What Ta-Tas Teach Us

Celebrate the Ta-Tas!

What Ta-Tas Teach Us

Jane Jenkins Herlong

Illustrated by Beth R. Clark

This book is dedicated to the memory of my sister

Carol Jenkins Hardman

Who Survived
Aggressive Breast Cancer
A Double Mastectomy
And
Breast Reconstruction

Carol died unexpectedly December 20, 2009 from heart related issue only five months after our mother, Eleanor McElveen Jenkins passed away.

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1. Change can be painful.

It was summer. I remember running on Bird Key Beach in Charleston, South Carolina without a care in the world. The only thing that bothered me was that my chest was hurting. I had no clue as to what was causing the pain until my mother suggested we visit Miss Dot, the lady with the big red lips and other ***outstanding*** features. To my horror, Miss Dot put me in a dressing room in Belks Department Store and handed me one "double sling shot" after another. Sadly, the best the "bra-lady" could do was to offer me a lacy t-shirt with the little pink bow.

My body was changing.

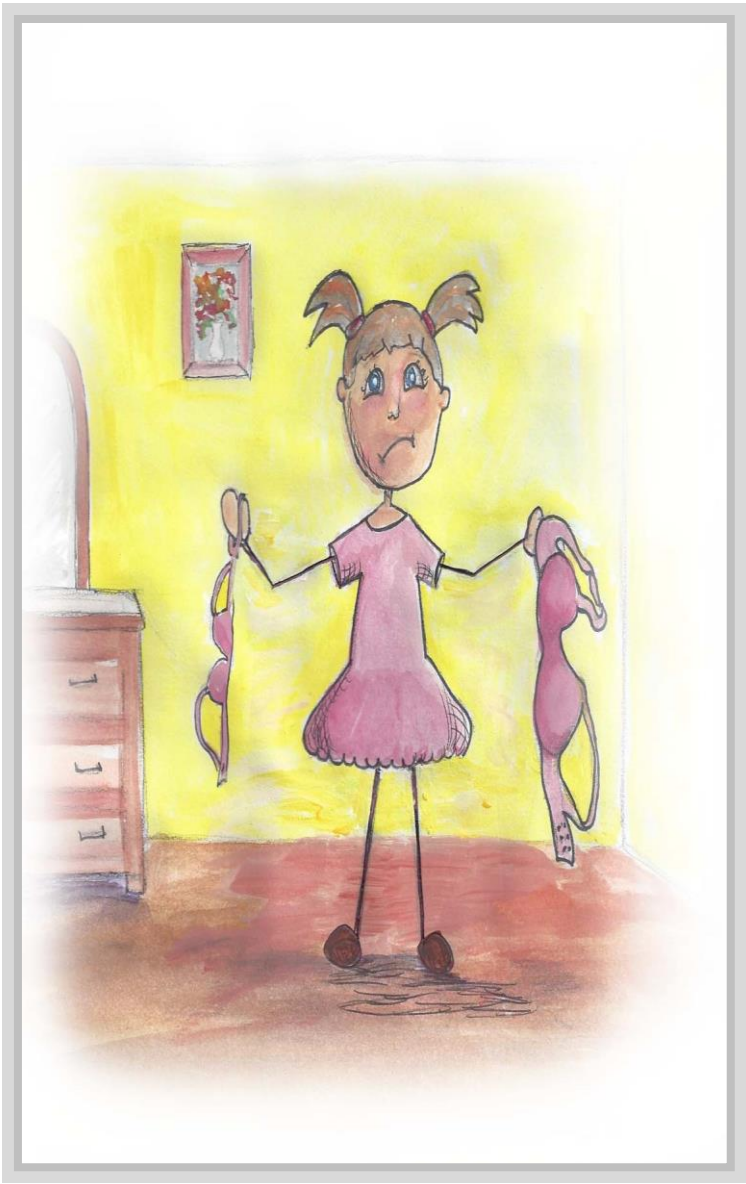
Anything new and different can be a challenge. Accept the fact that change can be painful.

2. Life is not fair.

I would sit behind girls in class and envy their wide bra straps and count how many hooks they had. I thought about the one pitiful, little hook I used to fasten my brassiere.

The quicker you learn it the better off you are; life is not fair. Call it what you will; **LIFE 101** is one of my favorite expressions. Eve ate the apple…

