

Psyche & cancer

from Dr. Alexander Bernhaut

Recognize one's own needs

Peter K., 53-year-old successful manager, married, one daughter: the patient who worked for an internationally operative food concern had – out of the sky – to deal with leukemia. Six weeks after getting that diagnosis he already made an appointment for a first conversation.

Concerning therapy he was permanently very disciplined and dedicated, not only concentrating on oncologic and psychooncologic support but also on psychotherapeutic support and meditation.

The described patient was a classical representative of the type "limitlessly acting". Many years of his life were to a high extent subordinated to professional requirements.

Since he was neglecting his own needs almost entirely and harming himself chronically by an unhealthy lifestyle (stress, malnutrition, chain-smoking) this became the basis of our collaboration.

Mr. K. grew up in narrow circumstances. As his father died early he was soon all by himself, even responsible for the

existential security of his family. Since childhood he learned how to work hard, to push himself through and especially to take on responsibility.

Of course these are all positive social abilities but the person concerned totally forgot of himself! This was actually the basis for our conversations. Mr. K. had to relearn because by continuing this morbid lifestyle it would have minimized the chances of healing. Finally it came to a remission of the cancer and to a recovery of the patient.

Dr. Alexander Bernhaut is specialist for psychiatry and neurology in Vienna