



## KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Commander Josef Levy



On June 18, 2007, I was at a work function, attending a dinner, when I received a message on my Blackberry from my wife Lysa. The message was actually a question, "When are you coming home?" Now, you need to understand that my wife rarely questions my whereabouts or inquires when I'm coming home, unless there was an important reason. After replying to her, I ultimately arrived home. In the back of my mind, I knew I was expecting some biopsy results from a recent exam. Week's prior, my doctors located a 1centimeter nodule on my thyroid. I was not terribly worried because I was told by doctors that the majority of these nodules are non-cancerous. However, when I arrived home, I was informed by my wife that my two doctors had called with some bad news. Lysa then told me "Joey, you have cancer".

Now, most of us in this profession have probably seen a lot of things that have shocked us and over the past 23 years, I have been shocked my fair share of times, but think about how you would respond to being told you have cancer. Feeling shocked was an understatement. I was overwhelmed with a wide range of emotions and all I could think about were things like, what will happen to my family, my wife, my four kids, why me, I'm only 44, I'm too young to die. Needless to say, that night and the emotions were so vivid, that I will never forget it. I would also like to mention the word timing. You see, I was told on Monday night and this was just 4 days before our son Adam's "big day" where he was going to become a Bar Mitzvah (where a boy becomes a man in the Jewish religion) so naturally, this presented a whole other issue of disclosure to family and friends.

I share my experience for a one reason. You see, when most healthy, able-bodied people are "doing their thing" they tend to get into a rut or groove and sometimes take things for granted. What I'm talking about is your health. Many of us worry and complain about issues that in comparison to our health, should be no comparison at all.

Prior to "getting the news" I would often think about the day-to-day stuff that might sound familiar to many of you. How much do I have in my savings or checking account? Can I afford that "toy"? What about that project on my desk? Will I be getting that promotion or assignment? Will I be getting a "call back" for an overtime shift? Why don't we have this, why don't we have that? It basically came down to "sweating the small stuff" in life. Why, because it's all so irrelevant in the larger scheme of things. Because, if you don't have your health, well, my friends, "you ain't got nothing"!!

My point is, until your facing possible death, right straight in the face, you may not have the perspective that others and I have. Believe me, I'm not bragging. I just recently got handed this thing called perspective, as a consolation prize for having cancer. I'm sharing my story because I want to emphasize the importance of not sweating the small stuff. Use your precious time and energy to focus on the big things, the things that are important to you, whatever they may be. Family, friends, music or religion. Because when it comes down to it, these are the things that help me cope, that give me support, strength and the power to be in a position to fight this thing. I have also discovered this thing called positive thinking. Something I have been preaching to others for many years. But it took a time of crisis in my personal life for me to begin to explore this very powerful tool I have been using to "fight the fight".

Soon after my diagnosis, my path lead me to Steve Bowles, a Sergeant (now a Commander) with the Seal Beach (Calif) Police Department. I learned that Steve was also a cancer survivor and was in the process of creating a cancer support group for law enforcement. As a result, the National Law Enforcement Cancer Support was created. The mission of our foundation is to provide free emotional support, guidance and resources to anyone in the law enforcement that is going through a cancer diagnosis. More information about our foundation can be found at [www.lecsf.net](http://www.lecsf.net).

So, if you find yourself falling into the victim mentality and turning into a chronic complainer, shake it off. Keep things in perspective. You may not have everything in life that you want, but if you have your health, a spiritual base, a strong diverse group of friends and family, then consider yourself "having it all".