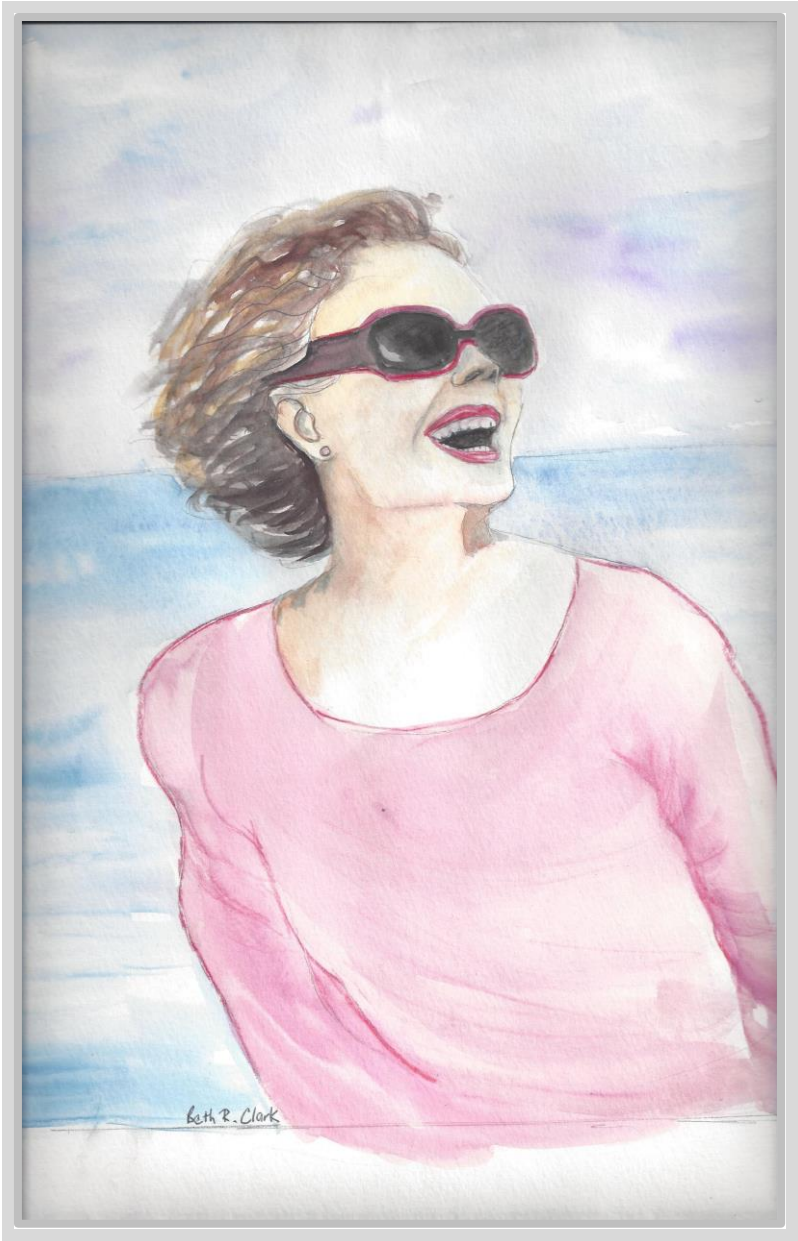
Life is not fair because people are imperfect and our world is flawed.



3. Be proud to be a woman.

When I finally realized that my physical maturity was God special way of creating me, I decided it was time to be proud to be a woman. After all, the new additions to my body were permanent. There comes a time to embrace all the wonderful opportunities and roles of being a woman.

Celebrate and embrace who you are!


Beth R. Clark

4. Learn who are your true Friends.

AAHHHHH…adolescence. Hormones in blue jeans.

Girls, we have all been there. We all know why the tall girls are the ones asked to slow dance with short boys. How many of us have had out-of-control hormonal boys stare at our bosoms and ask us one stupid question after another?

One of the absolute greatest lessons in life is learning who your true friends really are. The answer is not one hundred friends. Only search for six; three for each side of your casket.

You will cry, you will laugh, you will love AND you will find your truest friends.

5. Misuse and abuse will get you in trouble.

Remember the song called, “Be Careful”?

Be careful little eyes, what you see…
Be careful little ears what you hear…
Be careful little mouth what you say…
Be careful little hands, what you touch…
Be careful little feet, where you go…

And my addition…

Be careful with your Ta-Tas what you do…

So, be careful…

What you see, hear, touch, say and where you go are all important.

How you dress is a big signal. The scary part is the signals you send may be misunderstood by others. You may get yourself into a heap of trouble.

A friend of mine has an interesting word he made up. The word is CLEAVERAGE; instead of cleavage, use cleaverage.

Use wisdom and good judgment in how you act.

Use
Cleaverage!

6. Protect yourself.

There are few things more painful if you are a female than to be hit in your chest. OUCH! I was a Tomboy and I cannot tell you how many times I was hit, kicked, knocked and punched in that sensitive part of my body.

The main place to protect as we journey through life is our mind.

Because I grew up on a vegetable farm, I love using the analogy of picking tomatoes. The first half of your life we gather and the second half we cull.

Protect yourself and "cull" destructive people, places and things.

7. Be a nurturer.

When I finally became pregnant with our son, Holmes, I could not wait to nurse my child. I read all the books and did exactly what was suggested. The biggest issue was the confidence to try.

When Holmes was born, my parents had just left my sister who had also given birth. They were exhausted and very emotional. My mother took one look at me while I was nursing and asked, "Is he pulling? Is he drawing? Is he starving?"

I was able to breastfeed (hoorah) until Homes was about 11 months old and, one day during breastfeeding, he looked at me and said, "Cracker?" It was time to wean.

A woman's ability to nurture is not diminished by whether or not she decides to breastfeed. Nearly all women love to love to help, fix, provide, support, comfort, repair, resolve and the list goes on.

