
Love Medicine And Miracles By Bernie S Siegel

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INTRODUCTION: BEYOND CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

In the landscape of mind-body medicine, few books have sparked as much conversation, hope, and controversy as **Love, Medicine and Miracles** by Dr. Bernie S. Siegel. First published in 1986, this groundbreaking work challenged the conventional medical establishment by

proposing that love, attitude, and emotional well-being are not merely beneficial supplements to medical treatment, but essential components of healing. Dr. Siegel, a practicing surgeon, dared to ask a question that many of his peers avoided: Can a patient's mindset influence the course of a disease, even one as formidable as cancer?

The central premise of **Love, Medicine and Miracles** is that patients who cultivate a loving attitude toward

themselves and their lives often experience better outcomes than those who succumb to despair. Drawing from his clinical experience and a series of remarkable patient stories, Siegel argued that the will to live, sustained by love and hope, can trigger what he called "exceptional patients" to survive against the odds. Decades after its publication, the book continues to resonate with readers seeking a holistic approach to health, one that honors the connection between mind, body, and spirit.

This article explores the key themes of **Love, Medicine and Miracles**, examines Dr. Siegel's philosophy of healing, and considers the lasting impact of his work on both patients and healthcare professionals. Whether you

are a longtime admirer of the book or encountering it for the first time, this deep dive will help you understand why its message remains as relevant today as it was when it first appeared on bookshelves.

WHO IS BERNIE S. SIEGEL?

To fully appreciate **Love, Medicine and Miracles**, it helps to understand the man behind the words. Dr. Bernie S. Siegel was a respected general and pediatric surgeon who spent many years practicing at Yale New Haven Hospital. For a long time, he adhered strictly to the scientific model of medicine, viewing surgery as a technical craft and patients as cases to be solved. However, a series of profound experiences with patients who refused to give up hope led him to

reconsider everything he thought he knew about healing.

Siegel began to notice that some of his patients, even those with advanced cancers, seemed to live longer and with a better quality of life than medical statistics predicted. What set these individuals apart? It was not their age, their type of cancer, or the aggressiveness of their treatment. It was, Siegel observed, their attitude. These patients laughed, they loved, and they actively participated in their own recovery. They were what Siegel would later call "exceptional patients." This realization prompted him to establish ECaP (Exceptional Cancer Patients), a support group that combined medical treatment with emotional and spiritual healing.

In writing **Love, Medicine and Miracles**, Siegel synthesized his observations into a philosophy that placed love at the very center of the healing process. He wrote with a physician's authority but also with a human being's vulnerability, sharing his own struggles and doubts. The result was a book that felt less like a medical textbook and more like a conversation with a wise and compassionate friend.

THE CORE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE, MEDICINE AND MIRACLES

Love as the

Foundation of Healing

At the heart of **Love, Medicine and Miracles** is a simple yet radical idea: love is a powerful therapeutic force. Siegel argued that when patients feel loved, whether by family, friends, healthcare providers, or themselves, their bodies respond on a physiological level. The feeling of being cared for reduces stress hormones, boosts immune function, and creates an internal environment that is more conducive to healing. Love, in this context, is not a vague sentiment but a concrete biological advantage.

For Siegel, love also means self-

acceptance. Many of his patients, he found, were deeply critical of themselves. They carried guilt, resentment, and a sense of unworthiness that, in his view, contributed to their disease. By learning to love themselves, these patients could release emotional burdens that had been weighing on their physical health. This idea, while controversial at the time, anticipated later research into the psychoneuroimmunology of stress and disease.

The Exceptional

Patient

A central concept in **Love, Medicine and Miracles** is the "exceptional patient." According to Siegel, exceptional patients are those who refuse to be passive victims of their illness. They ask questions, seek second opinions, and take an active role in their treatment decisions. They express their emotions openly, whether it is anger, fear, or joy. Most importantly, they maintain a sense of purpose and hope, even in the face of dire prognoses.

Siegel emphasized that exceptional patients are not in denial about their condition. They acknowledge the reality of their disease but choose to focus on living fully rather than dying

prematurely. This attitude, he argued, can lead to what some might call "miracles" extensions of life that defy medical explanation. While Siegel was careful not to promise miraculous cures, he provided compelling anecdotes of patients who outlived their prognoses by years.

The Role of the Physician

In **Love, Medicine and Miracles**, Siegel also challenged doctors to change their approach. He criticized the medical establishment for being cold, detached, and overly focused on technology. He urged physicians to see their patients as whole human beings, not just as

collections of symptoms. A doctor's ability to offer compassion, to listen, and to convey hope is, in Siegel's view, just as important as their surgical skill or knowledge of pharmacology.

Siegel practiced what he preached. He would often hug his patients, cry with them, and tell them he loved them. This was, and still is, highly unusual in the medical profession. But Siegel believed that this human connection was essential for healing. By opening his heart to his patients, he created a therapeutic alliance that empowered them to fight for their lives.

**KEY LESSONS FROM LOVE,
MEDICINE AND MIRACLES**

You Have More Control Than You Think

One of the most empowering messages in **Love, Medicine and Miracles** is

that patients are control our
not helpless. response to it.
Siegel argued By choosing a
that while we positive attitude,
cannot always by seeking
control what support, and by
happens to our actively
bodies, we can participating in

treatment, disempowered
patients can by a medical
influence their system that
outcomes. This often treats
message them as passive
resonates deeply recipients of
with readers who care.
feel To implement

this lesson,
Siegel
recommended
that patients:

- Educate themselves about their condition and

treatment options.

