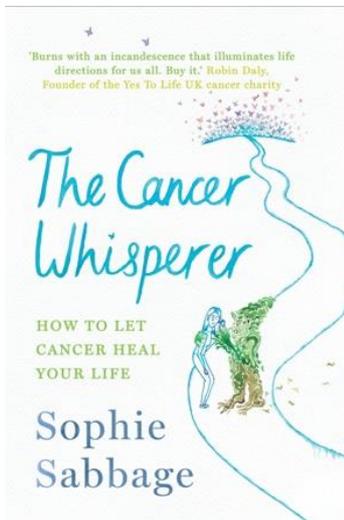


**MACMILLAN  
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# BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



## **The cancer whisperer: how to let cancer heal your life (2016)**

Sabbage S.

London: Coronet (Hodder and Stoughton), 2016.

224pp.

ISBN 9781473637986.

£14.99.

**Average star rating 3.9 (out of 5)**

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Please note that this book discusses some alternative treatments that are not currently supported by scientific evidence. The [Cancer Research UK website](#) has information about [alternative treatments](#).



This very personal book is not a 'how-to' book or a 'blame' book. Sophie Sabbage's cancer had metastasised by the time it was diagnosed and she describes her experience and shares information that she found – this saves time. I read it soon after diagnosis and found it so helpful that I wanted to tell others about it. It will be of most use to someone who has cancer but may also be useful for their carers and health professionals. It represents a complementary approach to cancer that some people might choose to accompany their treatment, and it gives a sense of what it feels like to go through treatment. The chapter headings give a sense of the territory covered: 1. The compass; 2. Coming to terms; 3. Understanding your disease; 4. Know your purpose; 5. Stabilise your body; 6. Clearing your mind; 7. Directing your own treatment; 8. Dancing with grief; 9. Breaking the shell; 10. The best medicine.

Sophie takes the reader through her experience of a devastating diagnosis, then shares the research she carried out into complementary approaches. Rather than seeing her experience as a battle, with winners and losers, she chooses to see it as a journey and talks about how she set about learning what cancer might have to teach her. Some people will prefer to go through treatment without thinking about it too much; others will find it a useful approach that encourages them to look at what they can do to complement their treatment and at life choices they can make that will continue after treatment has ended. The approach rang true to me and I immediately made some changes to my diet that are likely to be lifelong changes, not a quick fix. I also began a regular form of meditative practice, gave thought to my personal experience of grief and how this might have affected me in the longer term, considered my approach to my working life and to environmental stresses and took on ideas about how to ask for and receive help to get through treatment. I realise that's quite a lot but I got to this thinking much quicker because of reading this book.

It is easy to read. It could be read as a simple autobiography about a personal experience of cancer but equally it's possible to go deeper. It includes links to the author's website, which gives a range of freebies, including videos, alongside references to other resources and cancer-related research. I chose to follow some of the links but not everyone will want to. The information is there if the reader wants to

take it further. The author has done a lot of personal research and wanted to share information to prevent others having to start from scratch. She worked as a trainer prior to diagnosis and this may be why her book has such clarity. The format is pleasing, with a good, slightly quirky drawing on the front and a friendly writing style.

From first diagnosis, we are caught in a tsunami of processes and appointments over which we have little control. This is essential – we need prompt treatment and it's important for medical staff to know as much about the cancer as possible. New developments in cancer treatment are moving at a great pace. There isn't time for medical staff to take on additional learning about complementary medicines. In addition, cancer treatment can be harsh, and most medical staff think there's no point in making it even more rigorous by for example advising against sweets and alcohol or other forms of brief pleasure! So, we are simply advised against anything that might put us at risk of infection during treatment. However, this has the effect of taking away personal power to make changes that might support treatment. I have been living with a chronic condition for some time now and following my own D-Day (Diagnosis Day) I wanted to know what to do to help myself.

This is one of three books that made me feel I could do something for myself during treatment – towards helping my 'cancer journey'. To me, this approach was invaluable. It built my inner resources and helped me maintain focus and positivity. I have returned to the book and the website several times and each time I have found something new. As a practical example, the author describes the awkwardness that can happen with friends, family, and colleagues, and she suggests ways to allow them to help. Throughout my treatment, I have had great support from my partner and friends, and I think this is because I have been honest about the help they might be able to give – right down to supplying occasional meals, making me laugh, driving, visiting, or staying away, depending on what I needed. To my surprise, I have also found myself able to give the odd bit of support to others facing cancer.

For me there was nothing to dislike about this book. However, I read a newspaper article by a man with cancer who was angered by it. He saw cancer as an imposition on his life and felt that approaching cancer as a journey from which it is possible to learn denied the devastation it can cause. So, it will not be to everyone's taste.

It represents an approach based on hope and empowerment in the face of a disease that can rob us of hope and make us feel disempowered. It offers peer education from someone facing a terminal diagnosis and determined to live as long as she can! Sophie Sabbage's own description of her book is: "This book is for the cancer patient who wants to remain a dignified, empowered human being when your doctors and diagnosis are scaring the shit out of you, you're so shocked you can hardly put your shoes on in the morning, you're caught in the cross-fire between orthodox and complementary medicine and, disturbingly, the medical system treats you like a disease, not a human being. This is part memoir and part self-help book. I'm writing it to help you author your own story with wisdom, realism, creativity and courage." I feel that by sharing her own journey, Sophie has helped me face mine. She continues to share her own experiences via her website.