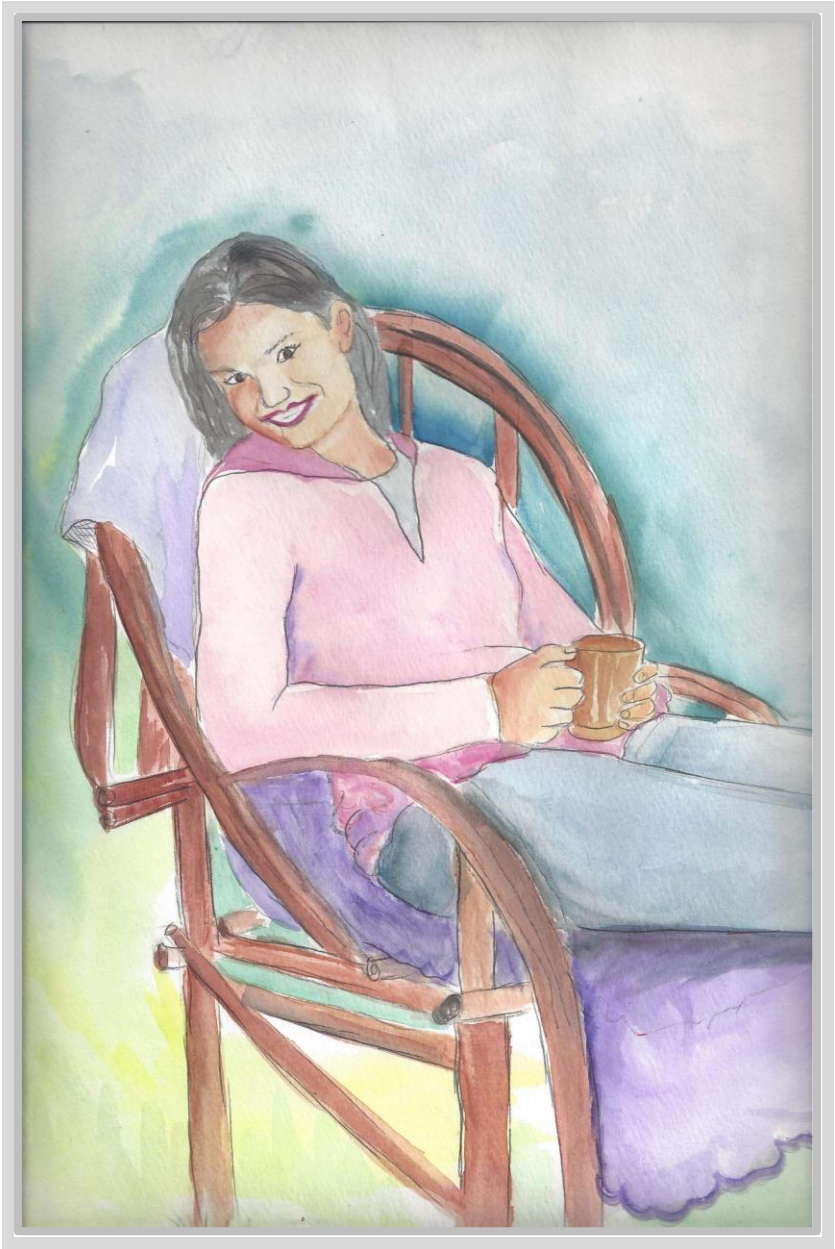
Beware of enabling which is a short-term fix with disastrous results. Choose to be a nurturer.

8. Take control of your destiny.

Some women want to be defined by a large chest. They flaunt, stuff, pad, and love to show their "blessings." These people choose to be defined by superficial means.

Being controlled by people or things is not the best way to live. Take control of your life and you determine who are you.

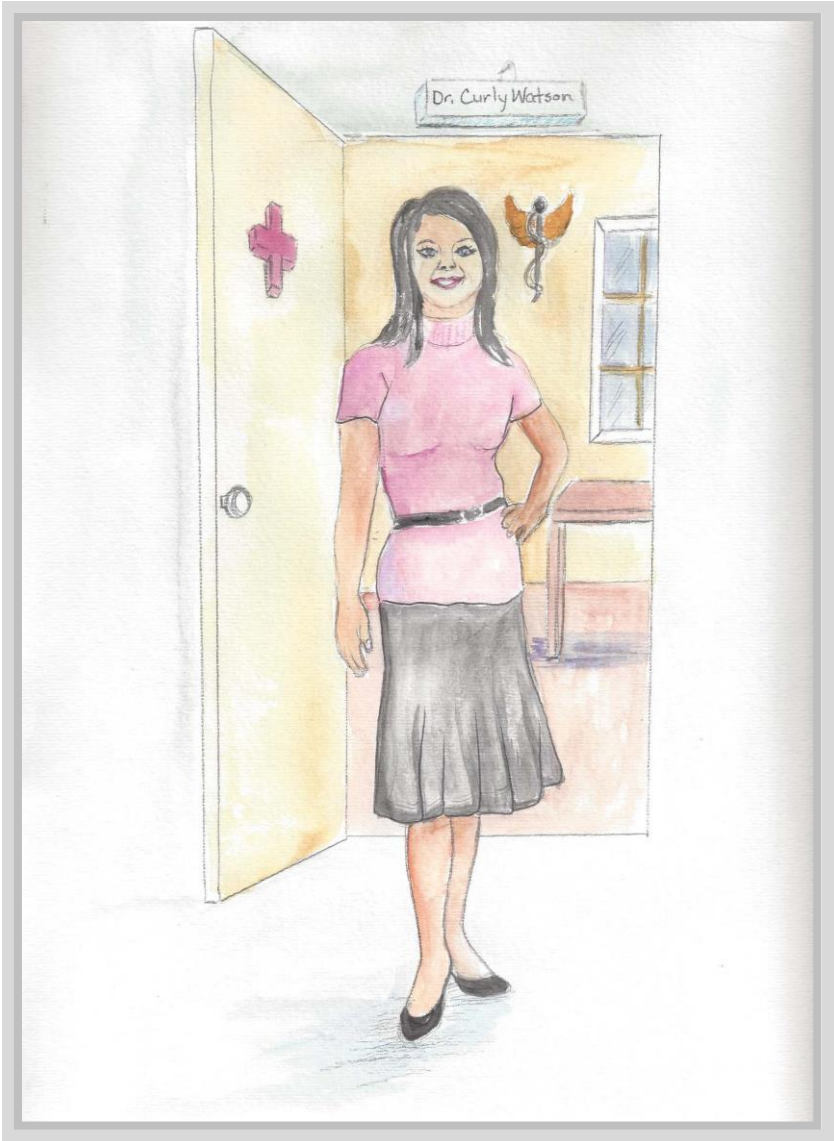
Beware of those with unresolved issues who try define or control you. Don't let your past mistakes define your future.



