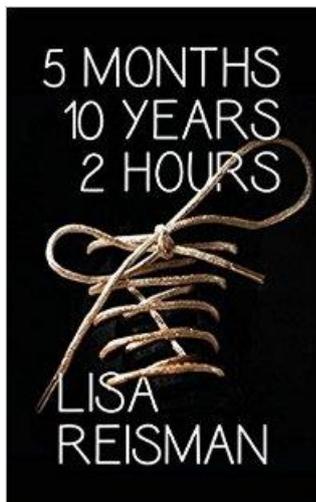


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**5 months, 10 years, 2 hours
(2015)**

Reisman L.

San Francisco, USA: Outpost19, 2015.

170pp.

ISBN 9781937402709

Average star rating 3.6 (out of 5)

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This book would be a useful read for anyone. It's a story of survival, grit and determination, most useful for showing that life continues, you should take your recovery and treatment plan in bite-sized chunks, and try not to project too much into the future or linger in the past. Focus on the here and now.

By using her recent triathlon as a framework to reflect on her disease, the author follows a very logical framework. While she's swimming, cycling and running she reflects on her diagnosis, recovery, and getting back to her life now. She explains her treatment in detail, but it is all very easy to understand. I warmed to the author; whilst independent and determined, she is also searingly honest about how she feels about others. She observes others well and is under no illusion as to her own foibles.

I enjoyed this book because the author conveys many of the thoughts I have had whilst on this "cancer journey". She talks about not looking back, to see what you have lost and what you may never recover, but to look forward. After treatment, we have an urgency to move on, as staying in one place means we are inert, lethargic, sick. Whilst going through treatment you need to develop tunnel vision to get better; we must become self-focused and protect ourselves from anything that may disturb that path. She also highlights the importance of how you focus on moments of pure exultation, aware that you might not have too many left. Interestingly, she also put into words for me that feeling I have always had that we simply endure the treatment rather than "survive" or "fight" it as some people from the side lines might say; their intentions are good but for me this is not the correct terminology.

Cancer of the appendix survivor (36-45) (November 2016)

This book is so good that it should be promoted to anybody who wants an elegantly written story about life's challenges, about having your life and ambitions thrown up in the air, and realising that survival isn't enough – you must reach a point where you get on with the rest of your life and stop thinking of yourself as a victim. When I had cancer, I wanted stories of people who had "survived" and I'm sure that brain tumour patients will find it reassuring that Lisa – who had a very poor prognosis – not only exceeded her expected life-span but went on to live a full and happy life.

The book is structured in an interesting way; her treatment is in chronological order interspersed with her story of her first triathlon, 10 years after diagnosis. It's not confusing and flows beautifully. There is no glossary, no clunky explanations, but she doesn't go into detail about drugs (other than anti-anxiety meds before MRI scans) and this keeps the book fresh and gives it longevity. Any details might be out of date by now (she was treated in 1998). The cover gives nothing away and the book has a self-published feel, with better than normal paper. There are no illustrations, the layout is clear and logical and the tone is honest and open, but with a sense that there's quite a lot of self-preservation going on; it is elegantly written.

I like Lisa's honesty and human approach. She does not paint herself as a nice person, acknowledges that she put her family through a lot, and talks about how she pushed men away because she always expected not to last long enough for a long-term commitment. What I like most is the elegance of her choice of words, her use of the classics (she studied Latin and Greek) and her references to poetry and music.

It's hard to judge usefulness but it's inspiring and will give people – especially those with a poor prognosis – a sense of hope. If I were looking for a more practical book about brain cancer, I might be disappointed but, for reasons mentioned before, I understand why she avoided that to create a book with much more general appeal. One thing that would be interesting to other patients, regardless of cancer type, is that she talks about how she “trained” herself to deal with the confinement of the MRI scanner by lying under her coffee table draped with a blanket to practise.

