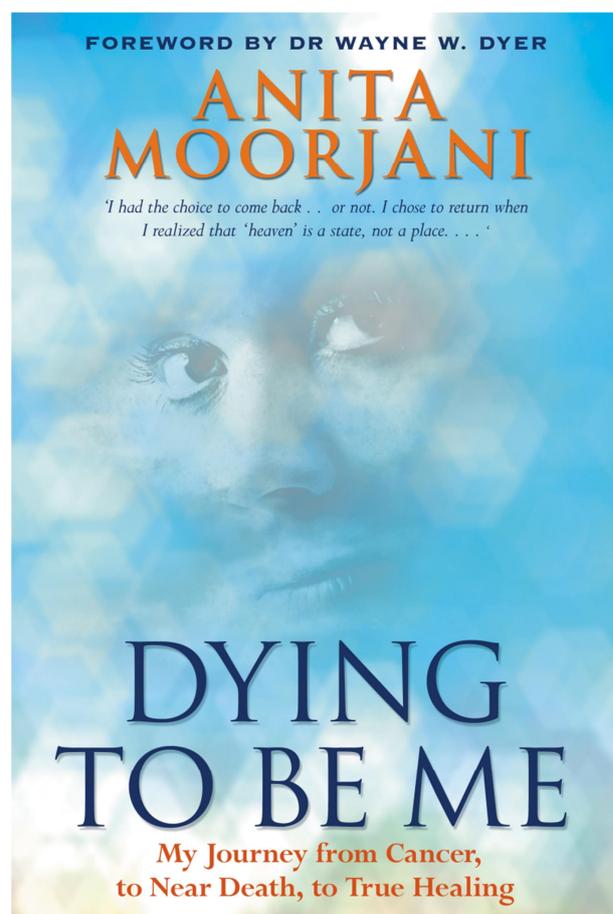
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Anita Moorjani's (2012) book, *Dying to be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing*, is a compelling story about healing that will mystify the most open-minded reader, while perhaps even rocking the near-death experience (NDE) community to the core. In fact, when this book was first brought to my attention I had yet to see why this book stood out, compared to many others written by near-death experiencers (NDErs), and was hitting popular media circles globally. Upon glancing at the first page it became abundantly clear why, and in fact, I was so intrigued that I did not put the book down until I finished it later that same day. Why, you may ask?

Moorjani shares an amazing story about healing and completely recovering from end-stage cancer—something only rarely heard of that continues to mystify the team of medical doctors responsible for her care (and all other medical doctors who reviewed her records). The incredible journey begins on February 2, 2006 when Moorjani was rushed to the emergency room, and was only given a few hours to live due to organ failure from

lymphoma cancer that had been eroding her body since her initial diagnosis in 2002. While in the hospital gasping for what everyone thought were her last few breaths, Moorjani went into a coma, which is when she had her NDE.



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During her NDE, Moorjani described having many profound experiences and realizations, including coming to understand how and why she developed cancer to begin with. She claimed she was given a choice to live or die, and that if she chose to return to life not only would she be completely healed from cancer, but she would have the opportunity to touch tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of lives. Moorjani chose life.

To fully appreciate Moorjani's journey, she cleverly presents her story in three main parts. The first part overviews her childhood and how she grew up (which sets the stage for how and why she believes she developed cancer later in life). The second part reviews her NDE in depth, and the third part concludes with what she has learned about cancer and illness in general from her NDE. As we briefly journey through each of these chapters, I want to point out that my brief overview cannot do Moorjani's story justice, as the book is full of rich material page after page that can only be truly appreciated by thoroughly reading her story firsthand.

