
OUR FATHERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

CONTRARY TO WHAT WE OFTEN SEE AND HEAR,
**BLACK MEN ARE SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST ACTIVE
PARENTS.** HERE A FEW SHARE THEIR STORIES

EDITED BY CHARREAH K. JACKSON AND LAUREN N. WILLIAMS



ARNALDO SILVA + VANESSA SILVA-WELCH

Beating Breast CANCER

THE BRONX NATIVE OPENS UP ON HOW HIS DIAGNOSIS SAVED HIS DAUGHTER'S LIFE
AS TOLD TO GINA ROBERTS-GREY

One morning about ten years ago, a shower changed my life. While washing, I felt a lump in my chest. I assumed it was an ingrown hair. A few months later, the lump had grown. My wife suggested I have it checked by our family doctor, who justified my nonchalance and said it was fatty tissue. The lump continued to grow. My gut told me something wasn't right. My daughter, Vanessa, urged me to get a second opinion. That doctor recommended a biopsy. "You have male breast cancer," my doctor said casually. The news was as scary as it was puzzling. My doctor explained I had joined the ranks of men who made up about 1 percent of all breast cancer cases. Breast cancer runs in my family. I lost a sister at age 47 and all five of my paternal

“It's not every day a father-daughter pair fights breast cancer together.” —ARNALDO SILVA

aunts to the disease. Still, I never thought I'd experience breast cancer firsthand.

I found myself sitting in a waiting room filled with women, waiting for my mammogram. Everyone's eyes were on me. The results indicated we needed to move fast. I had stage 2 cancer that spread to my lymph nodes. My doctor prescribed surgery to remove my right breast.

As part of my treatment, my doctor recommended genetic testing to see if I carried either of the BRCA gene mutations, which greatly increase a person's risk of breast, ovarian and other cancers. Learning I did carry the BRCA2 mutation helped me connect the dots between my health and the women in my family. My gene mutation came from my father's side. My father died of prostate cancer, of which the BRCA mutation also increases the chances.

Once I processed the fact that about 2,470 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, I went into papa bear mode. I was determined to make sure my kids and nephews were screened, including for the mutation. I urged them to talk to their doctors about their risk, and to make sure they knew every lump, hair and mark on their bodies and have anything out of the ordinary checked.

For me, chemotherapy and radiation followed, but so did unimaginable heartache. Vanessa, one of my four children, was in her early

thirties, so her doctor recommended she have a mammogram due to my history and her BRCA gene mutation. The test revealed that my daughter had breast cancer, and we sought treatment simultaneously.

It's not every day a father-daughter pair fights breast cancer together. Unfortunately, we knew the side effects and fears the other might experience.

It was my genes that were the reason she was sick, but my doctors have stressed that getting my diagnosis and urging awareness among our family saved my daughter's life. Without it, she might not have been screened as early and her disease could have hit an incurable stage. She's had to fight breast cancer three times, has had both breasts removed and just completed her third course of chemotherapy this February.

A year and half after my initial diagnosis, a mammogram detected a lump on my left side. My doctor gave me choices of a lumpectomy or breast removal to treat my Stage 0 breast cancer. I chose removal again.

Every day I open my eyes, I look at it as a gift. I make the most of it by trying to help prevent one man—or woman—from dying of this disease.

Arnaldo Silva is a Susan G. Komen More than Pink Hero, someone who has had a significant impact on the fight to end breast cancer.

Forgive: Your Life Could Depend on It

CLINGING TO PAST PAIN CAN DIRECTLY IMPACT YOUR HEALTH. LEARN THE COST OF HOLDING A GRUDGE AND HOW TO RELEASE THE ANIMOSITY **BY GINA ROBERTS-GREY**



Let go
of hard
feelings
to make
room
for joy.

Does your blood start to boil when you recall that time in college when your supposed BFF stole your sweater *and* your boyfriend? Is there a lump in your throat when thinking about the feeling of abandonment caused by an absentee parent? If you're ruminating on painful or stressful moments in your life and reliving the anger, frustration and misery you felt, it's time to forgive. Your body will thank you for doing so.

No, we're not suggesting you forget that a hurtful event occurred. But the emotional anguish induced by replaying it in your mind could jeopardize your physical health and well-being. Lower self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, poorer mental health and increased blood pressure are a few ways unforgiveness can impact your body, according to a study in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication. Separate research found nursing a grudge can decrease your ability to perform physical tasks.

Harness the power of forgiveness to boost your health.

THE PRICE OF RESENTMENT

"Harboring a grudge and choosing not to forgive someone sets a neurological chain of events in motion," explains Bradley Nelson, a holistic chiropractor and the author of *The Emotion Code*.