Lisa beat all the statistics to overcome her brain tumour but along the way she became a very different person. By tracing her 5 months of treatment in parallel with the 2 hours of her mini-triathlon, 10 years after treatment, she gives us an interesting look at the drive to survive and the hurdles along the way. She also uses the triathlon as a trigger to recognise that there comes a point in post-cancer life when you must put it behind you and start living again. This book could inspire anyone who has lived through a serious disease, or to those who've lived with someone in that situation.

Thyroid cancer, 5 years ago. No active disease now. (46-55) (April 2016)

This is a very interesting read on many levels. It's the fast-paced, honest, no-frills memoir of a New York attorney, a former classics major who had planned to leave the rat race and drive across the country in a lipstick-red convertible but who woke up in hospital diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour and a prognosis of one year to live. It's Lisa's story of her journey, illness, and treatment, interspersed with her participation in a gruelling triathlon after ten years – a testament of love, courage, ambition, despair, enlightenment, and survival. The author uses the word “Deinos”, ancient Greek meaning both awful and wondrous, to describe her mind the day after surgery and this captures the real essence of her book.

Lisa's path touched on many of my experiences in and out of hospital. Her relationships with consultants, hospital staff and family members are candidly described and these, as well as her own very human feelings of rage, frustration, incomprehension, and eureka moments, will resonate and be of deep interest to those living or coping with a brain tumour and ultimately facing their mortality.

Her story follows a logical order although the topic is handled not as in countless other “battling” cancer books but through an engaging narrative that weaves her physical and emotional struggles through diagnosis, treatment, and recovery to tackling a triathlon ten years later. The writing is clear and reads like a conversation. It is an American publication so some terms, e.g. AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), won’t automatically be understood. There is no glossary but only a few terms are not explained, for example, BCNU = Carmustine, an anti-cancer chemotherapy drug. It’s interesting that BCNU in internet slang means “be seeing you” which could be interpreted as victory over this disease.

The cover illustration is striking; the quality of the paper is good and the font is easy to read. It’s divided into sections (Swim, Bike, Run, Finish Line), her story told while running a triathlon a decade later. The author’s tone is unflinching, matter of fact and gutsy through every stage of her cancer journey and triathlon.

It is a compelling read and her sheer perseverance made me read this book in one sitting, hoping above all hope that she would triumph not only on a physical level but also in coming to terms with who she is now as a person and what life has in store for her. I particularly like how she expressed herself throughout in a very human way with moods, foibles, negativity, sarcasm, anger with hospital staff and frustration with her nearest and dearest. It’s unusual for the family dynamic to be so clearly portrayed but it demonstrates how essential reciprocal love and endurance is for patient and family – whatever form it may take and however aberrant the behaviour appears.

The originality of the writer’s approach, her very humanness that exposed the chinks in her armour, shook her to the core, and tested her mettle, deserve five stars.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (January 2016)



This book is personal, and I like that. It helps me engage with it and make me really feel for what is happening. I feel like I can get to know everything, and it helps me emotionally connect with it. It would be suitable after diagnosis. It will give people the hope that they need to get through the hard times, and when they don’t feel they can do it any more, it can give them strength and inspiration to carry on.

The cover is dark, and doesn’t have much going on, but no one reads books for the way they look, it’s all about the content. It’s written perfectly and is easy to understand. I like how it goes into detail about the things that we take for granted. It helps you understand what life is about, makes you cherish the smaller things. Even the title gets you thinking before you start reading; it gets your mind going. Brilliant. This book gives you the boost you need, to make you wake up every morning and cherish everything you can. Everything makes you feel emotional and the way the book is written is beautiful; the little details make you feel connected to the author.

Mother has breast cancer, grandmother died of lung cancer, and uncle recently died from multiples of cancer (Under 25) (November 2016).

This book will give someone a light-hearted but extremely relatable view of having a brain tumour. For the most part, it is in a logical order and I understood the language. Someone young may not understand all the references or identify with the feelings of a highly trained professional experiencing cancer, but the overall delivery is such that it doesn't matter. I could identify with so much. I didn't have a brain tumour but the feelings and processes you go through are the same for many cancers. I really like the fact that it isn't a straight, sad read – the dashes of humour made it feel personal.

