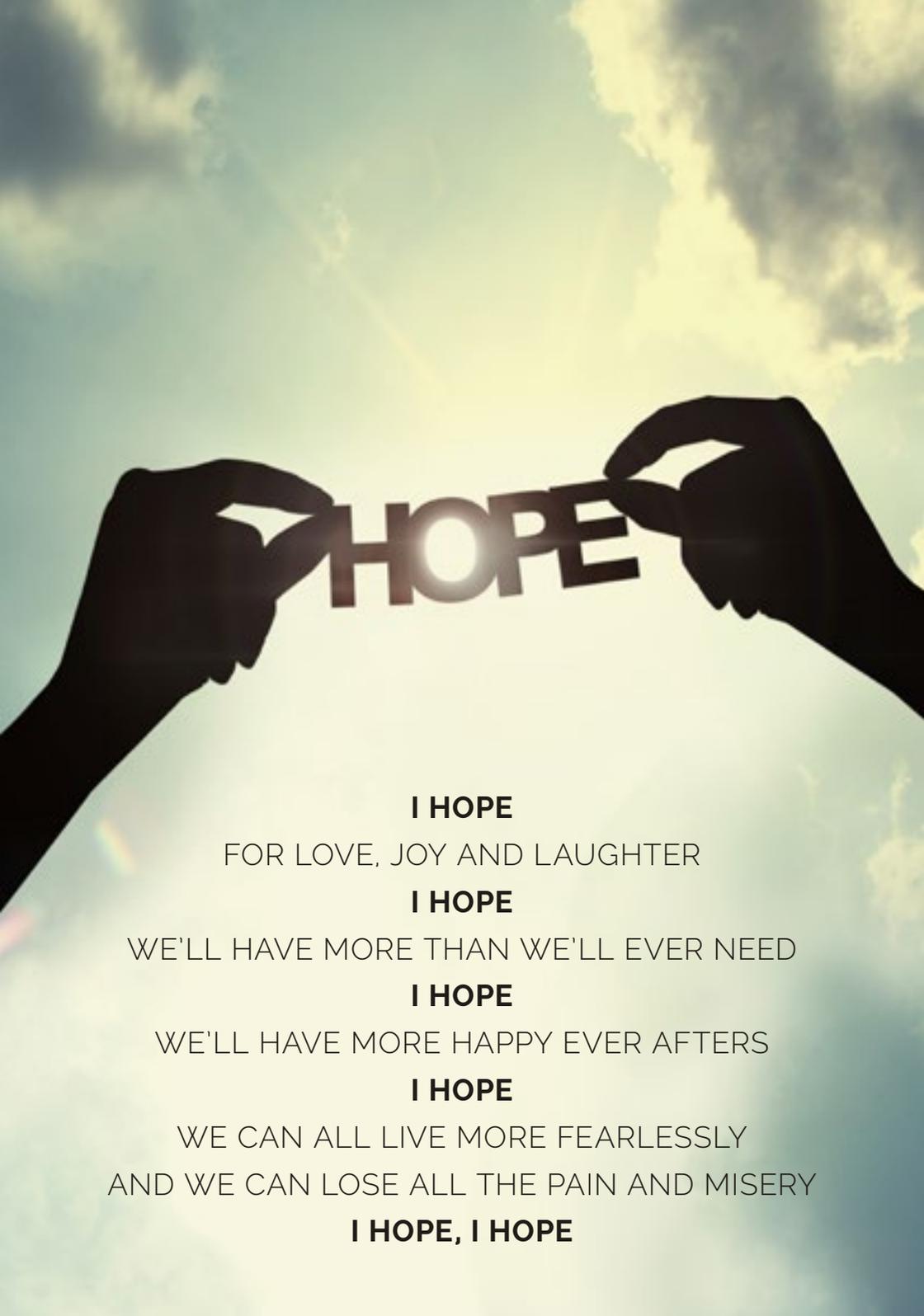


“ Too often when bad things happen people focus on the negativity but it doesn't have to be that way - strength, courage, humour, determination, friendships, vision and lots more can all appear and flourish in times of adversity. At the end of it all, I feel I have a whole new perspective on life. ”

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# REFLECTIONS

A collection of personal stories, thoughts and anecdotes from people's own cancer experiences, that may support and inspire others beginning a cancer journey.



**I HOPE**

FOR LOVE, JOY AND LAUGHTER

**I HOPE**

WE'LL HAVE MORE THAN WE'LL EVER NEED

**I HOPE**

WE'LL HAVE MORE HAPPY EVER AFTERS

**I HOPE**

WE CAN ALL LIVE MORE FEARLESSLY  
AND WE CAN LOSE ALL THE PAIN AND MISERY

**I HOPE, I HOPE**

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

**Reflections has been put together by Action Cancer with the support of people who have been through the cancer journey.**

Each story, anecdote, reflection and tip has been provided by those who have either used Action Cancer services or who volunteer for our charity. We are truly grateful to each person for their input and for their support with this book.

As well as providing personal insight and coping strategies, this book also gives information on ways Action Cancer too can help you at this time and we have provided an overview of services and contact details at the back of this book.