9. Practice good health.

There is way too much information out there to ignore taking care of yourself. When I became forty, my wonderful gynecologist, Dr. Gamewell Watson (who lived to be 102) made sure I understood the importance of having yearly mammograms. This made me pay more attention to eating habits, vitamins, exercise, and many other health related issues.

Many lives are saved from early detection and being pro-active with health matters.

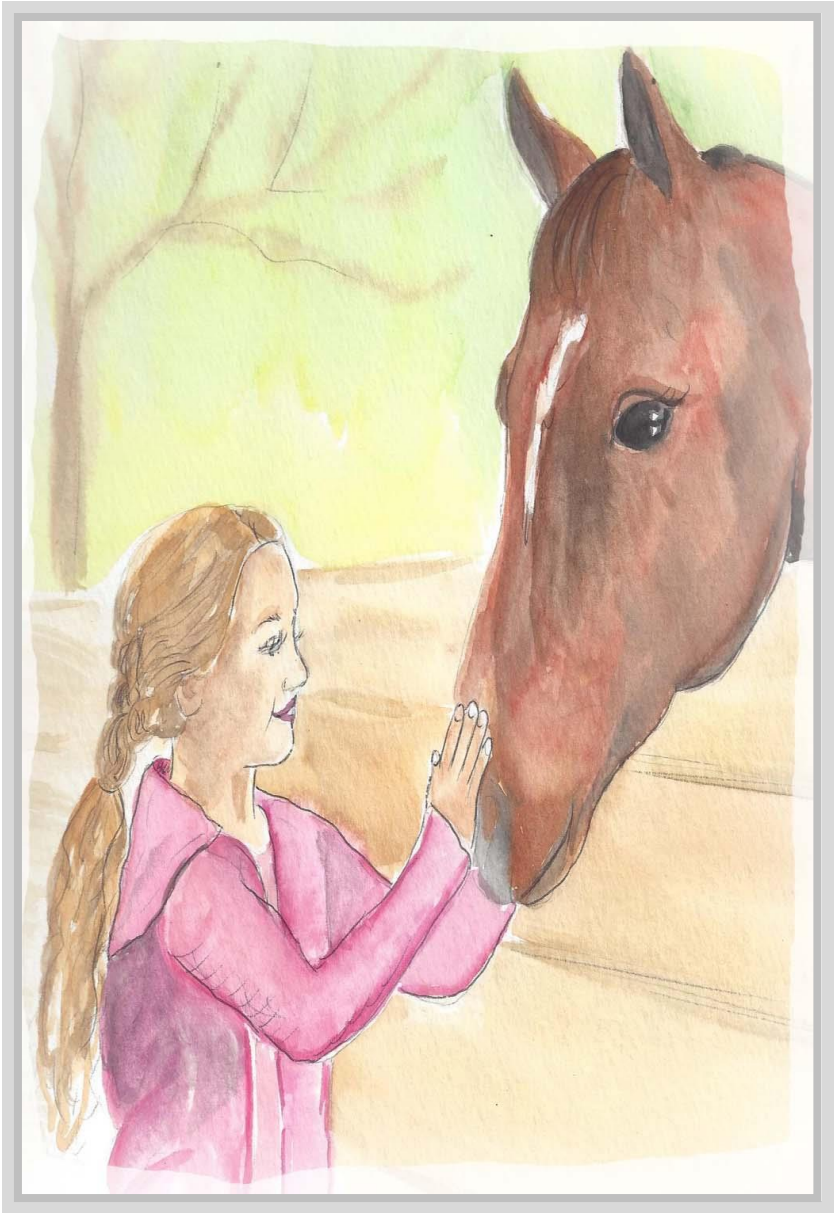

Dr. Curly Watson

10. Take time for yourself.

"If I can just get these children fed, rested and keep them from being sick…" This is what ran through my head as a young mother. I remember how much I enjoyed taking a shower or reading a book. Even during the moments of breastfeeding, I enjoyed sitting down and taking a break.