Acinic cell carcinoma survivor (36-45) (August 2016)

The author talks about herself and her experience, her challenges, and fears. She talks about things that she doesn't talk to her family about. Someone who has a brain tumour may find this interesting to read. I helped care for my mum and I can see now that when she said she was fine perhaps she had the same thoughts and fears as the author. I would have found this useful at the time.

Remaining positive can be tough; I remember reminding myself to keep strong, to be determined to help my mum to be strong and think positive, that cancer doesn't mean the end. The author is positive, positive, positive, then fed up briefly, then goes right back to being determined again. The author is given quite negative news up front but talks about the time that passes; she outlives expectations, she competes in a gruelling triathlon, these are the things that stick out that message of hope.

It jumps between past and present, so unless you read the book every day over a week or so, it is hard to pick up and remember where you are. There are technical terms/words and the medications were different from those that my mum had, but there are many types of cancer and treatment may be specific. The author's tone is honest; I like the way she writes; she gives real insight to different parts of the journey. I like how the book looks, the title is intriguing.

I like that it gives hope and talks through the reality of the situation and that there is a positive outcome. This is not always the case, but I think from everyone's point of view that keeping focused and positive no matter what appealed to me. I guess the only problem for me was the fact that the author switches tenses a lot. I struggled with this as, with all the work I have now, I could read only a little at a time.

I found it very useful from my perspective as a former carer. My mum recovered but we know it may come back and I have a better insight after reading this book. I think it will help me cope better and understand more from mum's point of view. I may recommend it; it depends on the individual and the type of cancer they have.

Carer (46-55) (July 2016)

This will help anyone with a diagnosis of a brain tumour who wants to know more of what to expect. It will also help immediate family or carers. I have not been directly affected but a family friend passed away at a young age from a brain tumour and this helped me to appreciate and understand the challenges and difficulties faced with cancer in such a location. There is insight into the treatment and how someone is

affected on a day-to-day basis. It is also inspiring in that the author was determined not to give up, and to do all she could to give herself a fighting chance to get better.

The structure is clever; the chronology is interwoven with first-person commentary in the present day, but also as if you are with her at diagnosis and treatment. This is an interesting way to take the reader from diagnosis to the all-important MRI scan to determine if treatment had been successful. Whilst some medical terms are used, there is nothing to confuse or overly complicate the understanding. Sometimes, we learn through the experience of the author who was herself discovering what some terms meant. The book has a high-quality feel to the cover and paper used. The image on the cover offers an idea as to the physical challenge that the author has experienced and what the reader is about to discover.

I like that this is a first-hand account and the author gives a heartfelt description of her experiences, fears, and challenges. It is inspiring to see that she did not give up. The book is split into four sections. Within each section there are smaller chapters. I did not like this layout initially but got into it as I read further. The smaller chapters help the reader to jump between the different time lines.

Lisa's story is courageous and inspiring. It offered me a stark reminder that life is short and precious and we should do more to follow our dreams and passions. Having made the right decision to move from a stressful law career she achieved more than this and overcame the odds of a brain tumour to participate in triathlons. Such a difficult experience has led to much self-awareness, closer relationships, and more meaning in life. Something I remind myself of each day.

A friend died from a brain tumour (36-45) (June 2016)

This is the author's unflinching, true-grit account of her cancer diagnosis and her determination to deal with the disease, treatment and supporting family members in her way. It is a remarkable testimony to immense strength and the sheer will to live and celebrate life. It is most useful for the day-to-day living and waking reality of living with a brain tumour, undergoing therapies, and finding a purpose and reason to live.

It is easy to understand, using simple, appropriate terms. It has an eye-catching cover and the title summarises the content. The tone is candid and direct. There are no illustrations or photos; however, this does not detract from the content.

This is an illuminating approach; Lisa reveals her medical history interspersed with her progress while participating in a triathlon ten years after her diagnosis to celebrate life. A no-holds barred personal and direct biographical account of her experiential journey from diagnosis through treatment to follow-up MRI.