We hope you will find this book helpful and would encourage you to pass on to others you feel might also benefit from its contents.

We hope that the information provided in this book will go some way towards helping you work through the worries, concerns and emotions you may be experiencing at this time and in doing so help still your mind to better manage your journey.

Thank you for reading our book and we wish you well on your journey ahead.

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# HOW WE COPE

Tips and techniques from others that may help during the journey.

*"Today might be bad but tomorrow might be better!"*

*"Stay away from Google!"*

"It's an old cliché, but **take it one step at a time** - in my head I broke the treatment down into chunks - surgery, chemo, radio - that made it all seem more manageable - when I thought about it all together as 8 months of treatment, I got overwhelmed!"

"It helped to **break it down** into tasks, project managing the journey, focus on one specific event/task at a time."

"Setting **realistic goals and targets** that mean something and setting a time for achieving these."

"Learning the **art of deep breathing, relaxation and/or meditation** are important - stress makes us take shallow breaths, at a sub-conscious

level, and many of us have forgotten how to breathe deeply."

"When dealing with losing my hair I found using a **pure cotton bandanna soaked in cold water** helped soothe the tingling and tension on my scalp."

"Chemotherapy - I found **eating ice lollies, particularly pear and pineapple flavours**, and drinking slushies helped soothe your mouth from ulcers, dry mouth and the tin like taste."

"I tried all sorts of bras post surgery, but **maternity bras** worked best for me (I had a lumpectomy) - soft but supportive!"

"Getting **plenty of rest, having duvet days**, listen to your body and don't feel guilty about doing it!"

"You can pretend to others that you're not tired or uncomfortable, but **don't pretend to yourself**. When tired, don't fight it."

"Take all the support that is offered to you, **from anyone who offers it!**"

"**Never be afraid to ring the oncology helpline** - it's there for a reason - I rang it many times and it always made me feel reassured and secure."

"If you are having breast surgery that will require drains being used, **take a gift bag to hospital to carry them in** - it avoids them getting tangled and pulling and also hides the contents."

"**Take a small mirror with you** if you want to use one as there are rarely mirrors in the bathroom on the ward."

"Take a **spray mister** to hospital to keep your face (and feet!) cool - even in winter wards are often warm."

"After surgery, **take great heed of the instructions** to rest."

"Getting fit, **keeping active** for recovery."

"Good days and bad days, **you learn ways to pick yourself up** from downers."

"Utilise the **services and support** available."

“**With the female patients who would normally wear make-up etc, I always told them to get back to putting some on, so that when they looked in the mirror, they saw a little of their old selves.**

**They also had a tendency to go home and stay in jammies/ trackie bottoms and if that isn't their normal attire it prolonged their feeling of being 'ill'.**

**I always thought of it as a silly by-the-by until a couple of past patients recently told me it made a world of difference, and was a first step in getting 'back to normal' ”**

- Cancer Nurse Specialist

# “MAKE EACH MOMENT SPECIAL/COUNT.”

“It’s never too late to live a life that makes you proud.”

---

“Talking about it honestly with people, checking in.”

---

*“Take time to relax and don’t feel guilty about it!”*

---

“Acknowledge your priorities may have shifted.”

---

“Taking time away from everything - holiday, short break.”

---

“Focus on your Happy Endings, whatever or whoever they might be.”

---

*“Pursue your passions!”*

“Getting back to yourself over time, however long it may take.”

---

“Make sure your expectations on yourself are realistic.”

---

“Be proud of yourself for what you can do and what you have achieved, focus on positive outcomes.”

---

“Relationships with others can be tricky, sometimes these need to be addressed, and sometimes it’s better to walk away from them.”

---

“Your experience changes you and sometimes this means that with the ‘New You’, some of the people

from the ‘Old You’ either don’t understand the change or don’t want to, do what is best for you.”

---

“Fatigue will almost always kick in, this is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of your body saying, it’s time to rest and recuperate!”

---

*“Don’t focus on the how, focus on the recovery.”*



# OTHER JOURNEYS

Reflections and inspirations from other people who have "been there".

"Too often when bad things happen people focus on the negativity but it doesn't have to be that way - strength, courage, humour, determination, friendships, vision and lots more can all appear and flourish in times of adversity. At the end of it all, I feel I have a whole new perspective on life."

"I have kept all of my get well cards and letters - I was so touched that so many people took the time and energy to write to me. When I have a low day, I read them. Every time I read them I feel loved, valued, and touched - it helps me stay positive."

"I read somewhere that recovery reflects expectations - so I keep my expectations high!"

"I had a hair cut party before my hair fell out - flowers, wine, and lots of friends and laughs. It was the kindness of family and friends on that day that made me cry, not having my hair cut."

"All those shoes and clothes that you love and keep as "good" - wear them now and all the way through your treatment! Every single day deserves to be a good clothes day! I made a point of getting dressed up and putting on make up everytime I left the house, even if I was only going to Tesco - It made me feel better and more confident!"

"You can't not deal with it, you have to just find a way to deal with it."