Everyone needs ME time. Get a manicure, pedicure, massage, etc. Take time to read a book, visit an elderly person or just chill out.

If you can't take a physical vacation, take a mental vacation. It will do you a world of good.



11. Have Great Support

What means more than cup size is having the proper support. All of us ladies have visited the lingerie department in search of the perfect bra.

Just the right support through life is a key to healthy living. Many times friends become our families and families become our friends.

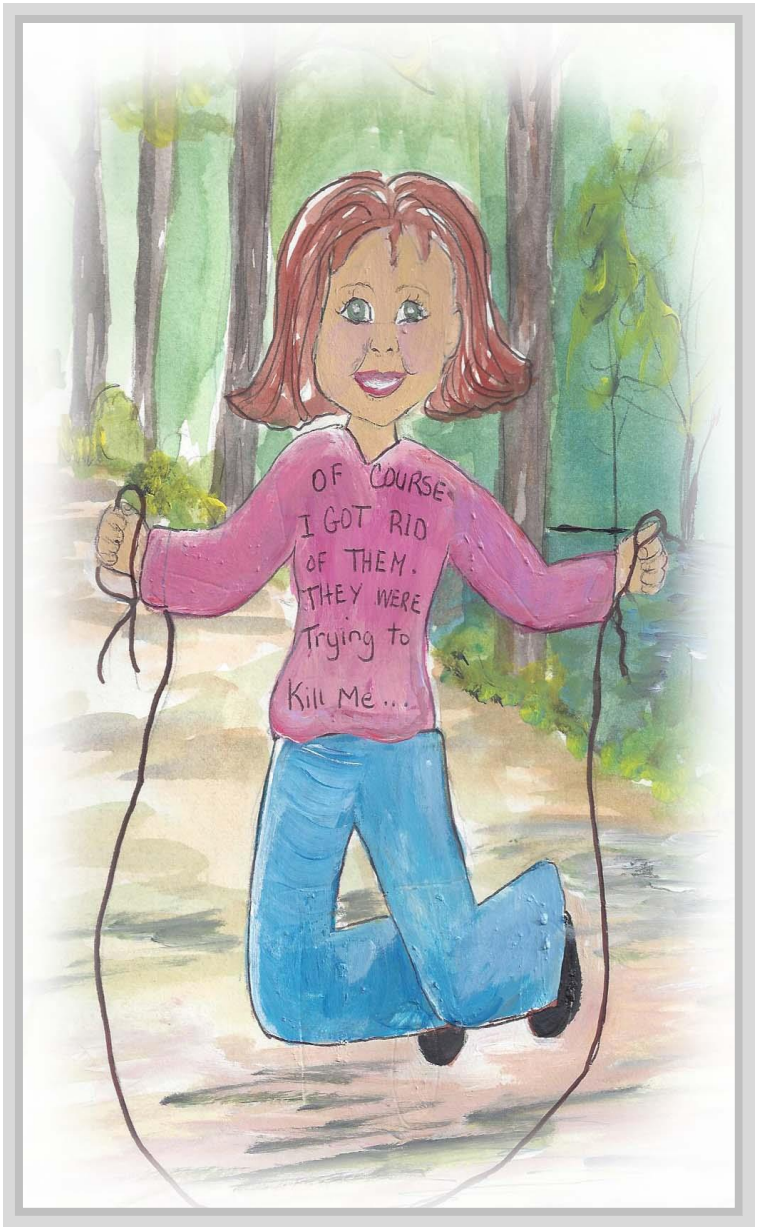
The most important goal is to surround yourself with the right people who love you and have your best interest at heart.

12. Get Rid of What Hurts You

More than likely, you or someone you know has been diagnosed with breast cancer. It strikes fear in women across the world. I have a friend who was diagnosed with breast cancer and opted for a double mastectomy. Another friend of mine designed a tee-shirt for her to wear with a great message, **"Of course I got rid of them. They were trying to kill me."**

Get rid of the cancerous things in your life. Know what to embrace and what to stay clear of. There are things and people in life that will take you down. Boundaries and borders have to be set and respected when dealing with situations beyond our control.

When people want to accuse without caring to know facts or truth, don't walk away, run.


OF COURSE
I GOT RID
OF THEM.
THEY WERE
Trying to
Kill Me...