Integrated health care facilitator (56-65) (April 2016)

This is most useful for someone with a brain tumour. The author showed great courage and gives hope to other patients. It is handled logically from diagnosis, through feelings and treatment. It is hard going at the start – the descriptions of her efforts to beat the cancer are detailed and full on – but no glossary is needed. It is a good-looking book; the paper quality is good and the cover illustration says it all.

I like Lisa's honesty, how she was feeling from the beginning of the diagnosis to the point where she was told she is clear. It is refreshingly honest and any patient will find comfort in reading this book.

Family member (56-65) (April 2016)

This book is very insightful in explaining the feelings and thought processes of the patient. It could help others to understand better, but patients may also identify with the author's raw emotion. It highlights the upheaval caused by a cancer diagnosis and the fact that it not only affects the patient, but the people around them too.

The book is in three parts (Swim, Cycle, Run) and cleverly slots this in amongst the time when she was ill. It is very easy to understand. Words are explained throughout the text (Latin phrases are used on occasion and bring greater meaning and understanding.) The language is excellent at describing events and feelings in a way that made me, someone who has thankfully never had cancer, understand. The comparisons are very good. How the author describes her feelings in certain moments (such as when she hears the results of her MRI scan) is well done. It made you understand her feelings. It looks appealing too, not too long, an interesting title and easy to read typeface. The paragraphs and chapters are not too long so it is easy to pick up, read a bit, then put it back down again (helpful if you are ill).

I love the author's complete honesty. Many of the things she said sounded familiar, for example how she hated people knowing she'd had cancer and wouldn't wear a charity t-shirt for her triathlon; I remember my mum being the same. She didn't want it pushed in her face and wanted some form of reality. I am also an active person, so the triathlon aspect made a lot of sense to me. I like that despite her poor prognosis, she still got through her illness. This will give people hope, especially in dark times. The fact that this is a true story makes it mean more than a fictional work, which may be construed as unrealistic with its "happy ending". It is, however, still a good story.

If you are looking to learn about the medical aspects, this is not the book for you. But if you want to understand more about the thoughts and feelings of patients it is extremely useful. No one understands the emotions of the patient. The author is a true fighter and her book could be a good morale booster.

Friend of breast cancer patient, daughter of bowel cancer survivor and friend of a man who died from a brain tumour (26-35) (March 2016)

Any cancer patient will find this book useful. It demonstrates that a brain cancer diagnosis is not the end and it gives hope. The author did not moan but got on and enjoyed what she could. I like her positive approach, her determination not just to live with cancer but to live as full a life as possible. The diagnosis on page 20 is relevant to all patients; it is my experience, you just don't take it in and the second part of page 20 is very well thought out. Also (p. 169), the feeling of winning the fight is not just the race but also the battle against the disease. It also makes it very clear that a supportive group of family or friends can make a huge difference to the patient's wellbeing. If, however, a patient wants help from support groups, this book may put them off looking for it as the author's experience was unhelpful.

It is very easy to understand and I love how it is written, one chapter in the past and the next in the present day. It kept me riveted, waiting to know what happened next. I like the title and the cover. I would like photos to show the journey but the author seems a private person and may not have wanted to share this aspect, that's OK.

It is a very positive story. The author does not live with cancer; she lives to spite it and is an inspiration to us all. Although it's not a dislike, it is an American experience and viewpoint. That said, cancer is universal and this book will help anyone.

Breast cancer patient (56-65) (January 2016)

This tells part of Lisa's story of her brain tumour diagnosis, but that doesn't make it any less relevant to people with other cancers. Or even, to some extent, to people not affected by cancer. For me, this is a story of someone facing a terrifying situation, dealing with it, and getting on with life.

There are some insights into coping with treatment and dealing with some of the emotional aspects of a poor prognosis but it isn't a book on how to handle treatment or live with a brain tumour. Rather, it is the author's story. There is a lot of detail about what she was thinking and feeling and about the impact on her relationships.

