Secondary Gain – Rubin Balintino.

It is well known that secondary gain can play a significant role in maintaining psychological problems and physical disabilities. **Becoming free of depression radically changes family dynamics.** Becoming free of chronic back pain might involve losing disability allowances, having to go back to work, losing sympathy and support from one’s family. **An alcoholic needs to find other ways to have a social network** and to get family concern before becoming sober, or as part of the process. Can cancer or other life-threatening diseases involve secondary gains? The answer is a guarded “yes”. This means that, if you are working with this population, that you must explore in some careful and gentle ways the area of secondary gain. If it is clear that there appears to be a significant component of maintaining the disease related to secondary gains, then this can be handled via standard psychotherapeutic techniques. A particular malaise can have significant effects on the course of a disease is connected with a lack of meaning in life, a sense of hopelessness and sense of no goal or direction.

A paradox of such a life-threatening disease is that often those suffering will comment **“You know in some ways having this cancer has been a blessing”.** This is a seemingly strange statement until they go on to explain that the cancer has taught them many things: the importance of being in the present – touching. Feeling, smelling, sensing, tasting, loving, caring, really seeing things, and living one day or one hour or one moment at a time. They now have a perspective on what is really important to them – trivia become trivia, relationships strengthen, society-driven goals wane; and they become more intensely alive, packing lifetimes into days. They almost pity the rest of humanity with their humdrum routine existence, doomed to walking their treadmill until they just fall off the other end. This paradoxical response of people who have life-threatening diseases is a life-affirming way of coping, and you need do nothing but be an active and sympathetic listener, and **learn from them the art of living one day or one moment at a time.**