The book begins with a foreword written by Wayne Dyer, who is a well-known best-selling author and lecturer in the domains of spirituality, healing, and growth (to put it generally). After Dyer's compelling account of what he called "Divinely orchestrated coincidences" (p. ix) that led him to meet Moorjani, he provides a touching account of how her story is a love story. In Dyer's own words:

This is a love story—a big, unconditional love story that will give you a renewed sense of who you truly are, why you're here, and how you can transcend any fear and self-rejection that defines your life. Anita speaks with candor about cancer, explaining why she believes she had to go down this treacherous road in her life, why she feels she was healed, and why she returned. And make no mistake about it, her life's mission is in a very big way reflected in the fact that you're about to read her report of this experience...and that I'm so involved in helping to get this crucial message out to the world. (pp. ix-x)

Following this, Moorjani provides a brief introduction to her story, while making it clear to the reader that it is not necessary to have an NDE to heal, and that her story is not meant to be a set of step-by-step instructions

that can be followed for others to attempt to heal from illnesses and diseases such as cancer. Rather, she emphasizes that it is only her intention to share her own emotional and psychological triggers that she believes contributed to her getting cancer, so that others can learn from this, and perhaps prevent getting sick in the first place.

Part 1 titled "Seeking the Right Way" consists of chapters 1 thru 6 that recapitulate Moorjani's early life, and many struggles she endured being immersed in three different cultures. Born in Singapore, yet ethnically Indian with her parents originating from Hyderabad Sindh, when she was two years old her parents moved their family to a British colony in Hong Kong. From an early age Moorjani described balancing the mix of these cultures. At home, her family spoke their native Sindhi language while practicing the Hindu way of life, yet she learned Cantonese to be able to immerse with the locals in Hong Kong, who were predominantly Chinese. Moreover, Moorjani and her brother attended a private British Catholic school, where the teachings were in English.

In Chapter 2, Moorjani describes noticing that she was different from her classmates at the age of seven when she began to experience the impact of cultural and religious differences for the first time. Attending a Catholic school, her classmates began to ask why she did not attend church on Sundays. When she tried to explain that her family was Hindu and that they attended the temple on Monday, she was met with disregard and was informed that she would not get into "heaven" when she died unless she went to church and prayed to God every Sunday. The nuns also conveyed this same message.

Terrified by this thought, Moorjani states she spent her time lying awake at night consumed by fear and anxiety, afraid that if she went to sleep that God might come for her, and that she might go to hell because she was not baptized. To compound things even further, Moorjani describes being bullied at school because she was a practicing Hindu, and for the first time in her early life she began to wonder where she really belonged. She had no friends, was not understood by others, and was constantly teased. Once her parents learned about this, they transferred her from the Catholic school into a public school.



However, the bullying continued. In her own words:

Such behavior made me feel lonely, sad, and dejected, but I held back my tears in public and cried into my pillow when I was alone in my bedroom at night. I didn't even want my parents to know I was being bullied because I didn't want them to think of me as a problem. After all, they'd already made me change schools once, so I kept pretending that I was adjusting well and was really happy. (p. 19)

It was during these early years that Moorjani describes wanting to denounce her Indian heritage, and to simply be more like her classmates so that she could fit in.

Chapter 3 describes continual identity struggles as she grew older, because being raised in the traditional Hindu culture came with expectations. Namely, that she marry the appropriate man and be the appropriate Hindu, subservient wife. Moorjani describes feeling deeply unhappy about this, as she had dreams of wanting to go to college and making a career for herself. However, with her family deeply immersed in the Hindu community and traditional ways of life, she was introduced to several potential suitors, none of whom she felt she could measure up to. Although she was engaged to one, she called it off at the last minute since she felt she could not live up to his family's standards. As Moorjani describes it, this left her feeling like even more of an outcast since she was letting down her family and the Hindu community in general. This only reinforced her earlier childhood experiences of never feeling like she belonged or fit in anywhere, and her name did somewhat become tarnished in the small Hindu community for calling off the engagement.

In Chapter 4, Moorjani writes about meeting her true love, Danny Moorjani, while expressing that she finally felt accepted, unconditionally loved, and understood for the first time in her life. "Diagnosis of Fear" succinctly summarizes Chapter 5, where she reflects on her diagnosis of lymphoma cancer on the fateful day of April 26, 2002.