"You learn to understand and recognise that your emotions will be up and down and you will have bad days along the way, but good days will also come and you need to hold on to this each time a bad day comes along."

"If I could pass on one piece of advice it would be 'Don't sweat the small stuff' (author Richard Carlson) - put things into perspective."

"I was inspired by reading the book 'The Only Way is Up' - Janet Gray."

"My approach was to 'Act strong, be strong', i.e. continue to work when you can, continue to do the things you enjoy and don't feel guilty about any emotion you feel."



“YOU CAN'T NOT DEAL WITH IT, YOU HAVE TO JUST FIND A WAY TO DEAL WITH IT.”

“ I used to look forward to every Friday as it was the last day of the working week and so my first chance to relax and unwind. After my cancer diagnosis, I took every opportunity to relax and unwind, why should I wait until the weekend to do this? I also took the time whilst waiting for my treatment to finish to reflect on my life.

At the beginning I focused on the negatives and felt that all the 'wrong' things I did were the reason I was sitting here today. However, another patient used her time to think about everything she had been blessed with in her life and I noticed she kept a little book with her and asked her what she was writing.

She told me she was listing all that she had to be proud of and grateful in her life and it was helping her to continue to be positive and focus on the good rather than the bad. I took my lead from her and started to keep my own little gratitude journal where I logged all the happy memories I had, all the good things that had happened and everything I should be grateful for.

I still use this and each time I feel thankful for something or someone I will log this, each time I get a nice card or hear a pleasant comment, I will keep these too. I can honestly say, I am a more relaxed and happy person than I even was before getting my diagnosis! ”



“ I always felt it was important to treat myself after each session of radiotherapy. Whilst the radiotherapy didn't always hurt, it wasn't the most pleasant of experiences so my thinking was if your body is going to have a negative experience, why not balance it out with a positive? Sometimes it was a cream bun, sometimes just a nice coffee and other times I went the whole hog and had a relaxing head massage. ”

“ I had a little book of quotes and positive thinking stories that I flicked through on the days that I felt down, I would like to share a few of these with others:

*Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realise they were the big things.*

- Robert Brault

*Some see a hopeless end, whilst others see an endless hope.*

- Author unknown

*Cancer is a word, not a sentence.*

- John Diamond

*I don't think of all the misery, but of all the beauty that still remains.*

- Anne Frank

These helped me. I hope they help someone else too. ”

“ This was the wee poem that I read a lot at the time of treatment:

### **Beannacht by John O'Donohue**

On the day when the weight deadens on your shoulders and you stumble,  
May the clay dance to balance you

And when your eyes freeze behind the grey window,  
And the ghost of loss gets in to you,  
May a flock of colours, indigo, red, green and azure blue,  
Come to awaken in you a meadow of delight

When the canvas frays in the currach of thought,  
And a stain of ocean blackens beneath you,  
May there come across the water  
A path of yellow moonlight to bring you safely home

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,  
May the clarity of light be yours,  
May the protection of the ancestors be yours,  
And so, may a slow wind work these words of love around you, an invisible cloak. ”

# PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Personal feedback on benefits of different therapies at Action Cancer.

“ **This weekend has changed our lives** and has empowered us in ways you cannot imagine. From the first day of my breast cancer diagnosis, I was bombarded by a ton of unfamiliar information. It in turn, almost forced me to make a series of decisions over the types of operation, choices of chemo drugs and the inclusion of breast reconstruction. **I was literally too overwhelmed by dealing with the new world** which was completely foreign to me to cater for my emotional and mental needs. Not knowing what to do as a novice cancer patient I participated in the Positive Living Programme. It was indeed another 'new world' ushering me to the mental and physical paths of healing. I am grateful for my fortune to encounter the programme. ”

- PLP Participant

“ Counselling has greatly impacted my life in a very positive way. My counsellor has talked to me, listened to me, **respected every aspect of the issues in my life** that I have brought up and helped me manage these ideas in my head much easier. She has challenged me at times to think about things differently and this has had a positive impact on my life. Some sessions are more detailed than others, which is just natural, but this allows the counselling to become more flexible and easier to manage. Overall, I would recommend counselling to anyone as it does have a very positive impact on people's lives. I am very grateful to have had this experience with counselling. **my life is much more manageable as a result of it.** ”

- Counselling Client

“ First I would like to say how impressed I was by the caring attitude of my therapist and how relaxed she made me feel. I think the choice of therapies was really helpful. I had some aromatherapy combined with reflexology and this was really relaxing. My last treatments have been back massage and aromatherapy and these have definitely had a relaxing effect. I feel that **my appetite has greatly improved and I also feel motivated to take up new interests.** ”

- Complementary Therapy Client

“ I have found that this therapy has really benefited me **because I now make the time for ME.** The therapist is very welcoming and in brilliant form, nothing is too much trouble for her and she is very good at helping me to relax and enjoy the experience. I have really enjoyed these sessions and have always come out refreshed and relaxed. Many thanks to you all for giving me my time and teaching me that it's ok to have my time and enjoy it. ”

- Complementary Therapy Client

“ Counselling has had a very positive effect from the early diagnosis of my cancer, throughout the journey. In my early stages, **I was in a very lonely, scary, dark place.** With the invaluable support of my counsellor, I can think positively and see the way ahead. Friends and family say is great to have 'me' back and while I am not 'fully back', I feel its great to have 'me' back too. Thank you so very, very much. ”

- Counselling Client

“ ON COMING ON THE COURSE I QUESTIONED THE NEED FOR THIS AND GIVING UP A WEEKEND FOR IT - HOWEVER I AM GLAD I DID - IT WAS EXCELLENT AND FAR OUT-WEIGHED MY EXPECTATIONS. VERY VALUABLE AND WORTHWHILE EXPERIENCE.”