That reaction in your head—and then your body—is your fight or flight response. "It's the same reaction as when you're faced with something dangerous or scary," explains Nelson. "When your

and physical feedback. Whenever you revisit that anger and bitterness, you flip on your fight or flight reflex. Constantly being in such a distraught state means "you'll have an increase in heart rate and blood pressure and sugar in your bloodstream," says Meryl B. Rome, M.D., owner, Boca Integrative Health in Boca Raton, Florida. Over time that can take a toll on your heart. "You'll also use up your energy instead

of storing it, so you're more likely to feel fatigued when you don't forgive." Every time you think about a

Every time you think about a grudge, your immune system takes a hit. —BRADLEY NELSON

brain receives the signal that you might be in trouble, it triggers the release of several stress hormones including adrenaline, norepinephrine and cortisol," he adds. And all those chemicals coursing through your body are handy if you're staring down a bear in the woods. They give you the courage and energy to stand your ground or run as fast as you can in the opposite direction.

Animosity, resentment and an inability or unwillingness to forgive prompt that same cascade of hormonal

grudge, your immune system takes a hit, says Nelson.

And expect to call in sick to work. Those stress chemicals bathe the tissues in your body for up to 24 hours from their release. "The uptick in these stress response hormones diminishes your immune system's capability," adds Nelson. A lack of forgiveness may have you catching a cold or getting the flu more than normal.

Rome says our body does a 180 when we're able to let go of old pain. »

"When we forgive, the opposing parasympathetic system to the fight or flight response, which controls restfulness and calm, is activated to slow down your heart rate and help your body maintain normal levels of stress hormones to promote overall health," she explains. As difficult as it may be, getting past old hurts is a gift to your body that you deserve.

TIME TO RELEASE

"We tend to withhold forgiveness as a way to get even with someone we feel has hurt us," says Nelson. "But nothing could be further from the truth. All we're doing is hurting ourselves." The other guy isn't the one with increased stress hormones and a compromised immune system. And you could get so stuck in a harmful unforgiving cycle that you are

She suggests looking beyond the offending act someone committed against you. "It's about addressing someone's soul while seeing them as a whole person," explains LaPorte. "You can have compassion for a soul while still acknowledging the attributes of that personality. In doing so, you make a choice not to have those negatives in your life while still opting to forgive and wanting the best for who they are as a person. Love them and set them free."

Reframing the situation can also help you tap into the healthy aspects of forgiveness. "Step outside of your box to consider all the ways people you may be angry at may view the situation," suggests Nelson. "Maybe behavior that's unacceptable or hurtful to you is their normal. It's possible their reality is much different from yours, and their life

**If you don't forgive,
you're continuing to give
them power. —DANIELLE LAPORTE**

unable to recognize the red flags that something is wrong.

One clear indicator of a need to bury the hatchet is if thinking about someone who hurt you results in anything other than a feeling of peace about them. "If you think of that person and negative emotions like resentment, hatred or anger start to well up, you have some work to do," explains Nelson.

"You'll know you're carrying unhealthy emotional baggage when you have feelings or thoughts related to a person or situation that weigh you down and sit on your conscience," adds Danielle LaPorte, author of *White Hot Truth: Clarity for Keeping it Real on Your Spiritual Path From One Seeker to Another*.

Before you can begin the process of forgiving, LaPorte stresses the importance of defining what that means. She says forgiving isn't forgetting what you've experienced or letting someone who hurt you back into your life and heart: "It's forgiving them for what they've done and creating your new life. Decide on how you want to feel about the situation going forward."

experiences brought them to the point of wronging you. Considering that can help you accept the notion of forgiveness."

And even if the circumstances leave you thinking that wiping the slate clean is impossible, Nelson emphasizes you're in control. "If someone has hurt you and you don't forgive, you're continuing to give them power over you. Instead, you can forgive them to take back that power and move on with your life," he advises. Everything you've been through has only made you stronger.

YOUR LET-IT-GO PLAN

**NOT SURE WHERE TO BEGIN THE
PROCESS? TRY THIS ROUTINE**

- **ADMIT YOUR RESISTANCE TO FORGIVENESS.**

Acknowledge how you feel to help you better see the big picture and how the situation is impacting you, LaPorte says.

- **KNOW YOUR ROLE.**

Often, we are trying to get over some form of betrayal. "Reflect on how you might have betrayed yourself when you weren't loving and respecting yourself or speaking your own truth," says LaPorte. "When we see how we participate, we broaden our perspective and realize the situation is not all about another person." That makes it easier to take control of a situation and be open to forgiving.

- **WRITE A LETTER TO YOURSELF OR ANOTHER PERSON TO STOP THE BLAME GAME.**

"This helps you express angst and negativity that might be in your soul about yourself or another person, even if you don't mail the letter," says Nelson.

- **SAY IT OUT LOUD.**

Tell yourself and/or that other person that you have truly forgiven yourself or the one who wronged you. "This helps seal the forgiveness," says Nelson.

START IN YOUR OWN HEART

Don't overlook forgiving yourself on your journey to better health

through forgiveness. "We often only focus on those who have wronged us," says Nelson. "But we've all wronged ourselves too."

Harboring resentment and anger at yourself for something you regret elicits the same neurological response as lugging around animosity for someone else. Replace that self-loathing with compassion, suggests LaPorte. Since it's impossible to avoid making mistakes, when faced with a personal flub—no matter the size—remind yourself that you're human. "Tell yourself, *Oh man, look at that. You really stepped in it this time. But that's okay. You're trying your best,*" she recommends. Gift yourself and others with grace.