As Moorjani struggled with her diagnosis and various treatment options, Chapter 6 takes the reader on a moving journey through her fear-driven attempt to research everything she could about holistic health and well-being, including Eastern

healing systems. She describes watching her best friend Soni die of cancer as well as a family member, and states that she was terrified of the dismal quality of life she had watched her loved ones go through up to the last day of their lives. Moorjani tried everything—Chinese herbal remedies, prayer, meditation, hypnotherapy, and even quit her job to travel to India to immerse herself in Ayurveda healing systems. However, once she returned to Hong Kong, she found herself very confused about some of the treatment modalities which had conflicting messages. For example, Traditional Chinese Medicine, which was predominantly practiced in Hong Kong, encouraged eating meat—especially pork. However, Indian healing systems encouraged a vegan diet, and discouraged eating meat of any kind—especially pork and beef. To confuse things even further, Western naturopathic systems discouraged eating sugar and dairy products, and in fact viewed these foods as feeding the growth of cancer cells, while Ayurveda had opposing views and encouraged dairy and "sugar and sweet" foods as a necessary part of a balanced diet. Subsequently, Moorjani describes becoming very stressed about food, and after making a slight recovery during her time in India, started to go downhill when back home in Hong Kong, leading to her being on her deathbed in 2006.

Part 11 titled "My Journey to Death...and Back," consists of chapters 7 thru 14, which describe her NDE in detail, as well as her quick recovery in the hospital. This section may be of particular interest to any physicians since it includes details of her terminal prognosis, as well as several doctors' reactions to her unexplained recovery.

Chapter 7 highlights details of Moorjani's condition upon being rushed to the hospital, where she went into a coma on February 2, 2006. A doctor told her husband, "Your wife's heart may be beating, but she's not really in there. It's too late to save her (p. 60)." While Moorjani lay there in the end stages of her life, her organs were slowly shutting down, and so was what used to represent any sort of life in her frail body. She was now hooked up to an oxygen tank, was choking on her own fluids filling up in her lungs, was severely malnourished, and because her body was so weak, she was not strong enough to undergo any surgical procedures



that might alleviate some of her suffering. Moorjani recalls what the doctors told her husband later that day:

There is nothing we can do for your wife, Mr. Moorjani. Her organs have already shut down. She has tumors the size of lemons throughout her lymphatic system, from the base of her skull to below her abdomen. Her brain is filled with fluid, as are her lungs. Her skin has developed lesions that are weeping with toxins. She won't even make it through the night. (p. 63)

While all of this was occurring to what appeared to be her lifeless body, she describes being in a different place of awareness, free of pain and suffering, and peace beyond what she said can be described. One of the many compelling aspects of Moorjani's NDE is that she recalled having vivid sensory awareness during this whole time, and was later able to accurately describe all of the medical procedures that took place, along with conversations that took place inside and outside the hospital room. Jan Holden (2009) called this phenomenon *apparently nonphysical veridical NDE perception (AVP)*, which is basically an out-of-body perception that could not have occurred from within the physical body, due to either the visual vantage point and/or the condition of the physical body and impaired sensory awareness. Moorjani's reports were also corroborated by others, so this is even more compelling. She also recalled being vividly aware of the emotions that others were feeling, almost as if she had merged with and/or were one with them.

