



## Navigating the Traditional and Alternative Medical Worlds

by [Susan Jacobs](#)



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Faced with this diagnosis, Susan Jacobs was going to have to walk the walk, and stand tall, while, by her choice, navigating the traditional and alternative medical worlds.

*For decades, I, Susan Jacobs was afraid of the ramifications of speaking up, speaking my truth, so I swallowed my words and feelings. And I swallowed often. That is until my body said 'no more, this is destructive, and since you don't see it, here's a little lesson that you will hopefully learn from.*

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***There it was – pow, boom, oh crap... I had developed a raging hyperthyroid and Graves' disease.***

At first, I didn't even know what a thyroid was, let alone where it was located in my body. I came to learn that it is a small but mighty and critical butterfly-shaped gland in the front of the neck, just below the Adam's Apple, that regulates our hormones and lots of other bodily functions.

To alternative and holistic healers and us yogis, the thyroid is associated with the fifth chakra and is about all things self-expression, communication, truth, and creativity. The fifth chakra supports us in expressing all that we are meant to be, speaking, and owning one's truth. In short, it's pretty darn important that this critter works properly.

**So it was with huge alarm that I received this news, but an even bigger challenge was suddenly finding myself face-to-face with the ultimate**

**test:** Could I maintain my belief that not only do we subconsciously create health conditions that force us to look at what is going on in our life, but that we also have tremendous power to heal ourselves? It was easy to strut strong to that belief when healthy, but faced with this diagnosis, I was going to have to walk the walk, and stand tall, while, by my choice, navigating the traditional and alternative medical worlds.

**Reality hit hard; I had to make life-saving or life-threatening**

**decisions.** This challenge was compounded by how I physically felt — as though there were 10,000 watts of electricity mixed with a steady IV drip of espresso and amphetamines running through my body coupled with a resting heartbeat of over 100 BPM and the ensuing brain fog that topped it all off. Fun, right?!

Before long, my strut went limp, and I was **caught between confusion and fear.** Should I take the dangerous, though seemingly 'safe' Western medical route, covered by insurance, or trust my expansive network of alternative healers, none of whom were covered by insurance? At the time of my diagnosis and for many years thereafter, nothing holistic was covered by insurance, which meant it would be an expensive journey.

The question of could I afford the alternative path was very real, but what was more important was standing strong with my integrity. I always believed in integrative medicine—East meets West, West meets East—and while I predominately chose East for my process, I did integrate elements of West.

**In addition to the insane hyperthyroid symptoms, I was dealing with, the Graves' disease caused me to have double vision and strange looking eyes.** Thanks to my holistic eye doctor, my contact lenses were switched out for

glasses with plastic prisms taped to the lenses. While somewhat unsightly, this did correct the double vision symptoms, not the cause.

If the physical symptoms weren't bad enough to live with, my endocrinologist scared the crap out of me every time I went for blood tests, telling me I was putting my life in danger and being irresponsible. He wanted me to follow the standard treatment of drinking radioactive iodine to kill my thyroid, causing me to ultimately become hypothyroid, and on medication for the rest of my life.

**If I chose that treatment, I would have been so radioactive afterward that I wouldn't have been able to be around children or animals for a couple of days.**

Sure, sign me up, that's right up my alley. Ultimately my endocrinologist fired me as his patient because I wouldn't succumb to these 'routine,' yet radical Western treatments. Perhaps I was risking my life, but I stubbornly believed I could heal. I didn't have a clue how this was going to unfold, and despite leaving his office after each visit in tears, I mostly held strong.

Not only was the doctor against my decision, I also had to endure the forceful opinions of my family and friends who were extremely worried about me. At 5'7, I was weighing 105 lbs. and a wearing size 4. Today, healthy, still 5'7, I'm 140 lbs. and size 8-10 (*I know women don't normally admit this but stay tuned for another post on this subject!*).

Not speaking from vanity, but how much better I now look is significant. Years later, friends and colleagues confessed that when they saw me at my worst, they thought I was dying.

It sucked, was horrible all around, and one of the most difficult experiences of my life.

At some point along the way, I had an 'ah ha' moment. Why did I get a condition that affected my throat and eyes? What wasn't I saying and seeing in my life? And then the floodgates opened.

With the help of an incredible posse of alternative healers including acupuncturists, homeopaths, naturopaths, astrologers, tarot card readers, nutritionists, and a whole lot more, coupled with my yoga master, Yogi Bhanjan's teachings, my Kundalini Yoga practice, and various books including Dr. Dharma Singh Khalsa's *Meditation as Medicine*, Carolyn Myss' *Anatomy of the Spirit*, Pema Chodron's *When Things Fall Apart*, and Louise Hay's *You Can Heal Your Life*, I began to seek answers within.

**Through this process, I became a much more active and conscious participant in my healing, not solely expecting that a treatment method would do the trick, but that I had to get to the root cause which only I had the answer to.** This perspective required tremendous energy, focus, and discipline to maintain (and a ton of tears!), and even though I experienced the benefits and saw the proven results, sustaining that level of conscious living remains a constant daily challenge.

Diet and lifestyle played a big part in my healing, but I believe the most important factor was becoming able to see that I needed to speak and live my truth. When I started doing that, my blood numbers and symptoms balanced out over time.

This was a long, hard journey that was accomplished 95% holistically, the exceptions being two eye surgeries for the Graves' disease, a year on the thyroid drug PTU before my body rejected it with a negative liver reaction, and a short stint on beta-blockers to protect my heart.

It took a long time for to me come full circle in the healing process before I realized that I am my BFF (best friend forever) and my most trusted guru. When I speak and live my truth and am disciplined with a daily practice of three simple actions – Kundalini yoga, meditation, and journaling – life flows, stress is minimized, and I receive answers from within and a have a clear sense of direction.

**Although it took a long time, tons of work, and lots of ups and downs, I can happily say that my thyroid has been balanced for the past several years.** While there's still stress in my life, on most days I handle it better, knowing that letting it get the best of me doesn't serve me in any way. I trust the process of life and trust myself. I am living proof that it's possible to heal yourself.

#### **About the author**



## ***Susan Jacobs***

Writing has been part of my DNA, career, and creative outlet for as long as I can remember. My joy is bringing to life stories of the world, its people, and its cultures.

I'm filled with an insatiable curiosity for life off-the-beaten-path and love to share stories of the unheard voices I find along the way.

Giving voice to things that matter, raising awareness, and expanding perspectives is what lights my fire and is the heart and soul of who I am and what I do.

I have contributed a chapter to two books: "Step Forward and Shine," published by RHG Media Productions, and "Pain, Purpose, Passion," published by The Round House Press. I'm a contributing blogger to Huffington Post, Identity Magazine, Thrive Global, Yogic Living, and Medium.com. My personal essays and writing have appeared in Pink Pangea, FourTwoNine Magazine, Extreme Sailing Series 2018 Official Magazine, Aquarian Times, Spirituality & Health, PR Week, and IndieWire. I'm working on my first memoir.

Please visit at [www.susanjacobswriter.com](http://www.susanjacobswriter.com)