**Undergoing treatment for breast and lymph node cancer (56-65) (November 2016)**

This truly inspirational book is by an extraordinary woman in her 40s brutally given a stage 4 lung cancer diagnosis with months to live. She is still alive nearly two years later. Rather than curl up her toes and give in, she became involved in her own care. She researched and gathered a vast amount of information about her cancer, seeking information from other countries and cultures. Because of her professional background in psychology and mentoring, she was already better equipped than many but, as a psychotherapist myself and from my experience only, this alone does not account for the path she takes. She seems to have been blessed with a robust personality, a drive and positivism that is exceptional. When offered radiotherapy for her brain tumours, she doesn't let panic dominate her thinking. She uses her mind well in making such a difficult choice to refuse it. The alternative therapies she turns to, in combination with a selection of what is offered to her by her oncologist and cancer team in the UK, support and treat her with the outcome of extending her life, a shrinking of her primary tumour, and eradication of multiple metastases.

My only question is how useful it will be to many people with such a diagnosis. I regard myself as a feisty person, but couldn't allow myself at the time of my stage 3 diagnosis to become proactive in my treatment. I was prejudiced against much of the alternative treatments, having a medical background. It would have been beyond me during my treatment to apply myself to the demanding and rigorous treatments and path she pursued, not just seeking help from a cancer doctor in Mexico, but the attention to nutrition. It could have made me feel overwhelmed and inadequate. She becomes friendly with a man with a terminal diagnosis. He chooses to go with the treatment plan on offer and dies as she is writing her book. He is in his 60s, she is in her 40s and has a four-year-old daughter. She has respect for his choice. I identify more with him. I am in my 60s and have had a full life and dying is not the worst thing I must face at this stage of my life. But if I were in her situation, I may respond as she did. The book contains much practical information so I am hugely grateful to her for all her work and research. I am in remission now, but if my cancer returns, I would certainly refer to this book. I would want to meet her and might even fly to Mexico!

Anyone could read this book; it is excellently written, beautifully clear, and very moving. One of Sophie's gems of wisdom resides in the subtitle (How to let cancer heal your life). She found a way of using the cancer to let her know what adjustments she needed to make in her life at every level – physical, emotional mental and spiritual. She teaches me that any adversity in life can be used to improve the quality of our inner and outer life. She has also achieved a balance between accepting her vulnerability and needing to lean on others, that when needy, we must be selective who we turn to. We can't control others and must be careful in our expectations from, for example, our friends. On the other hand, she shows such a strong independence and takes charge of herself in realistic, not insanely self-sufficient ways.

This book is authentic, and in contrast to many over idealisations of alternative therapies (often driven out of despair and panic) it is immensely believable and truly memorable. It is truly inspirational and helps to shift the reader's attitude to illness and mortality, not in a vacuous way, but a detailed, rich, and practical way. It's worth checking out her Facebook page for up-to-date postings, especially in relation to making peace with your illness.

**Breast cancer 2004, recurrence 2012, GIST 2014 (56-65) (September 2016)**

This is such a rare and honest book. I have been following Sophie's blog since I was told about it by a mutual friend so I feel as though I've been sharing the highs and lows of her cancer journey for some time. She is a beloved wife and above all a mother of now six-year-old Gabriella and this is important because it shows the lengths and extremes and sheer pain and discomfort as well as expense to which a mother will go to have as long as possible with her young child.

Sophie was diagnosed with late-stage lung cancer in 2014 with secondaries in the brain and elsewhere. Her background is writing, speaking, and facilitating workshops in changing your life so she is perhaps particularly well equipped to share her cancer journey. Her approach is integrated medicine, combining medical care – chemo, radiotherapy, the works – with complementary therapies and alternative treatments, some very extreme and prohibitively expensive, such as flying to the Oasis of Hope in Mexico. Don't let this put you off; it is her approach and she doesn't suggest it invalidates whatever her readers choose to do. It shows that there are other sources of help we might not realise exist, that we must be strong and clear about what we want to do and that we must find and choose our own path through treatment.

But the real value of this book is that it describes an approach to cancer that is non-combative, that if we make war on cancer we make war on our own bodies, that we can learn oh so much from this disease to transform our lives, even to being hospitable to the uninvited stranger at our gate (as I've expressed it in one of my poems). It is a spiritual book about grief and love and transformation with much practical information along the way. Sophie is a talented writer. She writes in a flowing style and it is very easy to follow. There is a very useful supplement with contact addresses, recommended books. The typeface is clear and the cover lovely.

Some people will find too much shocking information in this book to cope easily but it is good for the public to realise what the human body can cope with and that survival is possible no matter how serious your condition. I wouldn't try even half of the extreme treatment and diet regimes Sophie follows but I don't have a young daughter whom I want so much to see grow up. You don't have to embrace this approach to appreciate what Sophie shares so beautifully about living with cancer and listening to what it has to teach us, what it whispers in our ears about transforming our lives.

This interesting and informative read is a moving testament to one woman's way of living with cancer. Her approach is ground breaking. It's not that others of us don't aim to approach it in the same way but we haven't written about it or shared our story with the world. It gives a good picture of an integrative approach to dealing with cancer; not either medical or alternative, but a blend to give holistic treatment.

### **Living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (66-75) (April 2016)**

This will be most useful for coping with the emotional effects of a cancer diagnosis. I found the combination of the author's experience as a patient and her professional background very interesting. I love the cover design and feel. I particularly like the practical exercises to help and the well-written and moving story.

### **Past cervical cancer patient (56-65) (June 2016)**

Anyone involved with terminal illness should read this. It is the most optimistic and open book about cancer and the most helpful I have read for cancer patients and those around them; it is also excellent for anyone recovering from cancer treatment.