- Participant on Positive Living Programme

# EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT

Personal stories showing different cancer journeys and different ways to cope.

## FRANCIS' STORY

**My name is Francis and I was 58 when I was diagnosed with bowel cancer in May 2013.** I am married with four children and two grandsons. If you are reading this story, chances are that you suspect that you may have cancer or its presence has been confirmed. If this is the case you have my deepest sympathies for I know how you feel. When I was diagnosed with the cancer in May 2013 I was deeply shocked and felt I had been handed a death sentence.

However the positive attitude of the surgical and oncology staff in Antrim Area Hospital persuaded me that my fears and perceptions were wrong. In early June 12cms of my bowel containing a 5 cm tumour were removed and I was given a temporary ileostomy to my help my bowel heal. In removing the section of bowel the surgeons also removed 25 lymph nodes, three of which were infected by cancer as the tumour had perforated the bowel wall.

Whilst the surgeons were very confident that they had removed all the cancerous cells it was recommended that I undergo chemotherapy to ensure the eradication of any cancerous cells that may have been missed. I decided to undergo the chemotherapy treatment.

On day 1 of each cycle I was given an IV drip, this would take roughly 2 ½ hours. I took 4 tablets twice



a day for a fortnight starting day 1 of the cycle and then no further medication for the third week. I gave a blood sample the day before I started each cycle to ensure that my system was strong enough to withstand the effects of the medication.

I started chemotherapy in mid-July and while I didn't lose my hair I did suffer many of the forecasted symptoms, which included nausea, sensitivity to low temperatures, loss of appetite and general tiredness. The medication also affected my cognitive abilities however these started to return once I finished the medications.

Needless to say I didn't beat this disease on my own, the medical and oncology staff gave me a flying start; the TLC provided by my wife, children and extended family was very comforting; and the support and well wishes from friends, acquaintances and colleagues were also very encouraging.

I am very grateful to all who took the time and effort to offer me their support, it really did make a difference especially when I was struggling to cope with all that was happening to me. In finishing could I offer some advice:

- If you are not feeling well go to your doctor and discuss how you feel with them;
- If you suspect that you may have cancer get it checked out immediately, the sooner you know where you stand the sooner you will be in a position to do something about it. I suffered the symptoms for at least a year before going to my GP thus allowing the cancer to develop instead of nipping it in the bud.
- Finally may I wish you good luck and the best of health.



## MY CHALLENGE

**Hi, I am 50 year old cancer survivor, married with 4 children and 1 grandson.**

We all live together, it is a busy house with 7 people! I come from a big family and have experienced cancer affecting several people. I was diagnosed with cancer in my breast and lymph nodes in December 2012, my husband was with me and after the shock of being diagnosed, I just wanted to move on to the treatment so I could get it finished and get on with my life.

I remember thinking "It's Christmas in one week and I've got cancer! I have no time for this, I am not sick!". On Christmas Eve I was told I would be in hospital on the 3rd of January to have my operation that would remove the cancerous cells and my affected lymph nodes. I stayed positive as much as I could for my children and grandson. I had the operation and all went well so up next was the chemotherapy.

It was fearful not knowing how it was going to be but after the first session, it was not so bad. Bloods, chemo, sick, feeling better then three weeks later, more bloods, more chemo, more feeling sick and then feeling better. I always handled a challenge well and have experienced some difficult things in the past, but this was my biggest challenge and I was going to get through it.

Tony talked about a holiday at the end of treatment, when you are well we will



go away, so in the summer of 2014, we all went for a two week holiday to sunny Lanzarote. We had a brilliant time and it was wonderful to spend it with all my family. Six weeks after that, my husband and I went back again for one week to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. I have gone from strength to strength since my treatment finished. It really helped to focus on something positive, it got me to the end.

Everyone can dream but it's important to make these dreams come true, life is for living. You deserve it, just enjoy what you have.

## LIFE CAN GO ON!

**As my prostate cancer journey started nine years ago the passage of time has eroded some memories but my most distressing period was that between receiving biopsy results and the options for treatment.** My GP had been monitoring my PSA level for 2 years until it rose to 8.9 and he recommended seeing a consultant who would carry out a truss biopsy at Belfast City Hospital and I would receive the results the following week. I went to the appointment at City Hospital accompanied by my wife and daughter and the consultant discussed the biopsy results with us. He could have done an operation but suggested that we might want to consider the radiotherapy option and an appointment was arranged with another consultant to discuss this.