- Trust their intuition when making medical decisions.
- Surround

- | | |
|---|---|
| themselves
with loving
and
supportive
people. | suppressing
them. |
| • Express their
emotions
rather than | • Find meaning
and purpose in
their lives,
even during
illness. |

The Healing importance of
Power of humor. Siegel
Laughter was a great
Another advocate of
memorable laughter as
theme in **Love,** medicine. He
Medicine and believed that
Miracles is the laughter reduces

stress, funny stories to
strengthens the his patients and
immune system, encouraged
and provides a them to watch
psychological comedies, read
break from the humorous books,
gravity of illness. and find reasons
He often told to laugh every

day. he meant that
This aspect of his patients should
philosophy was take time to be
embodied in his still, to breathe,
famous advice: and to find joy in
"Don't just do simple moments.
something, sit Laughter, for
there." By this, Siegel, was not a

IN PRACTICE

denial of _____
 suffering but a Support Groups
 transcendence of and Community
 it. It was a way One of the most
 of affirming life practical
 even in the face outcomes of
 of death. Siegel's work

LOVE, MEDICINE AND MIRACLES was the creation

of support expression,
groups for mutual support,
people with and a focus on
cancer and other living fully. These
serious illnesses. groups provided
His ECaP model a safe space
emphasized where patients
emotional could share their

fears, their in these groups
hopes, and their was
experiences transformative.
without Research since
judgment. For the publication of
many, the sense **Love, Medicine**
of belonging and **and Miracles**
love they found has confirmed

the benefits of recover better social support for from illness than health. Studies those who are have shown that isolated. Siegel's people with emphasis on strong social community was connections tend ahead of its time to live longer and and has since

become a advocated for
standard the use of
recommendation visualization and
in integrative meditation as
oncology. tools for healing.
Visualization and He encouraged
Meditation patients to
Siegel also imagine their

immune cells acknowledged
attacking and that these
destroying techniques might
cancer cells, or not work for
to picture everyone, he
themselves believed that
healthy and they could
vibrant. While he harness the

power of the are widely used
mind to support in mind-body
the body's medicine, and
natural healing there is a
processes. growing body of
Today, evidence
visualization and supporting their
guided imagery effectiveness in

reducing stress, in mainstream anxiety, and healthcare.

even pain. CRITICISM AND CONTROVERSY

Siegel's work It is important to help pave the way for the acceptance of these practices note that **Love, Medicine and Miracles** has not been without its

critics. Some patients to feel medical guilty if they do professionals not recover. The argue that idea that attitude Siegel's claims alone can cure are overly cancer has been optimistic and criticized as a may lead form of "victim

blaming" that never claimed
places an unfair that love and
burden on the positive thinking
sick. could cure
Siegel was aware everyone. He
of this criticism acknowledged
and addressed it that some people
in his writing. He die despite their

best efforts, and was not a
he insisted that a guarantee of
person's worth is cure but a better
not measured by quality of life,
whether they regardless of the
survive their outcome. The
illness. What he goal, he said, is
advocated for to live fully until

the end, whether **Love, Medicine**
that end comes **and Miracles**
in weeks or has stood the
decades. test of time. The
Despite these idea that love
controversies, matters for
the core health is now
message of supported by a

growing body of can influence
scientific immune
research. Studies function,
in the field of inflammation,
psychoneuroimm and even gene
unology have expression.
shown that While Siegel's
emotional states language may

THE LASTING LEGACY OF LOVE,

have been ahead
of the science of
his day, the
underlying
principles have
been
increasingly
validated.

MEDICINE AND MIRACLES

More than three
decades after its
publication,
**Love, Medicine
and Miracles**
remains a
beloved and

influential book. impact can be
It has been seen in the rise
translated into of integrative
dozens of medicine, the
languages and growing
has touched the emphasis on
lives of millions patient-centered
of readers. Its care, and the

widespread gift is its
acceptance of message of
support groups hope. Siegel
for people with showed that
serious illnesses. even in the
For many darkest times,
readers, the there is room for
book's greatest love, for

laughter, and for all the tools at meaning. He their disposal, gave patients including the permission to be power of their human, to feel own hearts.

their emotions, The book also and to fight for challenged the their lives with medical

profession to courses on
become more communication,
compassionate. empathy, and
While there is the doctor-
still a long way patient
to go, many relationship. This
medical schools shift can be
now include traced, in part, to

pioneers like healing.

Bernie Siegel
who insisted that
medicine is not
just a science
but an art, and
that love is at
the very heart of

**PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS FOR
MODERN READERS**

If you have not
yet read **Love,
Medicine and
Miracles**, or if
you are
considering

revisiting it, here
are some
practical
takeaways that
remain relevant
today:

**1. Cultivate
self-love. Be**

kind to
yourself.
Practice self-
compassion
and forgive
yourself for
past mistakes.
Your

emotional
well-being
directly affects
your physical
health.

2. **Build a
support
network.**

Surround
yourself with
people who
uplift and
support you.
Do not
hesitate to ask
for help when

you need it.
Isolation is
harmful;
connection is
healing.

**3. Take an
active role in
your health.**

Be an
educated
patient. Ask
questions,
seek second
opinions, and
make
decisions that

align with your values and intuition.

4. **Find reasons to laugh and to love.** Joy is not a luxury; it

is a necessity for health.

Seek out humor, beauty, and meaningful relationships.

5. **Live with**