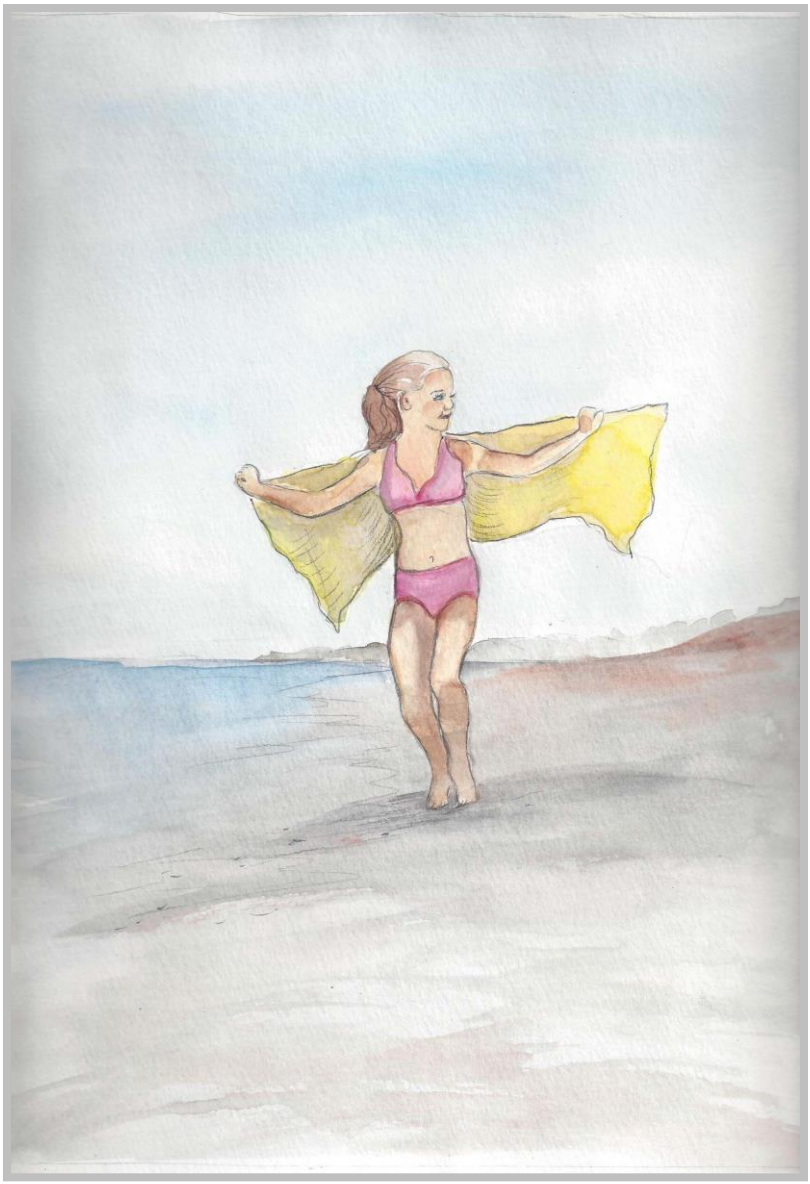
13. Learn to be courageous.

Some of the bravest and most courageous women I know, “fight like a girl,” in the battle against breast cancer. These are the women who have a perspective on life like no other. You know who they are almost immediately.

The more I mature the more I realize how important courage is. Standing up for what is right in the face of wrong and doing the right thing regardless of how you feel is a high calling.

I love the comment that Joyce Meyer repeats, “Do it afraid.”

Nothing great was every accomplished without being afraid. Just don’t be paralyzed by fear.



14. The True Meaning of Beauty

Our definition of beauty changes as we age and mature. I still love beautiful swimsuits and stiletto heels but not the way I look when I wear them now. My feet hurt and I get a good laugh when I try on my old swimsuits.

Beauty is not the reflection in a mirror. Beauty is in the eyes of a caregiver, comfort of a nurse, words of a friend or in the face of a compassionate physician. I saw beauty in the gentle spirit of a woman named Evelyn. She cleaned my mother's room during her many visits to the hospital. We thought she was mumbling to herself but she was actually praying for my mother's health. This is true beauty.

I saw beauty in the face of my college roommate, Candi as she fought her battle with breast cancer. I saw Candi love everyone she met and touch the lives of countless people.

Remained positive, loving and beautiful inside and out.

15. There is value in reconstruction.

Accept the fact that there may be a season for removal and a time for reconstruction. Ask any woman who has had a mastectomy and stood before a mirror. She will say her breasts do not look the same after breast reconstruction.

It is the same with relationships.

When there is fracture in your life, be sure you conduct yourself with high-principled thinking and not low-functioning reacting.

Principled behavior will help you face the future with the tools for reconstruction.

16. Accept who you are.

Most women complain about their bodies. I am too fat, too flat-chested, and the list goes on.

When it comes to matters of improvement, I am all for it. However, there are circumstances when nothing pleases.

I believe success begins when you truly accept yourself while continuing to strive to be your personal best.

17. Have balance; be in proportion.

A tape measure says it all. Bust and hips the same and the hip pons ten inches less. As a former Miss South Carolina and Miss America contestant, I can testify to this all-important beauty queen rule.