Again I attended this appointment with my wife and daughter and we were only in his room for a very short time when we all came to the conclusion that was the preferred option. We were welcomed by the consultant who explained everything clearly and we were so impressed by his pleasant professional manner that it was a very easy decision to make.

The whole process from this point in time was very well organised. Scans radiotherapy planning etc. were all carried out by dedicated staff who all made me feel very much at ease. The radiotherapy

daily sessions ran for almost two months and I found that it was good to speak to other patients while waiting for the daily sessions. It was helpful to be able to discuss our individual experiences, compare notes on side effects etc. and possible therapies which people found useful. I was able to continue my daily gym & swimming routines throughout the treatment without any ill effects.

In summary my journey emphasised to me:

- The importance of showing sympathetic care and consideration to cancer patients especially in the early stages. Everyone is an individual and has individual needs and must feel that they are valued.
- The importance of continuing normal life activities, sports, social outings, family and work as far as possible. I found this to be a worthwhile challenge and have seen a similar satisfactory situation in my daughter's breast cancer journey over the past year.
- I believe that those of us who have survived cancer should be willing to share our positive experiences to help assure patients that there can be a good outcome.

LIFE CAN GO ON.

## MY THOUGHTS AND ADVICE ON HAVING CANCER

**Accept all the loving support, practical or physical from family, friends and friends of family and friends.** I was totally amazed by the number of candles, novena and prayers I receive from people of all faiths. The presents my friends brought me after I came home from hospital were incredible. As a member of the Mother's Union, my name went on a prayer list and I had no idea how that prayer circle went so far. Of course there were people who did not know what to say to me and often the wrong thing was said but I quickly learnt to graciously walk away from negative thoughts. Remember their thoughts are with you if not their words.

I was lucky following my extensive surgery for my breast cancer and reconstruction, I did not have to have any further treatment.

However while attending various classes, and events especially, I felt guilty because I was not suffering the same traumatic things i.e. hair loss, nausea, and injections etc. Following counselling I realised that my trauma was just as great. I had physical scars plus the same mental trauma as any other cancer patient and my life had to be adjusted accordingly. I know I am not alone in having this guilt as I have spoken to others who felt the same.

Finally remember you are not alone and there is wonderful support in the community. Be as positive as you can and remember that there is light at the end of a dark tunnel. May God Bless all who take the cancer journey.