Details of her NDE are shared in Chapter 8. Moorjani's NDE is what Ring (1980) would call a deep core experience. Her experience included meeting deceased relatives and friends (her father and best friend who had recently died), having profound levels of knowledge flood her, and many deeply penetrating realizations about consciousness and the oneness with all of life. In her own words:

As I experienced my biggest revelation, it felt like a bolt of lightning. I understood that merely by being the love I truly am, I would heal both myself and others. I'd never understood this before, yet it seemed so obvious. If we're all One, all facets of the same Whole, which is unconditional love, then of course *who we are is love!* I knew

that was really the only purpose of life: to be our self, live our truth, and be the love that we are. (p. 76)

In Chapter 9, Moorjani describes coming out of the coma, and the miraculous healing that began to occur in her body. Within two days of coming out of the coma, her organs had started to function again, and much of the swelling caused by toxic build-up had subsided. Chapter 10 continues to provide details of her remarkable recovery. After six days of coming out of the coma and the intensive care unit (ICU), Moorjani slowly began gaining her strength, and her doctors thought that she was strong enough to undergo a bone-marrow biopsy, since it is common for lymphoma to metastasize to the bone marrow. When the results came back a few days later, her doctors were rather disturbed since they could find no trace of the cancer anywhere. And, her doctors insisted upon more tests, reminding her of the state she had entered the hospital just a few days prior.

The most baffling test result came a few days later when a lymph-node biopsy was performed. When the radiologist was unable to locate a trace of the cancer, he called her oncologist and stated: "I don't understand. I have scans that show this patient's lymphatic system was ridden with cancer just two weeks ago, but now I can't find a lymph node on her body large enough to even suggest cancer (p. 89)." Moorjani describes smiling to herself, as she already knew she had been healed of cancer, due to knowledge given to her during her NDE. But, her oncologist insisted that some type of lymph node be found to biopsy because "cancer does not just disappear like that (p. 90)."

Chapter 11 is eloquently titled "Lady, Whichever Way I Look at It, You Should Be Dead." For physicians, this chapter is a must read! It conveys the utter confusion of her team of doctors, as well as several other physicians who reviewed her medical records. Literally, there was no trace of the cancer to be found and not a single doctor could explain how this could have occurred. Chapter 12 provides a touching overview of her new lease of life, as well as how she continued to try to integrate parts of the NDE into her new life.

Chapter 13 highlights how her views on life radically changed, and some of the integration issues that came along with this.



Moorjani stated she was no longer attracted to a lot of her previous social circles, was not driven by the desire to obtain money, no longer feared illness or death, and realized how her previous way of life was deeply misaligned. Chapter 14 goes on to describe her healing as her body gained back physical strength, while still trying to integrate the NDE into her life. It was on her birthday, March 16th that she checked her email and realized a series of synchronicities had taken place that would point her towards her new life purpose. Wayne Dyer had somehow heard about her story, and had insisted that Hay House publish her story. Little did Moorjani know at the time, but Dyer had also been talking about her story on his public broadcasting show. Through a series of Divine mysteries, Dyer and Moorjani connected, and the book you are now holding is the result.

Part 111 titled "What I've Come to Understand" consists of chapters 15 thru 18. Chapter 15 overviews Moorjani's understandings gained from her NDE about why she got sick. To sum it up in one word, FEAR, seemed to be at the root. In her own words:

While I was in that state of clarity in the other realm, I instinctively understood that I was dying because of all my fears. I wasn't expressing my true self because my worries were preventing me from doing so. I understood that the cancer wasn't a punishment or anything like that. It was just my own energy, manifesting as cancer

because my fears weren't allowing me to express myself as the magnificent force I was meant to be. (p. 135)

Chapters 16, 17, and 18 are loaded with spiritual insights and wisdom that Moorjani learned through her NDE that continue to unfold daily. I will save details on those chapters for the reader to browse through, as they are much too profound to cover in this short review.

As I write, Moorjani is on a book tour and has become something of an international sensation. Her book, less than a month after its publication, became a bestseller, according to the New York Times. It seems clear that Moorjani is primed to become a leading figure in the NDE movement. In closing, I highly recommend this book to any and all—whether spiritually minded or not, for this book has the capacity to touch all audiences. If you are interested in viewing some of Moorjani's interviews, those can be found on her website at: <http://www.anitamoorjani.com>.

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