



How to Experience Healing While Facing Cancer

manual

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Introduction

This manual is written by a Harnessing Happiness team member who truly wanted to share her experience while facing cancer. We are completely grateful to her for documenting her journey.

One of the most frightening experiences one can have is to be diagnosed with cancer or have a loved one with cancer. It has been said cancer is a club one doesn't want to belong to.

This manual is meant to help those going through cancer. Cancer is a personal journey. An important lesson on this path is to know there is no right or wrong way to fight cancer. We need to have respect for one another on where we are in the journey and how we deal with it.

I am a cancer survivor and felt it was important to share my experiences. I was diagnosed with a rare and serious stage four cancer. I was given very little hope from top cancer specialists, however I did not accept their opinions. My motto instantly became "Live! Live! Live!"

The first week after my diagnosis was a blur of angst, tears, and fear. It is now one year later and I am in remission. I am appreciative to the great medical team I found, family, friends, and the kindness of strangers. This manual is a way of giving back and sharing my experience of cancer and healing.

One of my first activities was to affirm a miracle. I got a canvas and painted it with a simple rendering of me holding a banner that said "My Miracle" and "Miraculous Events Do Happen." Surrounding the painting were stars and positive words such as: love, healing, optimism, support, blessings, determination, will, strength and most importantly....faith.

Instead of rehearsing the diagnosis over and over in my mind and aloud, I repeated positive messages. My dear Godmother affirmed, "It is not your time." I repeated this and other positive phrases over and over and began to believe them.

The first miraculous, life-affirming event happened within a week of diagnosis. It was a bright, beautiful afternoon and I was outside with my children. My children were cheerfully zipping around and I was doing my best to be somewhat jovial. I held back the tears and was doing my best to hold it together for a few minutes in front of my little girls.

I wore bright red that day in an attempt to feel spunky even though I was anything but. Suddenly I spotted a red butterfly unlike anything I had ever seen lying on the ground. As I grew closer to the little creature appeared lifeless and flattened. My heart sank for the tiny and majestic soul. I immediately related to the creature. I felt like I was the crushed red butterfly. The children noticed and inquired what was happening. Softly I picked it up to give it love.

Magically the butterfly came to the life and gently flew away as if saying, “You are going to make it.” We all cheered, smiled, and clapped. This little red butterfly gave me a glimmer of hope. I was overwhelmed with gratitude as it was for me, the symbol of hope.

I have never seen this red butterfly in nature before or after this day and have researched the type. There is no butterfly in literature that looks like this insect. It is an anomaly – a miracle.

Change is inevitable in life. Some of the changes are very challenging, however new life can emerge. The butterfly teaches the magic of life. A caterpillar lays a new foundation as the stage of chrysalis begins. The caterpillar weaves itself into a cocoon and appears lifeless. The butterfly struggles to emerge. Then from the chrysalis comes a new winged creature. The struggle is important in the growth process it causes you to develop your ability to fly. Flight now becomes a new way of life.

The following exercises are a testament as to what carried me through.

Cancer Blessings

Apologies

Number One Priority

Courage - Compassion

Equipping - Empowering

Resilience - Resolutions

Exercise 1

C

Cancer Blessings

Exercise 1

C Cancer Blessings

The biggest blessing of this disease is learning to savor each moment and day.

Blessing that can come from cancer:

1. The realization that all we have is this present moment
2. Getting to know very quickly who our real friends and family are.
3. We no longer sweat the small stuff.
4. We begin to realize the kindness and goodness of people.
5. Great appreciation for nature.
6. Thankful to anyone who is helping us in any way.
7. Slowing down, prioritizing what is truly important.
8. Developing the art of loving more deeply.
9. Making better choices.
10. The realization of how strong we are.
11. Becoming more vulnerable.
12. Once we've had cancer, everything else becomes easy.
13. Learning to live one day at a time.
14. Gaining more resolve.
15. Becoming more compassionate and empathetic.
16. Birthing the warrior within.

Blessing Suggestions

Another way to look at blessings is for us to bless the medical staff, hospital, and the actual treatment. It's a feeling of inclusion and working with the health care professionals. As I arrived at the hospital, I'd bless the building and all of the people in it. I put my hands on the bags of chemotherapy drugs prior to infusion. The nurses and I blessed the chemotherapy. I placed post-it notes with positive expressions such as wondrous, healing, and effective on the bags of chemotherapy.