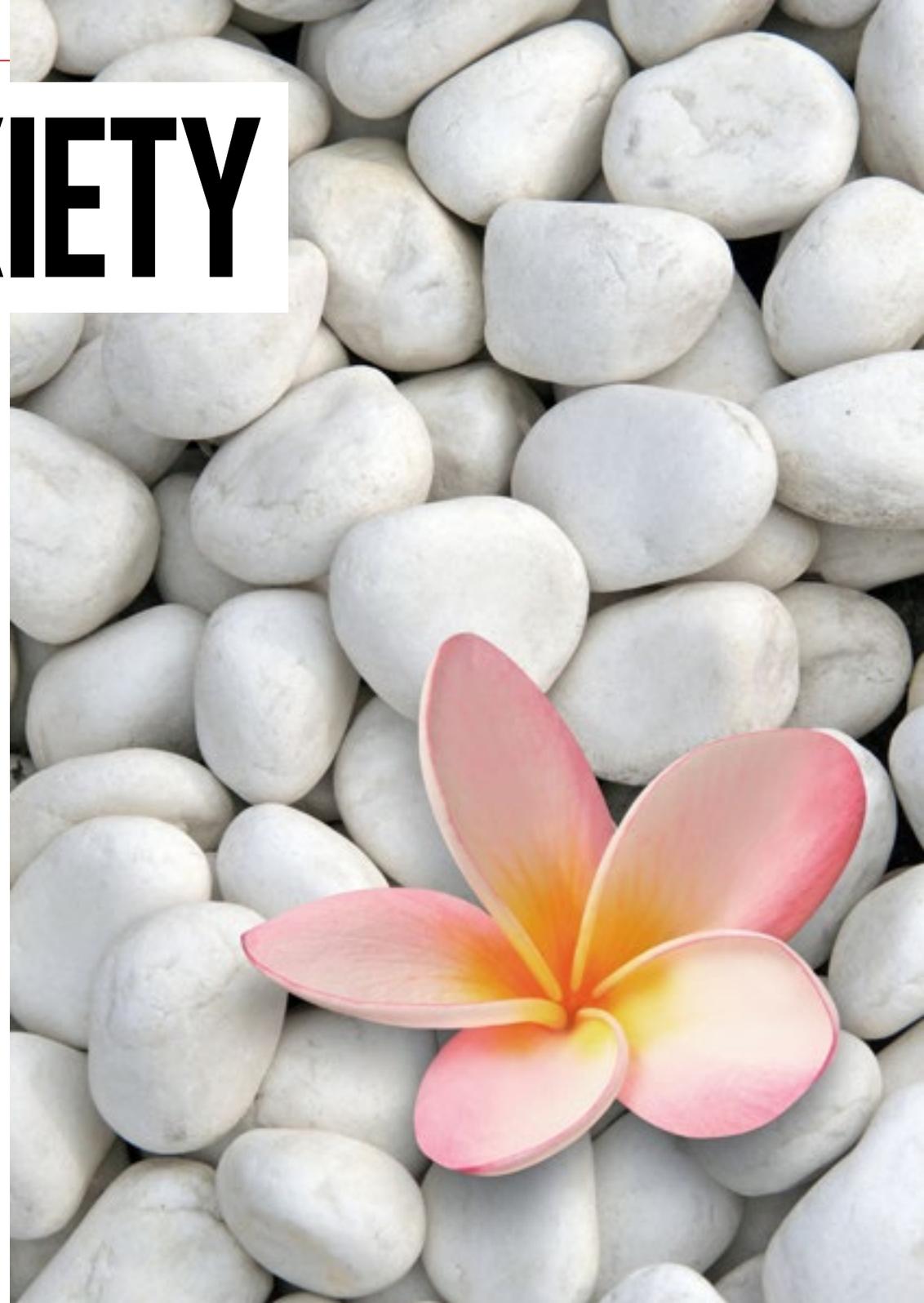


# STRESS & ANXIETY

Ways to manage when this kicks in.

“ There is no doubt that you will feel stressed and anxious, no matter what stage of the journey you are at. I read a lot around managing stress and I was particularly interested in things I could do 'in the moment', when the stress or anxiety kicked in. I found the following good advice to follow:

- **Think positive.** When you find yourself in a stressful situation, try to find something positive to focus on instead of dwelling on the negative.
- **Eat well, sleep well and exercise well!** Make a plan that suits you (e.g. don't buy gym membership if using a home DVD would suit you better) and seek advice from professionals where appropriate.
- **Develop a support system.** If you find it difficult to meet new people, try to find ways to socialise, be it a new table in the lunchroom, attending church, an exercise class, it's important to be connected to someone.
- **Relax.** Take time out to do the things you enjoy, even if it is only for a few minutes at a time. Go for a short walk, listen to music or read a book. Do whatever activity is relaxing to you.
- **Focus on what you can change, and accept the things you can't.** Don't waste energy wishing things (or people) were otherwise. Do what you can to improve things and remember you can always control your reaction.
- **Look for the opportunity to learn and grow from the experience.** Think about what you can feel grateful for in this situation, and in the rest of your life. Develop healthy optimism - research has shown that it increases health and even life span. Think: 'I can handle this'.
- **Ask your doctor for help.** Your doctor will have access to a team of health care professionals that can help to develop a stress management programme that is right for you. ”



## RELAXED BREATHING

“ I was constantly being told to relax, take a breath, which at times was easier said than done! Finally a friend who practices meditation took the time to sit with me and show me how to actually do this, so please, relax, take a deep breath and follow her instructions:

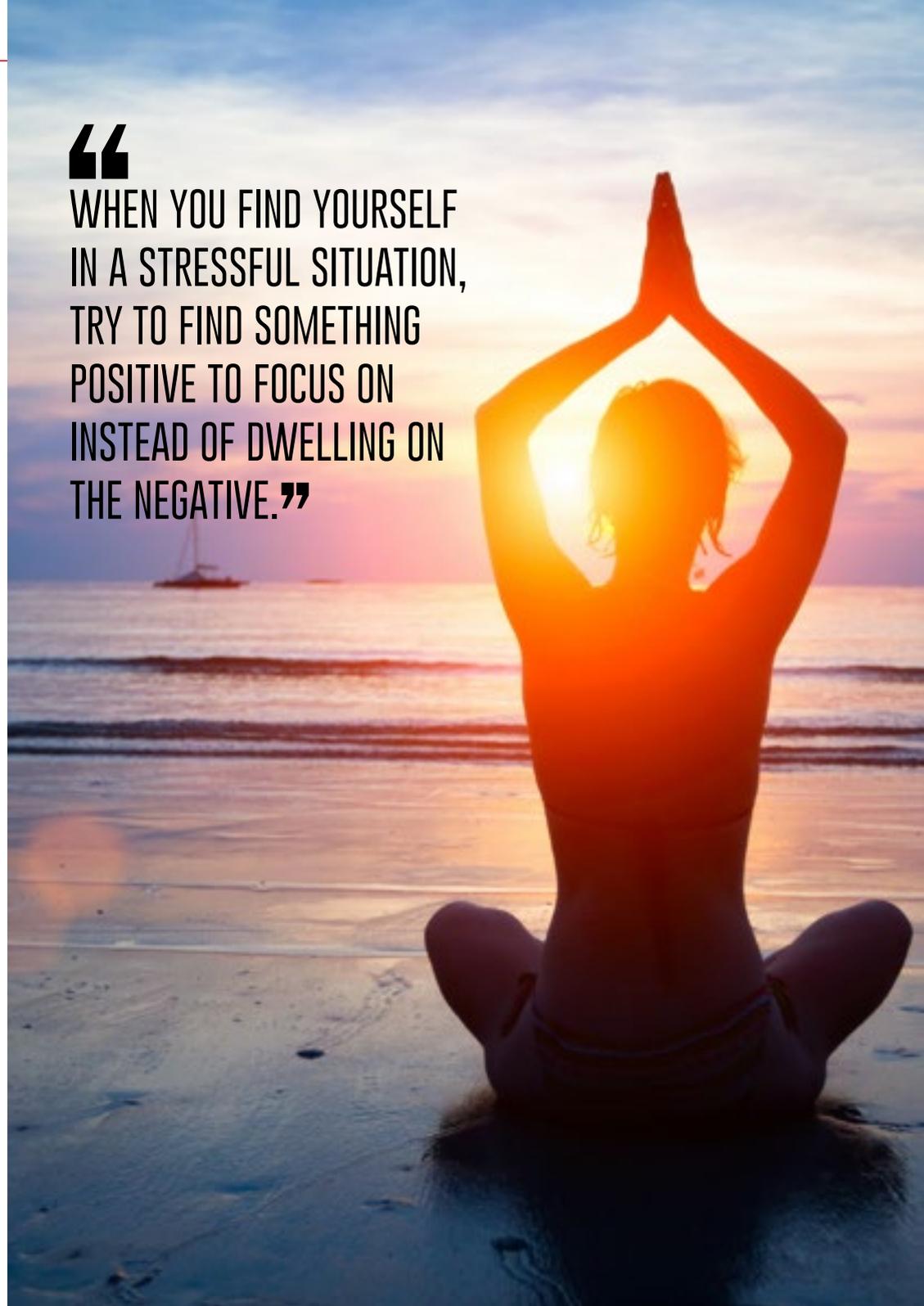
- Practise deep breathing at a regular time and in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Loosen or remove any tight clothes you have on, such as shoes or jackets. Make yourself feel completely comfortable.
- Sit in a comfy chair which supports your head or lie on the floor or bed. Place your arms on the chair arms, or flat on the floor or bed, a little bit away from the side of your body with the palms up. If you're lying down, stretch out your legs, keeping them hip-width apart or slightly wider. If you're sitting in a chair, don't cross your legs.
- Good relaxation always starts with focusing on your breathing. The way