It is written from the heart by an author who has been through every subject that she discusses and tells it warts and all. At the same time, she advises others what they could gain from her experiences without being presumptuous. Everyone involved with cancer – patients, medical staff, and carers – should read this book. It is very simple and to the point and once started you never want to put it down. A very deep and meaningful book, written with passion and thoughtfulness.

### **Living in remission from colon cancer (66-75) (November 2016)**

This excellent book will help cancer patients to live well and enjoy a good quality life. It goes into the feelings of the patient and how to deal with these. It will also be useful for relatives or friends to read. It is easy to understand with little medical jargon.

This is a book you can dip into and get some good tips on dealing with a devastating illness. It doesn't gloss over the severity of the author's illness, but does allow hope where you might expect none. It also covers ideas on how to live well with cancer but, unlike some, doesn't force them on you; it leaves you to make up your own mind whether to incorporate some alternative therapies or diet changes, or not. I believe it allows you to be kind to yourself even when you are undergoing difficult treatments and feeling ill. I highly recommend it for comfort even when in the middle of illness.

### **Living with womb cancer (66-75) (June 2016)**

This excellent book is full of good advice that could be read by anyone who wants to understand what someone living with incurable cancer goes through and how they can help them in a positive way. For patients, it is most useful for learning how to look at cancer differently if it is terminal and not to see it as all doom and gloom.

It is a very enjoyable read. It is well written and the author explains technical words well. The cover is very colourful, which makes it eye catching. The author writes as if she is talking to you face to face. I will be looking at her website to read more about what she has to say. I like how she does not force her opinions on you but just recommends things that have worked for her. She has a lot of good advice for managing and living with incurable cancer. She offers very good practical help and is not afraid to say it how it is – she does not sugar coat things.

I found this book very uplifting and once I started reading it I found it hard to put down. The author is very genuine and explains fully why she has done certain things without forcing her beliefs and what has worked for her on the reader. She offers great insight into living with incurable cancer and explains what people can and cannot do to help. It is a book that you can read repeatedly and get something different out of each time.

### **Living with secondary advanced breast cancer (46-55) (May 2016)**

This is a very personal book and although much of the content will be beneficial for others, including health professionals, to read, I feel it is for the person with cancer. It would also be a great book to share with a partner or someone caring for you if you are a patient.

For me the main "attraction" of this book is the wonderful input of dealing with the emotional and spiritual impact of cancer. It also covers nutrition, supplements, and alternative treatments, so deals with many aspects of living with cancer. Many people will select chapters read to begin with and may not want to engage with every aspect covered but this does not detract from the immense value of this book. For some it will be a cover-to-cover read but it is important to acknowledge that this is also a book to dip in and out of when the time is right.

It is a personal record of Ms Sabbage's journey with cancer so the sequence is entirely logical as it pertains to her own experiences. It is written in a personable and sensitive way and where any technical terms are used or references made the necessary explanation is given. I love the title and the cover. It appeals tremendously to me personally. The artwork resonates with my feelings about my journey with cancer, as does the title. It successfully gets across the ethos of the book – a journey to learn from, to try to understand and to communicate with.

I enjoyed the whole book although some sections appealed more than others. I love the optimism throughout and the honesty. I deeply appreciate the emotions and thoughts shared by Ms Sabbage and could connect with many of them very easily. There were moments of real brilliance that only someone who has sat in a waiting room to get the result of a latest scan or course of treatment could identify with. This is the "gold dust" of the book – it gets it! The author gets it – of course she does – but it is wonderful to read her words that so clearly show she gets it.

There wasn't much I disliked about the book although I have my own thoughts on certain aspects of living with cancer and one example of this is to do with nutrition supplements. I did not particularly want to read yet another book informing me of hugely radical changes I need to make in my life but to be fair Ms Sabbage states several times that these were her choices and would not necessarily be those of everyone. My only concern is that the amount of "Don'ts" can terrify to a newly diagnosed patient; sometimes they are better introduced slowly. In a book such as this, you get the whole "whammy" so to speak but of course everyone is different and for many people this will be exactly what they want. The other important point to consider is that Ms Sabbage was given a terminal diagnosis; in this circumstance, I can quite understand that she wanted to undertake everything she could to help herself get well. The severity of a diagnosis could helpfully be considered when deciding just how much change to incorporate into your life and how quickly to do it.

This is one of the best books on living with cancer that I have read. I loved it. Quite simply, I think it is wonderful. It is inspiring and brings hope and great understanding. It is full of empathy and for me the greatest joy is that Ms Sabbage addresses the "whole" person. There is so much to deal with in the mind and the soul that too often is overlooked in books on coping with cancer.

**Kidney cancer patient (66-75) (May 2016)**

In the author's words, this "is for the cancer patient who wants to remain a dignified, empowered human being when you feel like a rabbit caught in the headlights...". Her aim is to help you transform your relationship with cancer such that you are transformed by your illness, whatever the outcome; to help you steer your course and stay at the wheel, but not to drive the whole distance alone. The most important thing is to deal with the fear of dying first, not last, so you give yourself the chance to steer your journey with cancer instead of holding the rudder. She helps you to do this; you feel she is holding your hand as you take healing steps on your journey, she shows you how to engage with fear, anger, and grief in healthy and healing ways.

It has been described as an inspiring compass to help cancer patients and carers negotiate through illness, to use when they are lost to help chart the way forward at any given moment depending on what is happening. The author's aim is to help patients transform their relationship with cancer – she believes cancer has something to teach you if you know how to listen. That if you cannot become clear of cancer you can become free of it. She explains the key steps of the compass strategy:

1. Listen to your own intuitive compass.
2. Remain a person first and a patient second.
3. Stabilise your body then deal with the emotional healing side.
4. Attend to your heart and clear your mind.