It is written in an unusual way, swapping between what happened when Lisa was diagnosed and what is happening "now" as she competes in a triathlon ten years later. It is very easy to understand and accessible and compelling. If there were any technical terms they did not intrude on a gripping story. I found it difficult to put down. It has an attractive cover and the font size is large enough for someone with limited concentration. It is split into three sections – one for each of the parts of the triathlon. These are subdivided into shorter sections, which helps make it more readable.

I like how Lisa portrays her story with openness, even though things aren't always positive. Her style draws you in and makes you care about what happens. I would like to read more about how Lisa got from her good news post treatment to taking part in the triathlon!

Recovering from inflammatory breast cancer (36-45) (January 2016)

In this trim memoir, time is of the essence. It follows our narrator, Lisa Reisman, as she goes from life as a New York City lawyer to a woman battling grade-four glioblastoma after being found unconscious in her apartment by her stepmother. Lisa structures the book to follow the five initial months spent treating this cancer, the ten years since diagnosis, and the two hours competing in a gruelling triathlon. Training for and competing in a triathlon mirrors the narrator's determination to push herself beyond her cancer and to live her life with passion. There is certainly no lack of memoirs focused on illness, but Lisa's rich, illustrative details and impressive characterisation make this book memorable and vibrant.

Lisa's self-characterisation is subtle and distressing. She clues us in early on to what's emerged as a dominant trait: a sense of performance that is tragic given the circumstances. She is always attempting to be a model student for those around her, even as she is suffering from aggressive cancer. It comes across as a holdover from a pre-cancer attitude: "It was just what I told myself each time I strode into a meeting or conference or hearing. If I exuded self-assurance, I would be possessed by confidence. If I seemed fine, surely the rest would follow." Her book, however, isn't all such reflection. Lisa artfully depicts this characterisation in scene as well, most memorably when she is about to have radiotherapy. Her rich details bring her to life as she creates a character who attempts to brave her fate without flinching: "When a bald sallow-skinned woman – somewhere between thirty and sixty – limped into the radiation clinic waiting room with a cane, her clothes hanging over her emaciated frame like drapes, and nodded at me as she subsided into her chair, I didn't look away for fear that her image would awaken me late at night or during my weakest moments. I composed myself, looked her square in the eye, and smiled. And when my name was called, I strode briskly into the radiation room, my demonstration – why and to whom I didn't know – that I was vigorous and strong." These great illustrative details are on every page; the book hammers home the fear and determination of its narrator simply by including haunting, descriptive, sensory details.

The memoir doesn't focus on the trauma of a struggle through cancer, however. Some lovely moments brighten cancer's terrifying landscape: Lisa gives in to her impulse to please the little girls who live next to her mother by playing piano for them, "And with my fingers tripping along the keys to the tune of Maple Leaf Rag, I choked back a surge of joy when I saw them, all scraped knees and socks around their ankles, bobbing up and down, and my mother with a small smile on her face, and I was reminded – how could I have forgotten? – how much I loved performing, how I savored being recognized and appreciated". Moments of such joy so wonderfully depicted are a release for the narrator and reader. This passage also points to a tenderness between Lisa and her mother that shows how this is truly a story about relationships, that cancer is not the focus, which makes the memoir that much more memorable. Her complicated relationship with her sister Luke is also highlighted. After brief, fleeting episodes of loving sisterhood as children, Lisa seems to come to terms with how she feels about her sister during this ordeal, "The headlights from a long line of cars beamed in our direction and for a moment, I imagined my own funeral procession, then felt safe beside my sister, felt a pang that she and Cary were leaving the next morning." Lisa manages to complicate even the most ancillary character, from a nurse to the neighbour girls to one of her many doctors. Her charming storytelling sweeps readers along for this swift, stirring ride.