to do it is to breathe in and out slowly and in a regular rhythm as this will help you to calm down.

- Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).
- Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five.
- Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.

Practise this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes, two to three times a day (or whenever you feel stressed). ”

“  
WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF  
IN A STRESSFUL SITUATION,  
TRY TO FIND SOMETHING  
POSITIVE TO FOCUS ON  
INSTEAD OF DWELLING ON  
THE NEGATIVE.”



# QUERIES AND CONCERNS

Helpful questions and issues to consider before, during and after your treatment.

## BEFORE AGREEING TO YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

- Explanations or clarifications of terms used, for example, possible and probable and treatable and curable. It's ok to say you don't understand what is being said. \_\_\_\_\_
- Why is this surgery/ treatment being offered, are there any other options? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the likely outcomes for me? \_\_\_\_\_
- How long will the recovery process take? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the realistic expectations for your treatment? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the survival rates? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the risk of a recurrence? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the benefits and risks of each of these treatments? \_\_\_\_\_
- What treatment do you recommend? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why do you think it is best for me? \_\_\_\_\_
- When will I need to start treatment? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is my chance of recovery with this treatment? \_\_\_\_\_
- How will we know if the treatment is working? \_\_\_\_\_
- Would a clinical trial (research study) be right for me? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do I find out about studies for my type and stage of cancer? \_\_\_\_\_
- If I have pain, how will it be controlled? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone I can talk to who has already been through this? \_\_\_\_\_

## BEGINNING AND DURING TREATMENT

### Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy issues

- How does it work?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What will happen when I arrive?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How will I feel during and after?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long will it take?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How many treatment sessions will I have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Should a family member or friend come with me to my treatment sessions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What do the chemicals look like?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Can I see the treatment places first? Can I show my family so they understand what is happening?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What if it doesn't work?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What side effects may happen during or between my treatment sessions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are there any side effects that I should call you about right away?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are there any lasting effects of the treatment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will this treatment affect my ability to have children?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How can I prevent or treat side effects?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone I can talk to who has already been through this?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## IF A HOSPITAL STAY IS REQUIRED

- What should I bring with me?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Which is the best bra to bring for after surgery treating breast cancer?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long will my stay be? How should I plan around this?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How do you put the gown on?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are there baskets to put your personal belongings in when going for surgery?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will there be a need for a catheter?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How might I feel after my surgery, both physically and emotionally?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone I can talk to who has already been through this?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER TREATMENT?

- Follow up - what can I expect short and long term?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will there always be someone I can contact if I have any worries or concerns?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What if I feel another lump or experience a similar symptom, who do I call and will I have to wait for an appointment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who looks after me now?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long will it take for me to get better and feel more like myself?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What long-term health issues can I expect as a result of my cancer and its treatment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is the chance that my cancer will return?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What can I do to be as healthy as possible?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What tests do I need after treatment is over? How often will I have the tests?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone I can talk to who has already been through this?  
\_\_\_\_\_

# ACTION CANCER SERVICES



## POSITIVE LIVING PROGRAMME

The Positive Living Programme is a two day life coaching programme for people affected by cancer. This unique programme will help you to reflect, refocus, rebuild and re-energise, and to move your life forward following a cancer diagnosis. This programme empowers you to recognise your own personal strengths and create strategies to live a fulfilling life. Anyone can attend who has been affected by cancer, at any stage of their cancer journey, and those impacted by it, such as partners, carers, friends and family members.

