

ON Valentine's Day 2003, Kris Carr got a surprise all right: a diagnosis of an incurable form of cancer. The doctor told Carr, then a 31-year-old actress who had starred in several Budweiser commercials, that she had 24 slow-growing tumors on her lungs and liver: a stage four sarcoma.

Immediately she launched a vigorous campaign toward wellness. She consulted with oncologists, a macrobiotic chef, an acupuncturist, and a shaggy-haired spiritual guru, among others, and documented her efforts in a film that aired on The Learning Channel, *Crazy Sexy Cancer*. Carr wasn't searching for joy—she was trying to save herself. But personal happiness was the by-product of her life overhaul.

Before her diagnosis, Carr was struggling emotionally but viewed changing her life as difficult, even impossible. Her good salary as a commercial actress didn't allay feelings of frustration and insecurity, given the grueling nature of auditioning. "For women, it's a line of work that is focused on physical appearance rather than substance. I was always being judged, and always waiting for permission from casting directors to do what I wanted to do. I probably got more rejections in one week than most people get in a lifetime." Yet to give up on performing, her childhood dream, didn't seem an option.

A true nature lover, Carr had nevertheless been living in New York City for more than a decade. Thoughts of moving to the country popped into her head from time to time, but she quickly shot them down; a rural existence couldn't be reconciled with the life of an actress.

Carr's social life was further fueling her insecurities. "I was dating guys who were basically vampires, just sucking the life out of me and then disappearing. I would think to myself, 'This guy treats me bad, but there's something exciting about him.' I was addicted to drama."

The shock of the diagnosis and the prospect of a much shorter life than she had ever imagined transformed Carr's inner voices into stentorian commands. She immediately sold her apartment and moved to Woodstock, a lush and funky community two hours north of the city. "I was like a plant moving toward the sunshine," she says. She ditched her cavalier boyfriend du jour and eventually married Brian, the sweet cameraman with whom she made her film. "In my pre-diagnosis

and attractiveness to the disease. Her latest book, *Crazy Sexy Cancer Survivor: More Rebellion and Fire for Your Healing Journey*, includes dating tips, raw food ideas, meditation tips, and advice on acceptance and forgiveness.

"I'm much happier now that I listen to my gut more, and now that I have the courage to think that my voice matters," Carr says. "In my old life, I was always trying to see if people liked me, if they accepted me. Now I speak from my heart."

When she goes to conferences about nutrition for cancer patients, "I'm the only person there without letters after my name," she says. "I have to trust that I'm smart and capable. Before, I would second-guess myself into inaction. Now I'm more willing to take risks."

Living with cancer is in itself not hard for her, she says, even though it is presumably a constant reminder of how fragile life is. "I'd rather have one phenomenal year than 90 mediocre ones. When you are really living, it really doesn't matter how long you're here."



life, I wouldn't have noticed Brian, because I wasn't responding to nice guys."

Carr's health today is remarkably robust—the tumors have not progressed. And her new career as a health advocate is flourishing: Her sassy, defiant voice brings resolve and comfort to many cancer patients, especially young women who don't want to sacrifice their vitality