1. What blessing is the easiest for you, and why?

2. What blessing has been especially difficult for you, and why?

3. What are three blessings that you feel have come from having cancer?



Exercise 2

A Apologies

Exercise 2

Apologies

A cancer diagnosis is a very serious life event. One of the opportunities is a chance to gain more self-awareness, and be accountable. It can be a time to make apologies and amends, that you have been longing to make, but didn't quite have the courage to do.

This is a time of self-reflection and gaining insight. It's now a chance to awaken the hero or heroine within, by not only fighting for life but also, fighting for a good life. A heightened awareness comes over a person while facing one's own mortality.

Think back, starting at the earliest memories. Whom do we need to forgive? Whom do we need to ask for forgiveness? We do this exercise primarily for ourselves. We need use our best judgment as to when it would be appropriate to ask for forgiveness. Going through this experience can be truly liberating. This is a chance to let old hurts wash away because they no longer serve us as we seek healing. Forgiveness holds within it power for our peace of mind. It transmutes fury and frustration into calmness and courage. Feeling forgiveness is the oil that lubricates the friction within our hearts. One does not have to pardon the wrongdoing; one just needs to relinquish the anger generated by the wrongdoing. By forgiving another, we inevitably forgive ourselves.

Self-forgiveness is essential to healing. It is easy to blame oneself for the disease. We question ourselves regarding health and habits. We wonder if we should have paid attention sooner. We need to let this go and move forward from this present day, making the best decisions possible.

By forgiving others and ourselves, the energy of denial, confusion or deception no longer exits. Life may not be exactly what we bargained for, yet in the end, we become so much more than we ever hoped for. One would call this a prized personal victory.

1. Make a list of all the people you want to make amends to, including yourself. From the list, whom do you feel would be the most difficult to apologize to, and why?

2. Make a list of all the people you want to forgive. Whom do you think would be the hardest to forgive, and why?

3. From your amends and forgiveness list, make a plan of action as to what you are going to do with these people and situations.

Exercise 3

N

Number One Priority

Exercise 3

N

Number One Priority

A cancer diagnosis elicits the survival instinct. Health is the number one issue. Everything else in one's life takes a back seat to getting answers and getting better. Number one priorities include research, resources, and a great relationship with your health practitioners.

This is a time to focus on healing. Whatever we focus on becomes our reality. Focus on what is truly important is the gift that turns confusion into certainty. By focusing on something, we energize it. When applied properly, it creates of powerful convergence of thought, action and end results.

Research can be a daunting prospect. There are many questions in research including: figuring out the disease process, understanding the best first line treatment strategy, where is the best feasible care, clinical trial information, and so forth. If possible, limit Internet usage and focus on treatment and positive strategies.

Tapping into resources is an important step. Resources may include a support group or another person who has been through a similar experience. Having the support of someone who has gone through a similar crisis can be helpful. This is also a time of receiving from others. People genuinely want to help and be of assistance.

Finding the right doctor is essential. It's a mentality of a partnership and working together. It truly takes a village to persevere through cancer. A very important element in healing is being comfortable and having a sense of being well cared for by your doctor. Your life is in their hands. Does your doctor have great skills, experience, and access to the latest research?

Cancer certainly shifts priorities. Research, resources, and a positive relationship can be extremely helpful in the journey towards health and healing.

Suggestions

1. Be your own advocate.
2. Get more than one opinion.
3. Keep meticulous records.
 - *Organize the reports and paperwork so you can easily give records to other doctors. Keep CD's of scans and reports in one place and in chronological order.*
4. Ask a lot of questions. Bring a list of questions to the doctor and take notes.
 - *Be fearless in questioning what is proposed. Do not take anything as gospel from a practitioner or at face value.*
5. Do not believe when hearing or reading a life prognosis on the type of cancer you have. There are so many variables.
6. Focus your research on the exact type of cancer have.
7. Look towards the future.
8. If something doesn't work, have contingency plans.
9. Unexpected things will happen. Being flexible and ready for changes helps calm fears.
10. Do not get involved with other people's drama. Stay away from angst concerning their cancer or yours.

1. What are the three suggestions that are the easiest for you?

2. What are three suggestions that are the most difficult for you, and why?

3. Do you have an easy time asking for assistance? If not, why?

4. Are you comfortable with your doctor? If not, why? Do you feel free to openly discuss everything with him or her? If not, why?