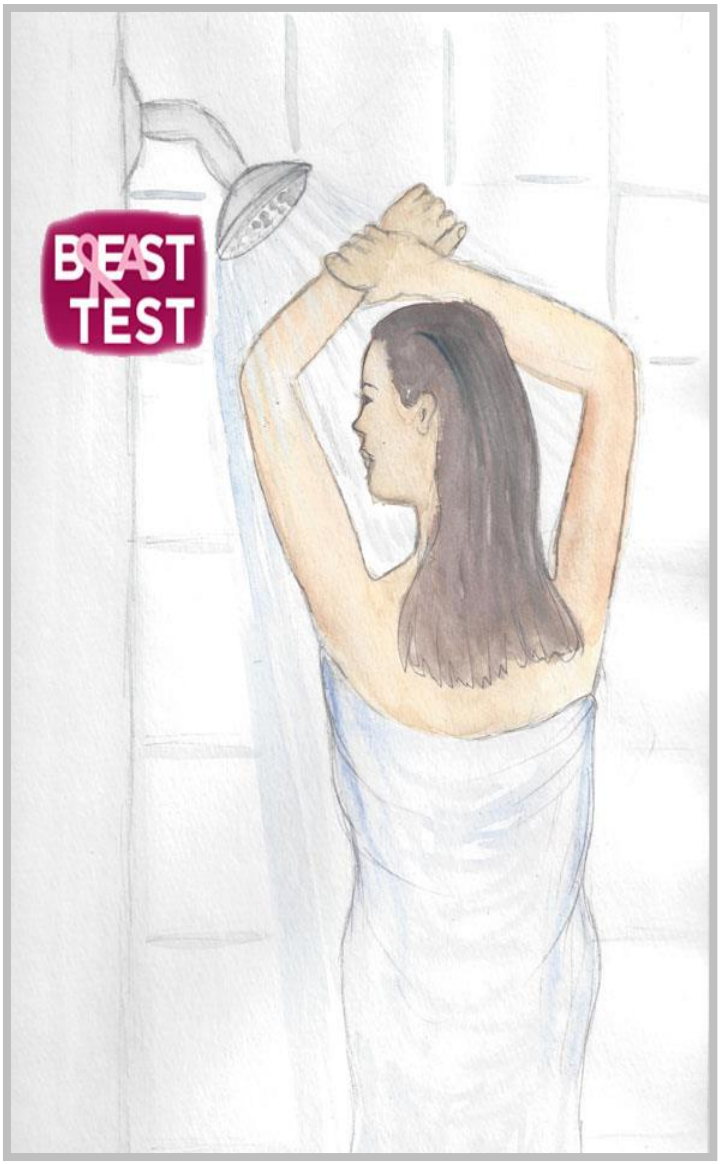
Balance and proportion are keys to a good life. Some of the most interesting people in the world have proportional living. They are not slanted one way or another but have learned how to balance all areas of their lives. ***No extremes are healthy. Practice balance.***

18. Self-Check

When women have breast issues, many discover these problems when they self-check. Doctors preach self-examination on a regular basis.

When troubles arise in life, it is important to first look at yourself. Ask questions like: is there anything I did to create this? What is the best way to handle this?

Examining yourself first is the healthiest way to handle issues in life.

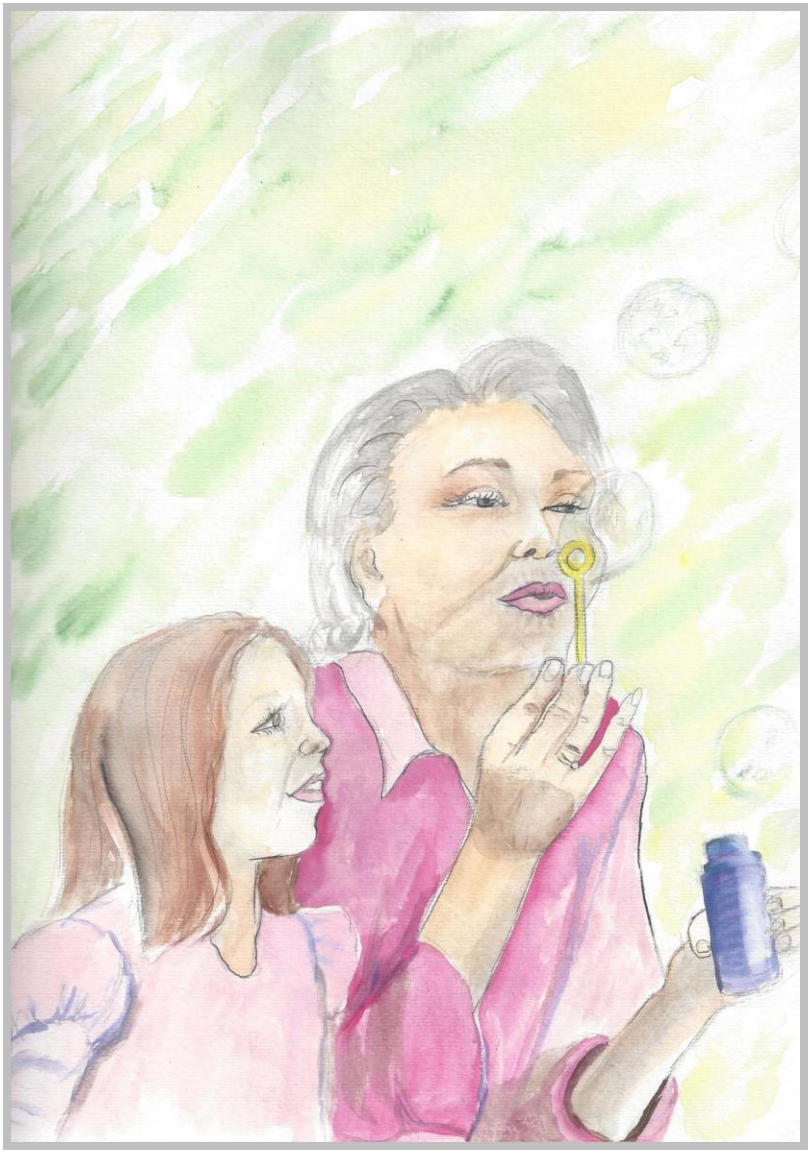

BREAST
TEST

19. Learn what is important and what is not.

From ages eight to eighty, life is a journey. Our bodies change throughout life as do our priorities.

