

Health and Hope: Lessons from My Parents, Who Survived the Holocaust



Growing up as the child of two Holocaust survivors, I was always acutely aware of the imperative to stay healthy. In the concentration camps, contracting a disease was tantamount to a death sentence. In my home, a cold was anything but common; a cough would set off alarm bells. I trained myself not to cough in the presence of my parents.

The fear of illness was a constant in my early years because **my father had been afflicted with a deadly disease** shortly after his liberation from the Mauthausen concentration camp. Tuberculosis was so dreaded in my family that I was forbidden even to utter the word, as if it were a curse.

Back then, it *was* a curse of sorts because there was no cure for TB, except to surgically remove the damaged lung tissue. Doctors performed that operation on my father, using whiskey for anesthesia. He survived, though left with less than half of one lung.

When my mother was reunited with my father, her fiancé from before the war, he was in a TB sanatorium in Germany. He freed her of her vows, saving her

him and moved into a wife's barrack adjacent to the sanatorium.