Exercise 4

C

Courage and Compassion

Exercise 4

C

Courage and Compassion

COURAGE

Courage is facing the dragon of cancer and slaying it while saying “Get behind me because I’m not going into the future with you.” John Wayne said, “Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.” It’s only natural to be scared of cancer and the challenges of treatment. It is important to acknowledge the feelings and muster up the courage to face those feelings. Feel the fear and go forth. It does not mean you are never going to have bad moments or days, it means that you keep getting back up. A Japanese Proverb says, “Fall seven times and stand up eight.” When life knocks you down, you stand back up. There will be excruciatingly long days, but believing there are better days ahead is essential to healing.

In the early days of diagnosis and treatment I distinctly recall being very jealous of those with the “popular cancer,” or those I perceived to have “easier cancers.” I was envious of healthy people and thought they have no idea what it is like to be so sick and scared.

As time elapsed, my heart began to soften towards others. I began to realize we are all doing the best we can and that in my own small way I could be part of the solution. I also began to realize there are every day heroes amongst us and we are not the only ones going through a trying time.

People would always call me courageous. I think it is true. I just kept saying, I want to live, I want to live. And Winston Churchill became my personal hero because his words never left me. He said, “Never, Never, Never give up.”

COMPASSION

Feeling compassionate is a mingling of being beautifully kind-hearted, openhearted, softhearted, and warm-hearted. An important part of compassion is our connectedness with people and animals. Compassion literally means, “to suffer together.” Researchers have found a biological basis in feeling compassionate towards others. Regions of the brain light up showing pleasure when helping others. Research has also shown a slowing in heart rate and a release of oxytocin, when we feel compassion.

The wise soul soon realizes comparing ourselves to others only leads to despair. Do not look down on others with perceived “easier situations.” They need compassion.
We are one. What happens to one happens to all.

The compassionate heart is the happy heart. Have compassion for yourself. Cancer is very difficult and being kind and loving to ourselves is essential. Compassion is a form of mightiness in itself.

Today, I am much softer to myself and with others. In the wise words of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, “The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.”

1. Who are three people in your life and/or historical figures who exemplify the virtue of courage?

2. Where do you think you are the most courageous?

3. Where do you think you are the least courageous, and how can you transform this.

4. Who are three people in your life and/or historical figures who exemplify the virtue of compassion?

5. Where do you think you are the most compassionate?

6. Where do you think you are the least compassionate, and how can you transform this?

Exercise 5

E

Equipping and
Empowering

Exercise 5

Equipping and Empowering

EQUIPPING

Cancer is not for the faint of heart. It is a strong opponent. There are many books and resources available for fighting cancer. It can be overwhelming wade through all of the information. Then you can feel guilty if you are not following a prescribed plan outlined by “the experts.” It is clearly impossible to be perfect so instead focus on a few good things done well. Decide on just a few strategies to implement and go from there.

With a Joan of Arc spirit you can carry a banner of healing. We are equipped with good nutrition, the best medical care available, and alternative forms of medicine. We can equip ourselves for battle with the four S's: Signs, Symbols, Sentences, and Song.

Signs:

I had signs of what I wanted in my life (vacation destinations, fun, health). I have an Onionhead card that said, “Healed” on my dresser. It will remain there.

1. Create signs of inspiration.
2. A vision board with healing pictures and quotes.
3. Signs with drawings of healthy organs and body systems.
4. 3x5 cards on a key ring with inspiration quotes.

Symbols:

A symbol is something that is meaningful and personal. It could be a four- leaf clover, angels, butterflies, a picture of a healthy organ, a word, etc. This symbol can become a reminder of healing every time you see it. The symbols that were especially meaningful included angels, butterflies, and paper cranes.

Sentences:

A sentence or phrase to be said over and over is a survival technique. My sentence was, “It is not my time to die” and “I want to live, live, live.” I had affirmations taped to my mirror.

Songs:

These are the songs that meant the most to me.