I love the quote, “Don’t major in the minors.”

One of the best lessons in life is learning what to embrace and what to let go.

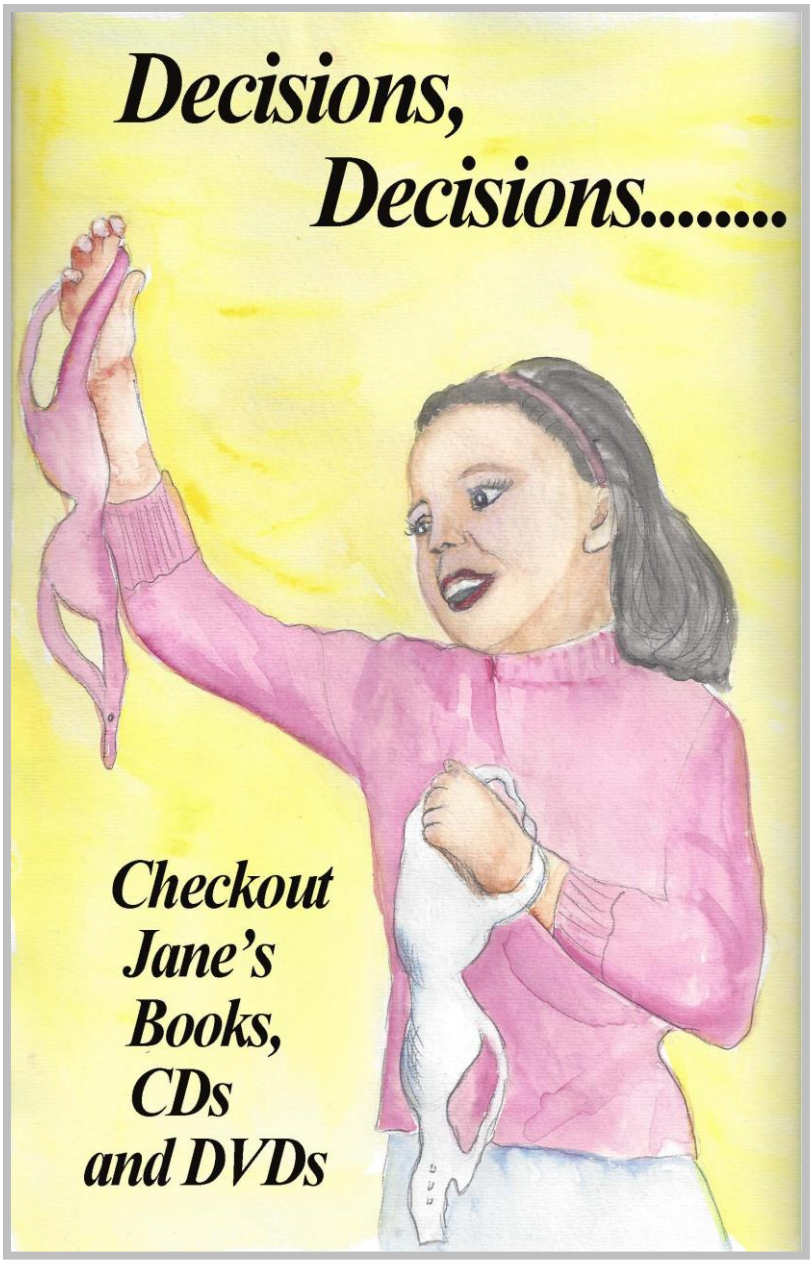


20. Be thankful for what you have.

Women constantly compare. Even before adolescence hits, we look around at others and begin to judge ourselves.

Being thankful is directly related to acknowledging that life is not fair. The best way to live a healthy life is to count your blessings.

Develop a thankful heart and realize the many blessings God has given to all of us!


Decisions,
Decisions.....
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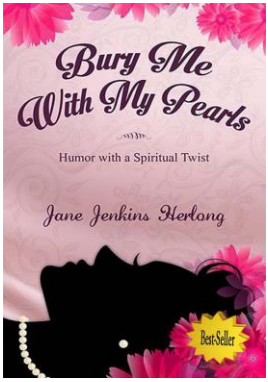
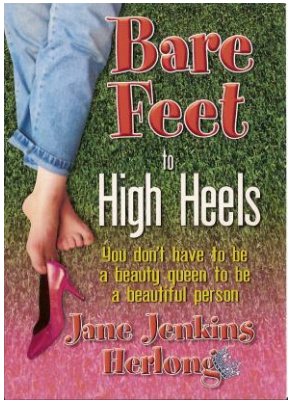


"Bare Feet to High Heels"

Laugh with Jane on her journey from the rows of a Johns Island, South Carolina tomato field to the Miss America runway.



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Beth R. Clark is well-known throughout the Southeast for her illustrations, limited addition prints, montages and murals. Beth's works include churches of Charleston, Edgefield County and the life of Strom Thurmond. Her artistry includes limited prints of the University of Georgia, Clemson University, and the University of South Carolina. Beth's murals are seen throughout Tennessee, South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia.