

through the re-discovery of the power of forgiveness that I was able to shed past hurt and grief to better cope.

Now I seem to be fully recovered from the mastectomy. At a recent visit, the surgeon who usually talks statistics and percentages with me, as well as issuing dire warnings since I gave up the anti-cancer medication, has pronounced me healed. He added, to my surprise, that I will stay well because of my positive attitude and that positive people heal faster and stay healthier, according to recent scientific research.

However, my thoughts have not always been what the surgeon might call positive.

Over this last year, I have practised my death in my mind many times as well as planned the funeral. I have cleaned out cupboards and given things away. I made myself ready to die by silently reviewing my past in the wakeful night hours, by telling those I love how much I value them, and writing stories that have been in my head for years. Having prepared myself to go, I am also keen to stay and so I research and action healthy habits, ways to live, think and be. These ways mainly involve daily prayer and meditation, religious practice, improved diet, daily walks, simple exercises, hugging, laughing, smiling and being connected with lovely people.

Fortunately, I had a near death experience about 15 years ago which freed me from the fear of dying. I had been rushed to hospital in septic shock and as I lay on the bed with my body shaking uncontrollably, I made the decision to stop trying to fight it. I had been silently calling out to God for help but finally, I let go and prayed, "I've had an interesting life; if it's time to go, I am ready." ... and I gave up.

With that yielding came a wonderful peace. I was finally physically still but somehow I was also looking down from above on my two daughters standing beside the bed where I could see my body looking like an old coat I'd cast off. I heard my elder daughter say in a shocked tone, "She looks like she's dead!"

In my high place, surrounded by peace and joy, I found her reaction funny because suddenly I was aware that my old body was nothing. I'd just outgrown it. I knew there was no need to be sad. It was the same as looking back into childhood and remembering how wonderful and precious those first