Kick Buns Playlist:

That Power.....	will.i.am
The Middle.....	Jimmy Eat World
Tubthumping.....	Chumbawamba
Happy.....	Pharrell Williams
The Warrior.....	Patty Smyth
The Climb.....	Miley Cyrus
The Remedy (I Won't Worry)....	Jason Mraz
Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now.....	McFadden & Whitehead
Don't Stop Believin'.....	Journey
Jai Ho.....	A.R. Rahman, Sukhwinder Singh

Soothing/Inspirational Playlist:

Need You Now.....	Plumb
Hear Our Prayer Oh Lord.....	Cynthia Clawson
It is Well With My Soul.....	Chris Rice
Come to Jesus.....	Chris Rice
Jesus Take the Wheel.....	Carrie Underwood
Oh Draw Near Oh Lord.....	Selah
Press On.....	Selah
Blessings.....	Laura Story
What Faith Can Do.....	Kutless

EMPOWERING

We are not a cancer “victims.” We are victorious and empowered. Empowerment is facing that which we cannot control and using our inner spirit to create something good. Being empowered is our birthright. The Harnessing Happiness website has a free downloadable manual for personal empowerment. The manual discusses strategies for empowerment through words, actions, intentions, and thought.

Yoda says, “Do or do not. There is no try.” I was determined to fight cancer with everything I had. I started juicing and eating organic foods. I was careful about what I ate, however not perfect. A good friend told me to “eat whatever the hell I want.” I did just that in the spirit of living and enjoying life.

Music was very cathartic. My song was “Power” by will.i.am. The lyrics included: “I’m alive, I’m alive, I’m alive and loving every second, minute, hour, bigger, better, stronger, power.” This song helped get me moving when I was especially down.

It is true that one can feel very helpless when realizing that cancer grew without us even knowing it. However, we can transmute that helplessness into self-empowerment through the way we take the journey of our healing.

To be empowered is to feel empowered
and
To feel empowered is a victory in itself!

1. What are the three ways you are going to equip yourself in coping with cancer?

2. What are the three ways you are going to empower yourself in coping with cancer?

Exercise 6

R

Resilience and
Resolutions

Exercise 6

R Resilience and Resolutions

RESILIENCE

“The ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens” is the definition of resilience offered by Merriam-Webster. We need only to look at history and within on our experiences to understand the resiliency of the human spirit. In this difficult cancer journey, we can aspire to a greater sense of wholeness. We must maintain our sense of humor. Believing there are better days ahead helps increase our resilience and resolve.

If cancer picks a fight with us, we’ll fight back.

Rest is restorative. Rest, Relax, and Recharge.

When we feel good, we’ll thoroughly enjoy the moment.

We seek to be whole, not perfect.

In moments of desperation we believe “this too shall pass.”

RESOLUTION

A favorite greeting card written by Brian Burns and George Harris reads:

“I believe in mind over matter.

I believe in the human spirit to prevail.

I believe in miracles and blessings both great and small.

I believe in possibilities.

I believe that hurdles in life are meant to be jumped over, not as something to stop us.”

Hospital stays can be particularly challenging. We as patients are so sick and trying to do the simplest task is monumental. While in the hospital I was blessed to have Agnes, the French version of Florence Nightingale as a nurse. Agnes' loving touch and words provided much encouragement. She wrote on my whiteboard motivational phrases:

Je garde le moral (I keep my spirit up)

Ca va Aller mieux (It's going to get better)

Vivre, Vivre, Vivre (Live, Live, Live)

WE

Count our blessings.

Apologize to others, forgive others and us.

Need to focus on number one priorities.

Connect with courageousness within and compassion for others.

Effuse empowerment and are.

Resolute in our resilience.

1. What is the line from the lesson that means the most for you and why?

2. When do you feel the most resilient?

3. When do you feel the most resolute?

4. Where do you feel this manual helped you the most?

Positive Suggestions

Eat fresh, healthy food.

Have fruit and vegetables cut and ready to eat in the refrigerator.

Make smoothies.

Have water foundations.

Light candles.

Play soft music.

Keep things neat and clean.

Watch TV programs that are uplifting.

See positive films.

Read inspiring books.

Have a pet if possible.

Be open to receiving love and support.

Take quiet or meditative time.

When or if bed ridden, make certain you have very calming things to look at.

Wear your favorite color.

Only talk to people who support you.

Stay as creative as possible.

Every day make a list of what you love about yourself.

The ABC's of Healing

I Feel...

Alive

Brave

Compassionate

Diligent

Energized

Funny

Genuine

Hopeful

Insightful

Joyful

Kind

Loving

Mighty

Nurturing

Optimistic

Persistent

Quiet

Receptive

Self-Confident

Tenacious

Unwavering

Victorious

Well-informed

Xtremely determined

Young at heart

Zen



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