Her attitude is "I have cancer but cancer does not have me".

The book is very readable and easy to understand. It is very appealing; it's a hardback and the image on the cover suggests the approach of the book and inspires you to read it. It flows well; the author explains her strategy and the key steps to it. She explains how to come to terms with the illness in four steps:

1. Feel your feelings to help you take charge of your treatment and be as emotionally healthy as you can be.
2. Face the full facts so you can make clear choices.
3. Ask for help and accept that vulnerability is different from weakness.
4. Establish your boundaries.

This is an inspirational book by a cancer patient who, although in the advanced stages of the disease, remains positive and is at peace with herself and her disease. It is a step-by-step guide to help you understand your disease so that you can begin to deal with it. She helps you to be at peace with your unwell body and not regard it as a battleground. She believes you may not be able to control all the events that happen but you can choose how to respond and decide not to be reduced by them – you can always choose your own way. She ends the book writing a letter to her cancer, which is quite amazing.

I like everything about it; it's probably the best book for cancer patients that I have read. I like the way it is written – part memoir, part practical and spiritual advice. The book has received high acclaim from the cancer community and I can see why. If you could only read one book on how to live with cancer make it this one!

**Recovering from bowel cancer (56-65) (August 2016)**

Sometimes you need to understand about cancer and how it works and this book does exactly that. It is amazing; it flows well and at the same time you are given whispers of wisdom – only someone who has been there and done it can do this.

The author has gone out of her way to explain everything that she has been through on her cancer journey. I like how she expresses how cancer has healing, as well as destructive, qualities and that it is your attitude towards it that makes the difference.

I love this book. It's one you have to read to the end. It's a journey from weakness to strength, a blueprint for empowerment and how to change your attitude to cancer and take charge of your life. Joy, pain, love, and wisdom permeate this book; it's a pleasure to read.

### **Carer to mother and friend with cancer (56-65) (June 2016)**

I saw my own journey as I read this excellent book. I recommend it to all. It gives a good insight into the feelings of someone with a terminal diagnosis and how she fought back. It is an honest account of someone who was dying but who began to take control of her life. There is a great balance between clinical facts and emotion.

The whole book gives hope for someone living, or caring for someone, with cancer, as well as anyone who wants to understand how patients feel when they are told. It may also be helpful for professionals as it gives an insight to the feelings of someone with cancer, especially someone who, in their mind, is terminal. Sophie describes so vividly how the health professionals dealt with her; I felt the same way.

It is well written and easy to read. I repeatedly felt it was my story and that the author wrote this book as a means of recovery and coping. Like her, I am not a doctor or health professional; I am a cancer survivor and could identify with what was written. I think the mood and feeling for the book is right, even the colouring and typeface.

I can relate to the alternative treatments, how I tried to cling to life, but also to the emotional side, that was so effective. It is an honest record of what happens. Others may have a different journey but this was very like mine. I wanted to cry at times; this is my story, this is me. I drew so much strength from it. I hope health professionals read it as it is about the patient; we are not a statistic, we are human beings fighting a terrible illness. I also want to acknowledge how she documented how the nurses and doctors reacted to her showing emotion; I especially like the time when she said she could not make an appointment and the reaction of the staff – this happened to me.

I would give it more than five stars. It is compelling and heart wrenching and like my story, especially the avenues I sought, and my feelings. As well as mapping the issues that one faces, it stimulates the emotions. Everyone can fight cancer if the different facets in their life (doctors, nurses, friends, family) pull together as one and work with the individual, let us own our own body and STOP trying to tell us how to do it. I read on one cancer website that chemotherapy or radiotherapy cannot always beat cancer, it is the body that must kick it out. So true and this book shows this.

### **Bowel cancer and leukaemia (AML) patient (56-65) (April 2016)**

This book outlines stages of grief and understanding, taking control over treatment choices and is a road map for the whole process. It flows very well and outlines each stage of the author's process of understanding, coming to terms with her illness and subsequent control of plans for living her best life. It is very easy to read and is written with little jargon. There is a list of useful contacts and websites at the end of the book for further research. It looks very appealing, like a self-help book, which it is!

This is an inspirational book and readers will enjoy and be uplifted by it. I found the compass analogy useful and the book looks in detail at each stage of understanding this process and the road to recovery or wellness. The author draws on her experience as a teacher of emotional transformation to help readers look at ways to view cancer as a liberating and meaningful experience rather than something to be feared. Her premise is that cancer is something that happens rather than an all-defining experience. It is empowering and uplifting for people no matter where they are on their cancer journey. It would also be useful for health professionals to read!

### **Treated for breast cancer 2015 (36-45) (May 2016)**

This has lots of practical guidance about using a holistic approach to deal with cancer. There are lists of websites and PDFs to download. These provide a template with soul-searching questions that enable the patient to delve into emotional and spiritual issues surrounding their potential suffering. It is a particularly useful guide for anyone working with cancer patients who is willing to explore at a deeper level.

Sophie provides a compass with a diagram and explanations of what each chapter will contain. This is in a logical sequence, which enables the reader to flow with Sophie's own experiences from diagnosis onwards and relate this to their own journey. The title itself would be enough to make me take a second look. The diagrams and subtitles are experiential and offered at times in note form. This makes the book easy to read and to pick up and put down at any stage. Sophie's eloquent language is easy to understand and I totally identified with her search for meaning. I ponder whether this is due to my own beliefs and training as a counsellor but I believe that anyone who reads this book will find something that resonates.

I gained total identification with Sophie's approach. I considered that "there is someone out there who thinks like me". This came at a time when I was feeling isolated and misunderstood in an expression and meaning of 'my cancer'. Sophie addresses the much-ignored effect of the FEAR that a diagnosis involves and offers an alternative way of expressing the disease. This will be unique to everyone. On the down side, Sophie's graphic explanations of her suffering and pain resonated with me on a deep level and I stopped reading it last thing at night. From a counsellor's point of view, I took on her pain and over identified.

There is something here for everyone affected by cancer. The holistic approach allows readers to gain knowledge, practical help, and identification on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels, as they choose, according to their belief system.

### **Living with anal cancer (66-75) (April 2016)**

Without question, this incredible book is one of the best on cancer that I have read. Sophie Sabbage was diagnosed with Stage 4B cancer and has a completely new take on living with the disease. She encourages the reader to make friends with their cancer, to let it heal them (Sophie speaks of talking to people who felt they were emotionally shut down before their diagnosis, who are now finally able to be honest with their emotions) and, above all, not to become a passive cancer patient. She invites the reader to try to see the positive message in cancer: there are things you can control, such as changing your diet, which she does to great effect; don't be afraid of researching the disease to ensure you get the right treatment. Crucially, she warns against listening to medical professionals who 'know best' and who may, for example, tell you how long you have left to live but who are only going on statistics.

It is very easy to understand. I love the cover and the feel of the book. It's very attractive and the cover illustrations are comforting; not something you always expect from a book about cancer.

It's quite unorthodox. Sophie speaks of telling her doctors when she will be available for chemotherapy treatments, rather than passively agreeing to whatever date she is given. I also love how she speaks of not being a cancer patient but rather of living your life to the full, whether it is long or short. It invites you to look at your diagnosis in a different way: to embrace your diagnosis and to look at how it can heal you. A very unusual and very helpful, comforting book. Not everyone may be able to embrace their cancer. I'm not sure I could have done so in the way Sophie does. However, this takes the 'sting' out of diagnosis. It makes it less scary and shows you how to take more control of your life if you choose.

I highly recommend this book. It encourages you to live and die well, and always on your terms. Positive, proactive and comforting, it may completely change the way you feel about cancer. It is particularly useful for anyone living with cancer when time might be short. Health professionals who haven't experienced cancer will also find it useful. It shows how not to talk to a cancer patient, which is helpful!

### **Cancer survivor (Burkitt's Lymphoma) (36-45) (June 2016)**

Although this book is intended to guide patients on their journey and offer advice on coping mechanisms, relatives, health professionals and anyone who has suffered hardship could benefit from reading this philosophy. Sophie addresses managing her diagnosis throughout, but anyone who is facing difficulty could apply this mindset to their life and truly grow from it. A cancer diagnosis is a shock, and most people find the thought of their disease horrifying and depressing but this book is the perfect tool to turn that mental attitude around by facing mortality with new eyes.

The book flows very well, and although the topics had the potential to become random and unorganised, Sophie has split the guide into ten clear chapters, each addressing an essential step in understanding grief, and living until you die rather than letting your life become about dying.

Sophie takes charge of her cancer care and in doing so, avails herself of alternative treatments. I fully support making one's own decision when it comes to healthcare; sometimes the option that a doctor recommends isn't one that necessarily best fits the person. For example, an individual may concentrate on quality of life rather than surviving as long as possible and this could clash with recommended treatment. However, Sophie takes part in various treatments that are not particularly proven to be of benefit whilst leaving out some of the treatments offered to her that may have been to her advantage. Perhaps to gain control in an uncertain time, she concentrates a lot on diet; this is of course important, but this diet may not be recommended for patients for whom maintaining their weight and quality of life is very important. The options that Sophie discusses were right for her, but people who read this book should not necessarily follow her methods precisely – read and see which elements of her mentality would fit in with your own. She has fabulous insights and recommendations that could very well benefit you mentally and physically.

Sophie goes into in-depth explanations of all complex terms mentioned, and describes the processes rather than assuming you know it, which will be of benefit to anyone just beginning their cancer journey. She has a very strong set of beliefs and values that have been vital in helping her through the experiences of diagnosis, treatment, and grief. The use of metaphors is amazing, and at times her story is nearly like poetry – engaging and melodious. The book itself has an unusual eye-catching design, with the illustration on the front page symbolising the cancer journey. It is small enough to be easily carried around, and the paper and hardback cover are of good quality. It is easily read, with any processes e.g. clearing your mind, listed in bullet point form for ease of understanding and application.

The way that Sophie describes cancer is a true revelation into how people can use their diagnosis for genuine personal growth rather than allow it to crush them. Her mentality would be a real inspiration to anyone who wishes to value each precious day and develop a determination to live rather than wait to die. Sophie is not naive, she understands that her cancer is terminal, yet she has not allowed it to swamp her. She describes with great openness and tenderness the darker days that everyone with chronic illness must face, and fully embraces that it is perfectly okay to not feel chirpy and happy every day. This book would be perfect for those struggling to cope with their mortality in the face of cancer, and has many motivational quotes and paragraphs that struck me, for example: 'You see, we grieve for that which we have loved and do love, so when you feel grief you feel love. And there is nothing more healing than love.'; and 'I could let cancer heal my life – even if I couldn't heal my cancer.'. These are two examples of the many sentences throughout the book that made me question a lot of assumptions that I had about illness and mortality. Nearly every page has a way of explaining cancer in a melodic and calm way.

As a healthcare professional in training, I worry that recommended treatments from doctors were perhaps being replaced by alternative medicine. This was Sophie's decision, and she spent a lot of time researching these treatments, but I caution any reader not to decline recommended treatment unless it is your strong belief that it would do you good. Prioritise what is most important for your own case – perhaps some of Sophie's choices would suit you and perhaps not, but the most important thing to take from this read is that you are a person, not a patient, and you have the right to be involved in the decision making surrounding your own treatment.

'The cancer whisperer' is an amazing insight into Sophie Sabbage's attitude to cancer management. It would be an emotional support mechanism for difficult times, with lots of practical advice alongside metaphors to help view your diagnosis from a different angle.

### **Radiotherapy and oncology student (Under 25) (October 2016)**



This personal account of learning to live with a terminal diagnosis is most valuable to others in a similar situation. The author describes, in detail, the journey from a shock diagnosis of incurable cancer to taking control of her situation and finding how to have a positive and fulfilling life whilst dealing with her illness. It is essentially a self-help book and the author explains in some detail how she learnt to research orthodox and complementary treatments to enable her to make informed decisions. She explains the reasons behind her strict diet and the extensive research into treatments too. However, the focus is her emotional and spiritual response to her diagnosis. She explores the grief, fear, and anger that at times overwhelm her and outlines how she overcame them and is now able to approach life in a positive way.

It flows well although some parts are a little repetitive. It is quite easy to understand and there is little technical content – the focus is largely on Sophie's spiritual journey. I suggest you read the blurb on the back first – it's a good example of the style and language of the book. I found it just the right length and the chapters are in easy to read chunks. The typeface is easy to read and the book has a good quality feel to it.

An insight into how someone else with terminal cancer is thinking, feeling and coping is extremely valuable. The author is very honest and it is reassuring to read thoughts that I recognised as some of my own. A strong message throughout is to remember you are a person, a complex individual, not just a patient, and to take control of the situation – this is very important. The author is refreshingly honest and insightful. There are also useful practical exercises to help you tackle grief and other emotions.

Sophie has made radical changes to many aspects of her life. For example, she believes that her very restricted diet is contributing to her improved health. This made me feel inadequate at times – I know I could never be so disciplined. She receives a variety of treatments around the world – unattainable to many. However, we can choose the advice to work with and the author is very careful to ensure she doesn't mislead in any way. She reminds us that everyone is individual and to take relevant professional advice before making any important decisions about treatment.

This is a valuable insight into one person's experience and emotions. Readers will be able to take away valuable advice on how to tackle the complex emotions and situations they unexpectedly experience when given a diagnosis of cancer.

### **Living with incurable NET (36-45) (June 2016)**

This is a great guide on coming to terms with and living with cancer. It provides mainly psychological support, teaching you how to deal with the shock of diagnosis and guiding you through the difficulties of living with cancer and deciding the right treatment for you. Sophie spends a large amount of time talking about maintaining 'personhood' in the face of cancer; providing support by reminding you that you are an individual and not just a cancer patient – something that can often be forgotten when you are whipped up in the medical world of chemotherapy. It will help cancer patients come to terms with their diagnosis and guide them through their cancer journey. It will also be a helpful read for family and loved ones, so that they can help the patient in deciding the best way to deal with their cancer and move forward.

It flows well; each chapter focuses on a different aspect of dealing with cancer, from the initial shock of diagnosis, through understanding the cancer and choosing treatments, to living well as a patient. This means that the reader can gain insight at any point on their journey, no matter what their prognosis is. It is written in a very friendly tone that is easy to understand and accessible for all. Sophie explains technical terms fully and provides a list of sources at the end in case you want more detail. She comes across as a friend, helping to guide you through your cancer journey while referring to her own. There are no factual inaccuracies as such, but it is important to remember that the methods that Sophie chooses are what work for her, they might not necessarily work for everyone. For example, she praises a diet without sugar, but it is not proven that sugar feeds cancer. The cover design is interesting – representing the journey that you go on through cancer, presenting cancer more as a friend that you can learn from rather than an enemy. The paper quality is good and the type size is appropriate and easy to read.

This book is great for anyone at any stage of their cancer to help them work out their cancer journey. The book concentrates greatly on the importance of maintaining your sense of self in the face of cancer, which I found very helpful. There have been many times throughout treatment that I have felt like a number, rather than a person; this book provides you with many practical ways in which you can maintain your individuality in the face of the hospital system.

Sophie spends a large amount of time discussing her extreme diet change and the alternative therapies that she uses. I understand that this works for her, and it may work for some people, but I worry that some people reading this may feel compelled to follow suit even though it might not necessarily suit them.

This is a very uplifting read for cancer patients; it shows that you do not need to feel that you are in a battle with cancer, but provides ways in which you can work with your body and gain a new insight into yourself. No matter where you are on your cancer journey, Sophie provides practical methods in both dealing with your cancer diagnosis and moving forward. Most importantly she concentrates on maintaining your individuality in the face of cancer, and this makes the book a very uplifting and empowering read.

**Leukaemia patient, post bone marrow transplant (Under 25) (April 2016)**

Many of the core messages in this book are universally applicable as a philosophy for living and thus relevant to us all. Clearly, as the context here refers to a personal cancer journey, there is more content that is directly applicable to those affected by cancer. In parallel with the author's experience, it has most direct relevance to people diagnosed with very advanced cancers, although there's much here for anyone directly affected by cancer. I recommend that it is read as soon as possible after diagnosis as a guide to how to react to such devastating news.

It is nicely presented and laid out and there's a broadly logical and structured progression to the content. The language is not technical; it is written by a self-confessed layperson and aimed at other laypeople, using plain and sometimes amusingly colloquial English. The author does tend to indulge in some flights of fancy with passages of flowery and poetic language that, for me, detracted from the power of her advice. She could have offered the same advice in perhaps half of the word count if she'd omitted the non-essentials!

There is much to admire in this book. The core messages of don't be a victim, take control and retain your humanity are all very helpful. They were absolutely in accord with my own approach to cancer and it's gratifying to see these principles so well described. I admire the positive but grounded attitude adopted by the author, which I think serves as a model for all patients. There are many useful and practical tips for dealing with the physical and psychological aspects of dealing with diagnosis and treatment. Many of these are framed within helpful checklists. Finally, I admire the candour with which she describes the low times she endured. It's reassuring to see that even the most resilient and positive people have moments of weakness.

I found three aspects irksome. The first I have already mentioned (the gratuitously flowery language). The second relates to the author's spirituality, which to a non-believer like me is annoying and serves to undermine her credibility. I developed a personal cancer strategy with many similarities to those in the book without reference to the metaphysical. Clearly, the author can believe whatever she likes but there's a danger that non-believers may be alienated and feel that it's an essential part of the process – it isn't. Thirdly, the author adopts a rather self-congratulatory tone at times; I'd rather she left the reader to judge how bold and resourceful she is. It would be a 5-star rating without the irritations described above.

### **Testicular cancer survivor (56-65) (April 2014)**

This is a very useful book for anyone who is touched by a cancer diagnosis. It is empowering and enlightening with lots of useful information. It is easy to understand and an appealing size with clear text. The author uses a couple of simple diagrams as illustration but there are no photographs.

This is a very positive and proactive book written in a feisty style, which educates, informs, and inspires the reader. The only thing I don't like is that the author references her website several times (she runs workshops as part of her business); I found this a little too self-promoting.

### **A relative recently died from endometrial cancer (46-55) (April 2016)**

This is ideal for anyone looking for alternative and positive ways to deal with cancer. It is very easy to follow even if you don't believe in God (this is not touched upon too much). However, it is repetitive in places. It deals with having a different mindset to coping with terminal cancer. It is interesting to see how Sophie deals with her journey by not accepting what the professionals tell her and setting out to ask questions and follow alternative options. The chapter that deals with the mindset of having any form of cancer is uplifting. This book is not for everyone but if you are open to new ideas and options on dealing with terminal or treatable cancer then I recommend it.

### **Testicular cancer survivor (46-55) (June 2016)**

This focuses on a difficult prognosis and should be recommended accordingly. It could be useful soon after diagnosis, but emotions may be too great for the patient/carer to benefit. Everyone is different and the key is to be guided by the individual. It is very much based on the author's experience and written accordingly; most readers will be able to relate to a lot of the content, but not necessarily in the same order. It covers relevant areas but each reader's capacity to take on the depth depends on their circumstances. The author discusses extreme diets as part of her strategy BUT most importantly reinforces that it should be an individual decision and stresses the importance of seeking advice.

It is straightforward to read, although in parts, the vocabulary is difficult to digest and the terms overwhelming. The author's tone is direct and empathetic but her personality of 'direct and upfront' can prove scary and unmanageable in places – it could empower some, but abandon others. The front cover is great and I like the key messages at the end of each chapter.

There are many good things about this book, for example: the information, guidance and encouragement to find appropriate support through grief; the do's and don'ts list for friends; the author's honesty/openness about the emotional impact of diagnosis where the prognosis is challenging; her permission 'to be and feel' yourself regardless; her encouragement to engage proactively in making decisions with your healthcare professional; and the importance of understanding 'know your purpose' and making a true commitment.

This book is based on the experience of the author and in the wrong or desperate hands, may prove difficult to adapt and leave individuals feeling a failure. Some content is not realistic or doable; it depends on finances and a network/influence of external professional support. It is quite useful and I might recommend it but timing and the individual's capacity to take on information is crucial. Everyone's needs are different and some parts of the book are more relevant than others.

### **Living with the consequences of breast cancer (46-55) (May 2016)**

This provides patients with an analysis of what it means to have a diagnosis and how the author came to terms with her terminal diagnosis. It is a positive, constructive book and patients will be able to identify with the author. I particularly like that she faced up to her fears of death; once she had confronted them she could move on and

use her energies positively. I found this myself; once you face up to the fear, which is all consuming at the time of diagnosis, you create space for more practical issues.

It covers orthodox and unorthodox treatment protocols, which I found helpful but some readers will be turned off by this approach. I didn't like the emphasis on emotional/psychological factors playing a role in cancer; this can be a dangerous assumption, causing patients to blame themselves if they have personal issues that they cannot do much about. More generally treating the whole person rather than the cancer, as if it is something almost divorced from you, is a good positive approach. There is a wealth of information covering dietary and lifestyle advice.

Sophie emphasises how each patient is an individual and should be treated as such, not lumped in with the prevailing statistics. There are patients who have relentlessly sought out ways to treat their so-called terminal cancer with amazing success and the book refers to one of these ([www.survivingterminalcancer.com](http://www.survivingterminalcancer.com)) – an amazing story that illustrates that cancer specialists do not know everything. I told my specialist about this video – he baldly stated that no one survives this type of brain cancer, when this man and others clearly have. High time these people's voices were heard – there are increasingly more of them.

Health professionals are becoming more aware that patients wish to be involved in their treatment and know as much as possible, entering a dialogue rather than passively accept that doctors know best. I fully support this for anyone who wants this and the author makes it very clear this is what she wants and expects – full participation giving the patient the chance to have an active role in treatment.

