Hacking anti-cancer with green tea and attitude

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July 28, 2015
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Green tea—the first step in hacking anti-cancer

My research starts with two core assumptions:

1. I am not a helpless victim of my life, but an active and engaged participant capable of making changes and altering outcomes.
2. I am bigger than my cells.

It starts with two core philosophies:

1. Life is wonderful and worth hanging onto.
2. Joy is a process, not a goal, and is an internal program I run intentionally and mindfully. It's something I've modded into my personal copy of OS-Human, not a fantasy I chase.

And it starts with two core attitudes:

1. Learn everything, because nothing is wasted—the weirdest bit of arcane shit may some day save your ass.
2. I'm probably not the first person to ask *this question* (where *this question=x)* and therefore, I can probably find some answers quickly, but if I am the First Asker, I can work with that, too.

I am by nature and culture a hacker, with my day gig being to hack writing, my hobby being to hack life, and my life goal being to successfully and completely hack joy.

If you're going to hack joy (and hacking joy is essential if you're hacking anti-cancer), then you modify and adopt one of the core rules of writing—Don't write the boring parts.

You modify it to *"Don't feed the boring parts of life."*

You can program your life to skip over the boring parts, and give yourself more time to think about and live the stuff that actually matters.

Here is my life-hack for skipping life's dull spots.

That which is necessary, but which does not interest me, I automate.

My personal weird example:

I have decided that clothes are a non-optional social convention, but that they are not interesting. Wearing clothes, therefore, must be done, but doing it does not need to interrupt my thought.

So I have have a seasonal wardrobe that consists of fourteen short-sleeved women's T-shirts (this means they're made of

high-grade cotton rather than T-shirt cotton, and that they come in blindingly bright colors, which I like). When it gets colder, I swap these out for identical shirts in identical colors, but with long sleeves.

I also own seven pairs of denim shorts, and seven pairs of denim jeans.

Life-hack note: If a social occasion mandates a dress, I'll have to go out and buy one, and all the crap that goes with it.

I rotate my clothes directly out of the wash, with fresh clothes always going to the back, so that all shirts and pants wear out evenly.

I hang shirts to the right of my sweater storage bag. (Sweaters are not clothes, because they're intriguing to make—they incorporate arithmetic, geometry, spatial puzzles, colorful yarn spun from cool fibers, and complicated stitch patterns which have histories and lore. I like designing and making my own sweaters).

I hang shorts/jeans to the left of sweater storage.

I have a little plastic three-drawer container on the floor where most folks store shoes. (I own three pairs of shoes: classic blue Converse sneakers and two pairs of Sketchers walking shoes which sit by the front door, so shoe storage is not an issue for me.) This little container holds socks and underwear. All my socks are identical white cotton, which goes with jeans and sneakers. All my underwear is identical. Nice…but identical.

With my system set up, I reach right for shirt, left for shorts, down for socks and underwear. I can do this in the dark in about ten seconds and have my clothes for the day. Everything will match, everything will fit, and I will be appropriately and comfortably dressed for any situation I'm

likely to encounter.

I had to replace my summer shirts recently. I walked into JC Penny, found the St. John's Bay section, picked out seven V-neck and seven U-neck short-sleeved T-shirts in my size in colors I like, and was finished with my wardrobe shopping for the next couple of summers in under ten minutes.

Having spent some concentrated time one day outlining and then building this system, I don't ever have to waste time or thought on what I'm going to wear again. My vividly colorful uniform frees my mind to do better things.

I've designed most of my life this way.

And I mention this because part of my hacking anti-cancer has to be automating the stuff that is necessary but isn't interesting, so that I'll do it and benefit from it while getting to think about and do the things I actually love.

It turns out that doing what you love helps you hack anti-cancer, too.

So…

Back to hacking anti-cancer

The thing about hacking (not *cracking*—assholes *crack*) is that it rewards thought, humor, exploration, curiosity, lots of reading, and is a helluva lot of fun. Hacking at its best is the process of thinking and working with joy. You cannot hack cancer, because there is nothing fun about cancer.

Anti-cancer, though, is entirely hackable.

To hack anti-cancer, you ask the question:

What can I do to give myself the healthiest cells possible?

That’s it. It’s such a simple question.

And the first answer is astonishingly simple.

Drink green tea.

The virtue of green tea is not just that it’s full of anti-oxidants. It’s that cancer cells excrete a pro-inflammatory factor called “nuclear factor kappa B” (NF-kappa-B [1, 2]), and green tea contains large amount of the catechins that block its actions.[3, 4, 5]

I’ve never been much of a tea drinker, but after I discovered that green tea is an actual **weapon against cancer**, I went to Tevana at the local mall and asked the girl at the counter, “What do you have in an organic green tea?”

She set an enormous tin in front of me and popped it open, to display what looked like a bunch of bright green dried grass clippings. It was Guyokuro Imperial, a Japanese green tea, and two ounces of loose leaf cost eighteen bucks. I almost balked—but with some questioning, I discovered that you can re-use the leaves up to three times, you only need a teaspoonful to make three big cups of tea, and it stores well.

Also, after some slightly deeper thinking, the stuff costs a whole less than having to pay for radiation or chemo somewhere down the line. That may come someday, but *how about I do what I can now* to point myself away from that?

I am a big fan of the following

concept: Prevention is better than Cure.

Partly because prevention is cheap and cure costs like hell. Partly because I like breathing, and I want to do a lot more of it.

- So I have been drinking three big cups of green tea a day. Mostly Guyokuro Imperial, but also cheap, boxed, bagged organic green tea from Whole Foods. I like the stuff that's mixed with pomegranate—but the Guyokuro is genuinely delicious.

- Along with this, I've eliminated all but one soda a day. Have cut out sugar (turns out sugar feeds cancerous cells in preference to healthy cells, and running your blood sugar high makes it easier to activate the pre-existing proto-cancer cells we all carry around inside us). I've also cut out natural sweeteners (excluding that one can of diet soda a day).

- I was already exercising—I'll hang on to that. In the work-and-stress crush of the last couple years, I got out of the habit of meditating. For me, meditation is just sitting on the floor with my eyes closed and counting "One" on each inhale, and "Two" on each exhale, and dismissing thoughts as they bubble up with a firm "later". There's no mysticism to it—there's just breathing, and focusing on my breath. So now I'm picking the habit back up, starting with ten minutes a day.

- I was already eating Paleo, but I've decreased my meat intake and increased my fruit intake a bit, and am looking for free-range meat rather than conventional meat.

- I found the way to release anger I've held toward two men who worked pretty hard to destroy my life, and who for a while looked like they might succeed. To set myself free, I let myself see them not as the men they were when they hurt me and my kids, but as they were as children. Both of them were horribly mistreated as kids, and neither of them was able to overcome the mistreatment; instead, they broke inside. From that perspective, I was able to let go of my anger toward them, and to find pity for them in realizing everything they lost.

Shortcutting the research

When I set out to research my situation, I already had the right assumptions, philosophies, and attitudes in place to make my research easier (listed at the top of this post).

I also asked the right question: What can I do to give myself the healthiest cells possible?

I had already decided that I would hang on to conventional medical treatment, but that I wanted to find things I could do on my own to improve on that treatment.

With those parameters set, I very quickly found a shortcut to the hard research I'd anticipated, because I was not, in fact, the first person to ask this question.

Having found the shortcut incredibly useful, I'm going to recommend it here to the following folks:

- **If you already have cancer**—you're not alone, you're not helpless, and there are a lot of things you can do, no matter what stage your cancer is in, to improve and possibly extend your life
- **If you have faced or are facing a pre-cancerous condition**

- **If you are a diabetic:** Diabetes sets up conditions in the body that can encourage the growth of cancer
- **If you are overweight or obese:** Fatty tissues provide available fuel and easy growth spaces for tumors, frequently in tandem with the high blood sugar tumors love
- **If you are or have been a smoker**
- **If you are or have been a drinker of alcohol**
- **If you routinely eat** foods that contain pesticides, growth hormones, or chemical preservatives (anything that isn't grown organically or free-range), **wear perfumes**, **use aluminum-based anti-perspirants**, or have other high-risk elements in your life

You can make a surprisingly big impact on cancer-proofing your life and yourself with small, doable steps.

Green tea is an excellent place to start.

From there, you can choose to make additional small or large modifications, depending on how YOU want to live your life.

So what was my shortcut?

It's a book by David Servan-Schrieber, MD, PhD, titled **Anticancer: A New Way of Life** The link goes to the author's website. I picked up my copy of the book for the Kindle on Amazon, but am offering the website link rather than book links because A) the author's website has some fantastic information on it, and B) a Google search will hook you up with the actual purchasable book in about ten seconds.

The author beat brain cancer for twenty years by following his own research and recommendations, and though he died in 2011, he gave himself probably nineteen extra years of life by doing so.

While I'll keep digging and hacking on anti-cancer, the book

offers an excellent starting point with lists, diagrams, and steps you can start taking immediately to hack your own anti-cancer life.

Finally…

You matter. And if you're dealing with any of this, you can post here any time. Describe what you're doing to hack anti-cancer. How you're taking control. What you're afraid of and how you're handling that. What you life means.

I'll cheer you on, you can cheer me and the rest of the folks on. None of us gets out of this alive—but while we're alive, hacking joy lets us make each breath count. And we can each live so that we die with no regrets.

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