

Inspiring People: Jeannine Walston

My Brain Tumour Journey Led to My Purpose



In 1998 at age 24, I worked in the U.S. Congress in the United States with plans for law school. However, the unexpected emerged when I was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Numb, shattered, and disassociated, I entered a new, shocking world.

Necessity can become a powerful teacher. I quickly learned the importance of conducting research, collecting multiple opinions, asking important questions, engaging in quality decision-making, and aspiring to choose wisely.

Research recommendations and decision-making emphasised the importance to have awake brain surgery since the brain tumour was located in my left temporal lobe impacting speech, memory, and sound. I chose the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is considered one of the world's

foremost medical research centers with well-respected excellence.

Thankfully, my surgery successfully removed the entire tumour and some surrounding tissue. After the surgery, and learning of the pathology reports and statistics that accompanied them, I began to further dance with fear and uncertainty.

Over time, my relationship with cancer—and finding ways to support my health and healing—helped me to create a new mindset. Challenges can be transformed into opportunities, and adversity can drive action, and these powerful concepts invigorated me to transform my life and way of being.

As I continued my quest for profound healing and prevention, I used some complementary, alternative, and holistic strategies.

I started exploring supplements, herbs, acupuncture, craniosacral practitioners, dental work, psychotherapy, and Shamanic work, among other things.

This holistic approach allowed me to become more aware of my inner Self, and ultimately my own unique meaning and purpose.

I started doing volunteer work supporting brain tumour patients, fundraising for brain tumour non-profits, lobbying Congress during Brain Tumour Awareness Month, speaking in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C. regarding brain tumours, delivering presentations at brain tumour events for the Senate and Members of Congress, and presenting at brain tumour conferences.

I eventually left my position in Congress and expanded my role in

the cancer community working for two cancer non-profits. I was also hired as a consultant to the National Cancer Institutes, and the Food and Drug Administration.

After a few years, personally and professionally, I felt very strongly that I had to take additional action. I needed to address more than just the cancer diagnosis and expand into the whole person, so I secured a position at the National Institutes of Health, National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

My experience took years to grow and blossom. My desire to make change fueled my fire. My passion flooded from my heart and soul, and showed me the way.

It hasn't always been easy. I've danced in darkness personally (including as a cancer patient) and professionally in directions unwanted. Fortunately these experiences in life are invitations for lessons, learning, transformation and better choices moving forward.

Indeed, chapters and priorities do twist and turn. I had a brain tumour recurrence in 2000, but I wasn't informed about it until 2004 despite its presence on multiple MRI scans. This challenged my

ability to trust. I continued for many years without conventional cancer treatments, using extensive health and healing strategies, as well as various treatments from doctors and providers across the United States and clinics in Europe. I built an optimised integrative cancer care team, which evolved over many years.

This recurrence wasn't stopping me though. In 2004 I started my own business—that eventually evolved into Integrative Cancer Care for the Whole Person and Healing Focus® addressing the physical body, mind-body connection, spiritual vitality, social support, and a cleaner environment to improve quality of life, cancer survival, and cancer prevention.

Unfortunately I could not escape the unthinkable. I needed a second awake brain surgery at the University of California San Francisco in 2011. Then with the further tumour growth that followed, research led me to the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) where I had my third awake brain surgery in 2013, as well as radiation, oral chemotherapy, and a clinical trial of DCVax-L® immunotherapy with a dendritic cell vaccine developed by UCLA.

Along with some highs, I battled with undesired lows. Once again, edges in life can offer invitations toward a new rising with new strategies to live fully. That includes an embodied awareness with integrity and responsibility to serve.

I continue to strive to make a stronger impact through my business working nationally and internationally as a Cancer Coach, writer, consultant, and speaker; and so far my clients include cancer non-profits, hospitals, clinics, doctors, providers, other businesses, cancer patients, and caregivers.

I have a vision to accomplish much more to help impact change. People affected by cancer deserve to experience improvements. Advances are happening. More needs to be done, and time is of the essence. This is my purpose, and my brain tumour journey led me to it.



Jeannine Walston

Jeannine Walston is a brain tumour survivor since 1998, Cancer Coach, writer, consultant, and speaker. Her extensive work includes for the U.S. Congress, cancer non-profits, National Cancer Institute, Food and Drug Administration, National Institutes of Health National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, hospitals, doctors, providers, other businesses, cancer patients and caregivers. Visit her Integrative Cancer Care for the Whole Person and Healing Focus® website (jeanninewalston.com) with hundreds of articles and information about her services. Jeannine lives in Los Angeles, California in the United States, and works nationally and internationally.



Jeannine Walston received a Tenacious Bravery Award from the UCLA Brain Tumor Program by Linda Liau, MD, PhD at Golden Portal Awards on June 14, 2015 in Beverly Hills.