I like her unflinching honesty, her admissions of fear and failure and her sheer dogged determination to make herself seen and heard. The book also universalises Lisa's experience with fresh candour. We see in her situation how a patient might not always know what's going on, a terrifying prospect in any circumstance. How many people struggle through illness with limited information? She writes, "I had been too preoccupied with holding myself together. What I knew about the tumor had reached me incidentally and in fragments and was confusing if not contradictory." She universalises her fight without forcing it through clumsy prose, and even her intense desire to please her doctors seems easily applicable to many patient experiences. In meeting with a new doctor, she explains how she wanted so badly to impress her, and eventually overthinks the interaction: "It didn't occur to me that I might be presenting myself to Dr. North in another desperate way – that is to say, hell-bent on getting her to see me as an exceptional patient – and that in itself might have been more tiresome than anything." Her strong storytelling skills weave through the book in a way that readers with or without contact with cancer will recognise and appreciate.

For those for whom life with cancer is always an uphill battle, this is not a memoir but a revealing portrayal of the true nature of the everyday battle to survive. It moves beyond a cancer narrative and showcases relationships and complex characterisation in vibrant prose. The dread and fear of a life wasted bursts off the page: "I wanted to try ice fishing. I wanted to worry about the stock market. I wanted to wonder whether I should feel guilty about the things I had. I wanted the time to do all that. I wanted more time." This book is like a ticking clock. It is an excellent memoir that uses the narrator's battle with cancer, even in its trim form, as a springboard into so much more.

Friends with several people with breast cancer, caring for father with prostate cancer (56-65) (December 2015)



Anyone could read this book at any time; it is most useful for persistence and belief in survival – anything's possible no matter the odds. It looks like a normal book and doesn't resemble a book about cancer specifically. It is easy to understand and cleverly done; the author ties in the story of her cancer from diagnosis, through treatment, to her MRI scan, linking it to a triathlon she is taking part in ten years later.

I am ambivalent about this book. It didn't wow me, nor did I dislike it. The format of the narrative is interesting and gave me a good impression of how gruelling it must be to have to go through treatment. Out of all the cancer books that I have read, this is the one that expresses a lot of concern about hair loss. Others skirt round the issue or barely mention it, whilst here it is truly significant.

My admiration goes out to anyone who can do a triathlon, but this must take some beating. What an accomplishment.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (June 2017)

Reading about the experience of others with a brain tumour will always be frustrating, as it will never resemble your own completely. That said, this book gives great insight into the challenge of going through treatment. It shows the author's attitude to life after diagnosis: changing her eating habits to healthy ones; exercising; not seeing herself as a cancer patient. She even sees the disease as a blessing when it brings her back to piano playing in front of two neighbours.

The author's triathlon story is interwoven with her story to beat her brain tumour. Her descriptive writing is straightforward and easy to understand. She writes in a bluntly honest way, giving insight into the disappointment of getting sick, the denial, the lashing out at other people, the loss of control. An important part of the book is about how she deals with a low blood count through relaxing and how to get back into attending social events despite being sick. However, the conclusions and learning are limited because it is one case of glioblastoma that might not resemble others.

The author says that "the worst part of some dreaded disease is to be a diminished version of who you once were". Elsewhere, she says that "going on when you have a brain tumour is not out of bravery or strength, it is because it is the only option". These remarks made me think. Whilst they are refreshingly honest, they might not apply to all patients. You are different after going through cancer or supporting someone on a cancer journey and I like to think it makes you a richer person, through raised awareness and sensitivity if nothing else. A cancer journey is also an everyday choice of not giving up on yourself. Given the outcome, I might not have wanted to read this whilst supporting my mother as it would have inevitably led to disappointment. It is great to read it now though and this is just my personal view.

Ex-carer of somebody with a glioblastoma brain tumour (36-45) (July 2016)

This may be useful for some – the author's determination to get on with life is very relevant. The cover has a lovely feel, the paper is good quality and the book is a handy size to pop into a handbag. However, I found it a difficult read, trying to decipher the American wording and humour and the author jumps backwards and forwards too much – I found that in places I was very lost.

