Can Journaling Benefit Those With Cancer?

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How Can Cancer Journaling Help Cancer Patients?

Living with cancer can be overwhelming at times. Feeling ill, worrying about the future, side effects of medications, and financial concerns can make living with cancer frightening and exhausting.

Modern medical treatment is essential; however, it does little to help you cope with the day to day stress of living with the disease. In fact, traveling to appointments, fighting with insurance companies, and sitting in waiting rooms while you are ill often adds to the stress of living with cancer.

Some people who live with a diagnosis of cancer have discovered that journaling helps them cope better.

The Differences between Healing and Curing

Modern medicine uses tools such as surgery, medication, and radiation in hopes of curing cancer. These treatments are effective if the disease is discovered in its early stages. However, sometimes a cure is not possible. The good news is that while curing the cancer may not occur; healing is always possible.

Curing means getting rid of the cancer. Healing means living well despite your prognosis.

What Can a Cancer Journal Do for You?

Journaling can reduce your levels of stress and depression, help you to discover what makes you feel better, clarify your goals, and enhance your spiritual life. It may even reduce your levels of pain and improve your energy. Journaling is free, portable, and adaptable so that is can help anyone. Journaling heals.

The beauty of journaling is that it is entirely up to you how you want to approach it. This can be empowering. While coping with cancer, you may often feel that you are at beck and call of your disease, medical appointments, and energy levels. While you journal; you are in control.

Whether or not you tell people that you are keeping a journal is up to you. This is your time. Feel free to write whatever you want.

No one ever needs to see what you write. You can say things in your journal that you might be appalled to say out loud. Getting those feelings out can relieve stress. Relieving stress benefits the health of your immune system, affording your body with the opportunity to fight your disease more effectively.

Journaling also helps you to let go and move on from thoughts which are keeping you up at night and draining your energy.

You have more important things to do than continually dwell on challenges that your illness and life present.

Journaling can help you to move forward and live better today.

Cancer Journaling 101: How to Prepare a Cancer Journal

Beginning a journal can be as simple as carrying a notebook with you and writing when you have a moment. However, you will reap more rewards from journaling if you implement some of the following strategies.

- **Set aside a regular time and place each day for journaling.** This way you will be more likely to stick with it.
- **Create a scared space to write in.** An ideal location is a quiet room or a comfortable lawn chair. Some people choose to have a silent location; while others enjoy soft music while journaling. You may enjoy journaling while sipping on a special tea, or other beverage. Consider lighting candles or purchasing an aromatherapy diffuser to enhance the ambiance of your writing environment.
- **Let your family know that you do not want to be disturbed while you write.** Turn off the ringer on your phone. View your journal time as an essential part of your healing process.
- **If possible, use an attractive book to write in.** This may be a homemade book, a simple spiral bound notebook with a colorful cover, or an exquisitely bound book filled with handmade paper. Having something special to write in helps you to keep focused on your healing.
- **Choose pens which are comfortable.** You may want markers, paints, glue, and stickers. None of these tools need to be expensive. They just need to be comfortable and meaningful for you.

Next page: Cancer journal tips for patients, including how to start your cancer journal journey and more.

Cancer Journaling 101: Starting Your Cancer Journaling

Some people are reluctant to journal because it is one more thing to do. Journaling may sound intimidating if you do not believe that you are a good writer. You may not know how to start.

If you are concerned about journaling being burdensome; consider giving it a try for three weeks. By the end of that time, it may become a habit. You will likely begin to see benefits by then. If you see benefits, continue; if not, either choose to try a bit longer or consider another method to support your healing.

Approach journaling with a sense of curiosity. Say to yourself. “This is an activity which many people find helpful. Perhaps it may help me.” Keep an open mind.

Some people find that committing to writing one page is helpful in the beginning. Writing one page is manageable, yet not overwhelming. Some experts recommend that if you cannot think of something to say, writing “I can’t think of something to say, over and over again, leads people to think of something to say. “ See if this works for you if you get stuck.

A journal need not be created with words. Do you like to draw? Have you always wanted to paint? Would making collages appeal to you? You can use all of these techniques to keep a journal and not write one word. Use whatever techniques help you to stay in touch with your feelings.

Consider what your goals are for keeping a journal. This can be a great place to start when you do not know what to write. Journals are kept for many reasons.

Some people keep them to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment. You can document what you eat, your energy and activity levels, and keep track of current treatments. Try rating your levels of pain or other symptoms.

A journal may be used to identify stressors, the effectiveness of medications, or links between foods which cause digestive disturbances. You can make your own health journal or you may purchase books designed that facilitate tracking of physical and emotional health. Keeping a journal may help you to recognize strategies and patterns which help or hinder your health. It can result in improving your sense of well-being.

You may keep a journal to provide meaning and purpose to yourself and others. Some people write their journals as if they were writing a letter. If you have grandchildren and want them to know how much you love them, and have wisdom that you wish to pass down to them when they get older; a journal can be a very special way for them to know you even if you are not present when they grow up.

Have you considered using technology to make your journal? You can record what you want to tell grandchildren and others with a cell phone or using a computer. A journal can take many forms. It need not be written.

Your journal may strengthen your spiritual life. Try purchasing a book of daily meditations or prayers. Read the day's passage. Write whatever thoughts or feelings are provoked by your daily reading. Some people collect prayers and words of wisdom in their journals.

Use your journal to clarify your life's goals. Make a list of your values, what you want to do with your life, or things that you want to change. Include a list of your strengths. Believers from diverse spiritual traditions state that you clearly stating your goals and desires sets the universe in motion to make those dreams become a reality.

Make Your Journal for You

Your journal is a gift to yourself. You may choose to share that gift with others, but that is up to you. Keeping a journal can be like conversing with your best friend. You will have a better understanding of who you are.

Cancer journaling lets you look past your illness and gets to the core of the wonderful person that you already are. It affords you the opportunity to heal in the truest sense of the word.