### A previous participant on the programme said:

“ The Positive Living Programme proved invaluable in helping me explore my current situation and help me begin to focus on the future. I feel over the two day programme I moved from 'survival' mode to 'living' mode.” ”

## COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

Complementary therapy is available free to any adult or child affected by cancer (person diagnosed or family member).

Complementary therapy has been shown to be effective in dealing both with physical symptoms as well as emotional/psychological symptoms that impact people affected by cancer. For example aromatherapy, reflexology and massage have been shown to: aid relaxation; relieve stress and tension; improve quality of life; aid sleep; improving coping with side effects and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.

All our Complementary Therapists are trained to adapt techniques to work safely with adults and children with a cancer diagnosis.

## COUNSELLING

Counselling provides the opportunity to explore thoughts and feelings, to identify worries and concerns, to create self-awareness and develop coping mechanisms to help bring about change. Counselling is available to adults, young people and children aged 5 plus during any stage of the cancer journey - from diagnosis and treatment right through to recovery or bereavement. We also offer counselling to anyone who is undergoing genetic cancer testing.

## LIFE COACHING

Using techniques that help you reflect, refocus, rebuild and re-energise, life coaching helps you to think about your life, adapt to change and move forward. Each client is provided with confidential and safe surrounds and is taught techniques for developing strategies to achieve their personal goals. Life coaching is delivered through one-to-one sessions or in a facilitated group setting such as our Positive Living Programme. Life Coaching is available from Action Cancer House, Belfast and as part of our Positive Living Programme which is offered from a range of locations across Northern Ireland.

## PAIN & SYMPTOM CONTROL

Action Cancer provides a number of services outlined below to support people

cope with pain and symptoms resulting directly from a cancer diagnosis or from the stress/worry of caring for someone with cancer.

### Acupuncture

Acupuncture involves the placement of sterile disposable needles at selected points on the body, followed by physical manipulation, heat, or electrical stimuli. Acupuncture may be able to help with any of the following symptoms due to a cancer diagnosis: pain, restrictions in movement, nausea and vomiting, shortness of breath, hot flushes, dry mouth, fatigue, anxiety and stress.

### Bowen Technique

With Bowen Technique the practitioner uses thumbs and forefingers on precise points on the body to make rolling type moves which gently stimulate the muscles, soft tissue and energy within the body. These moves prompt the body to make the adjustments which help to re-balance, relieve tension and reduce pain.

### Emmett Technique

This involves the application of light finger pressure at specific points on the body which help change muscle tension and action.

Both Emmett and Bowen therapies are safe to use on children/young people as well as adults.

## PEER MENTORING

Action Cancer now offers a peer mentoring service to those who have received a cancer diagnosis or are affected by hereditary cancer. This support is provided by trained volunteers who are accredited by the Open College Network. All our peers are previous cancer patients and where possible will be matched to someone with the same diagnosis and pathway as their own. Their training and experience, also means they can support people regardless of their diagnosis. Through listening and supporting, our mentors can help others to reduce anxiety, increase self esteem and develop coping strategies along their cancer journey.

## BREAST SCREENING

Action Cancer is the only charity in the UK and Ireland to offer breast screening to women aged 40 - 49 and 70 plus who fall outside the NHS age range (50 - 70). We have been screening women in Northern Ireland for breast cancer since 1978, ten years ahead of the NHS. Breast screening is an X-ray of the breast. It's carried out in women who have no symptoms with the aim to reduce deaths from breast cancer through early detection of the disease.

If any early warning signs are present, women are referred for further assessment. A mammogram is an X-Ray of the breast. In breast screening, 4 X-Rays are taken (2 of each breast) and a radiographer will position you in the mammography machine to get the best images possible.

In order to obtain high quality images, compression of the breast is essential. Some women may worry that having a mammogram may be painful, however most women would describe the procedure as uncomfortable, rather than painful.

## HEALTH PROMOTION

Health promotion aims to empower and educate individuals and their communities to make informed, positive healthy decisions. At Action Cancer our two key health promotion messages are prevention and early detection. We deliver these messages across Northern Ireland through a range of health promotion activities and in a variety of settings including schools, workplaces and community groups.

**Prevention** - Up to 50% of certain cancers can be prevented by making small, simple changes to our lifestyle such as: not smoking, eating a healthy balanced diet, keeping physically active and taking care of your skin in the sun.

**Early detection** - Being aware of your own body and attending available screening tests can aid early detection of cancer and greatly increase the chance of successful treatment and longer survival.

**For more information on any of our services or to make an appointment please go to [www.actioncancer.org](http://www.actioncancer.org) or call 028 9080 3344.**

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