Ovarian cancer patient (56-65) (April 2016)

This is an insightful book speaking of the cancer journey, living with and beyond cancer. It could be useful for those newly diagnosed and those in remission. I liked reading about the emotional and realistic events that took place in the early period of diagnosis and coming to terms with diagnosis and treatment. I don't like how it flips between being newly diagnosed and competing in a triathlon; it is confusing and it is hard to relate to the triathlon. I wanted to enjoy this book more. It has great parts but the way in which it jumps backwards and forwards makes your emotions flip rapidly, which is hard to stick with. It is not an easy read because of this.

Macmillan Cancer Support Worker and relative and friend of someone with a cancer diagnosis (26-35) (March 2016)

Once you have been diagnosed with a brain tumour, you thirst for information. This book will not provide that, but then you will look for proof of those that have survived – if others have survived, why not me – and this is an example of someone that has. It is not technical, but focuses on the emotional aspects.

You know from the back that this is about someone's cancer journey but when is it going to start? It's not until page 50 that the cancer journey really starts. It is not written chronologically – diagnosis, treatment, and recovery – but starts from the position of recovery, competing in a race. The author is American and I did not find it the easiest of reads. The cover is stylish and the paper quality superior to the average paperback. There are no illustrations but the book has a quality feel.

This is a little different from most cancer journeys, with more of the feel of a novel. Most encouraging is that it's about a brain tumour survivor and that will give encouragement to others. It's not particularly useful. It's not a book that goes into detail about treatment but it is evidence that someone with a high-grade tumour has survived; that, in itself, may provide encouragement.

This book grew on me and, in the end, I quite enjoyed it. The dedications on the back led me to believe that it was about someone's cancer journey. In that respect, it does not get going until page 50. It's an intriguing read but taking a different time. It is perhaps most suitable for a cancer patient that likes a novel.

Brain tumour survivor (Glioblastoma Multiforme Grade4 removed 2005) (56-65) (March 2016)

I'm not sure who would find this useful. It may help family and friends understand how the patient may feel during treatment; their emotions will be all over the place and they may act differently. It might also help health professionals to understand that each patient is an individual and treat them accordingly.

It is written like a novel. The author speaks of her treatment, personal struggles, and fears, intermingled with competing in a charity triathlon. It is very easy to understand. It looks appealing; it is not large, the typeface is good, and the title would attract me.

I love this book because it is an honest account of the author's journey living and coping with a brain tumour and how she coped with this traumatic change. There isn't much that I dislike; the emotions that can be stirred up when reading such a story got to me at times because my sister died with a brain tumour.

I wouldn't recommend it to someone with a brain tumour. I had thought of passing it on to a friend with a brain tumour but it would be too upsetting for her to read and deal with her own emotions. Overall, it is more useful for those providing emotional support. It could be in a public library but not on show in a cancer information centre.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (December 2015)



This is quite a sterile narrative with very little of the author's human warmth coming through. There is little useful information for living with or coping with a brain tumour.

The topic is handled in a logical order in terms of diagnosis and treatment and it is easy to understand generally with very few technical references in the text. There is no glossary. It is not ideal for younger readers due to the proliferation of Latin terms and would benefit from translation footnotes. It is generally a reasonably appealing book. The layout and typeface are fine but the texture of the cover is uncomfortable to the touch (matt and dry texture as if covered with talcum powder).

It is short, easy to read and ends with a very positive message but it is not particularly useful. It does not offer emotional support nor depth of factual content.

Relative of womb and bowel cancer patient (46-55) (January 2016)



I like the concept of this book. It is interesting that the author can recreate the feeling she had during her cancer diagnosis and treatment. I thought this was very good writing. However, I dislike the layout and it made me stop reading; I found it very difficult to encourage myself to start each day.

I don't like the cover; it's not at all inviting although I do like the font and colour of the illustrations on the cover. The paper in the book is quite thin and the font is very small; it's okay for me but I have good eyesight, if someone is struggling for whatever reason, they may not be able to read it easily.

The concept of switching between the past and the present is interesting but I don't think it flows very well. You almost have to reread after a little while because you realise you are now in another situation. This is not a book I recommend.

Carer (Under 25) (April 2016)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.

It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.

We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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