This unusual book covers physical, mental, and spiritual facets of cancer in the whole person. It will be well received by patients open to new ideas from an engaging author, but some people will not like it and therefore I did not give it five stars.

#### **Breast cancer patient (56-65) (June 2016)**



This book flows well and is easy to understand. The chapters are well thought out and I like the use of bullet points, the supplement and how personal it is. However, I don't like how the author speaks negatively about NHS treatment and how the staff will force you into things and not let you have an opinion. It is very difficult for NHS staff to read this book and not feel offended and saddened by this.

I would not be able to recommend this book to my patients; it is very difficult to do so due to the alternative therapies and clinics that are mentioned. However, if I personally knew someone with cancer, I would recommend the parts on coping strategies and acceptance, which are very interesting and really thought provoking.

#### **Lung cancer specialist nurse (26-35) (November 2016)**

This refreshing personal memoir and self-help book encourages people to look for another way to thrive and be in control of their life and care after a cancer diagnosis. It is most useful to support those living, or caring for someone, with cancer to have the confidence to live well, to be in charge of their own treatment, and to take an integrated approach to living well with cancer. It is easy to understand.

The front cover design is appealing. The sleeve quotes and text are clear and encourage a reader to pick up the book and read more, but I am not sure about the comments on the back about grief to encourage others to read the book. I am uncertain about the approaches outlined in the chapter 'Dancing with grief'.

Sophie encourages us to look for another way, to pursue an integrated approach to treatment and to take control and charge of our lives rather than be solely under the control of the medical profession. She feels strongly that we can learn and gain from, and even be transformed by, the experience of cancer. She encourages everyone to be a collaborative partner in their care. There is a strong message about the importance of "you" amidst the medicalisation of cancer and some important messages to help and support us to shift mindsets and live well, have the best quality of life and be in charge of our care. It is quite useful, especially the key message about living your life and not becoming a patient-preserving you. I recommend it to patients and their carers to support how one navigates the path of integrated care without the tensions of orthodox versus unorthodox treatment. It may be especially useful for those with advanced or terminal cancer.

### **Living with breast cancer (46-55) (November 2016)**

This may be useful for anyone with a keen interest in seeking a wide variety of support systems other than those offered by the NHS. The energy and enthusiasm of the author is admirable, (if exhausting to read), as she seeks to find a way of taking control of her life after a cancer diagnosis. She never sees herself as a victim as she takes charge of her condition and her treatment.

It is mostly in a logical order, but does feel a little repetitive in places. It is mostly easy to understand although at times the author descends into terminology of the "psycho-babble" variety, which I'm afraid I skipped. Sophie writes from a privileged position, largely unacknowledged, in that she can employ the services of many agencies available only to a few, e.g. a nutritionist, a naturopath, an acupuncturist, a colonic irrigator, a lymph-draining masseuse, an integrative oncologist (?) as well as frequent travel to Mexico for vitamin C and oxygen therapy. I was also irritated by her attitude to appointments; she expected them to be fitted around her availability, her needs and lifestyle. I wonder how we ordinary mortals would fare if we tried this in the NHS?

It is difficult to decide how useful it will be. It could be very useful for someone with a similar outlook and mindset, but it could leave someone who is unable, for whatever reason, to have such a positive and forthright attitude feeling guilty for not being able to follow similar paths – this would not be at all useful. I do get the feeling, at times, that the author felt that it would be pathetic and weak to succumb to cancer. Before I recommend it, I must be sure that the reader wants to follow a unique and individual approach and is looking for inspiration, encouragement, and guidance to do this.

This book is a little like Marmite... you will love it or hate it! I veer slightly towards the latter. However, the ideas of living fully alongside cancer and healing your life as well as your cancer are admirable and could be inspirational. I like the author's idea of re-thinking the adversarial attitude of 'fighting' or 'battling' cancer. There are no rules on how you are supposed to react or behave and everyone handles cancer differently. What works for one doesn't for another and so it is useful to have access to thoughts and ideas that may not sit comfortably with your own. The author quotes Viktor Frankl: 'The last of the human freedoms is to choose your own attitude in any given situation, to choose your own way'. Amen to that!

### **Breast cancer patient (66-75) (May 2016)**

This book would be useful for anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer, perhaps particularly those with late-stage or terminal disease who are looking for alternative treatments or options for keeping well. It is a personal story of how the author took control of her cancer diagnosis and prognosis. It tells of the moment she learnt of her diagnosis of stage 4 (terminal) lung cancer and her emotions and reactions and is at all times a raw and honest account of her life and philosophy. The author writes passionately of her determination to 'remain a person first and a patient second', while not diminishing the cruel reality of her life with cancer.

It is personal and truthful, setting out the raw experience of being diagnosed with late-stage cancer at a relatively young age, with a young child and much-loved husband. The shock of how life throws up such unexpected events is evident in her struggle to draw on her experiences as a life coach and facilitator to re-condition herself to embark on a more healing journey through the illness. I like the fact that the author challenges others' perceptions of her as patient and the medical profession generally when she refuses to be seen as a patient not a person, and so puts her energy and drive into researching alternative treatments and tailor makes a treatment plan that combines orthodox ('synthetic') treatments such as chemo and radiotherapy, as well as a range of 'alternative' therapies. Her bravery and willingness to challenge and take control are what I most relate to.

It is very 'readable', accessible, easily understood and encouraging in tone. It is unlike most other cancer books that I have read, part memoir and part practical; the author wrote it with the aim of sharing her experience and philosophy of how to be in control of your diagnosis and life with cancer. She references several theorists and 'mentors' with links to their works and programmes at the end of the book, along with many of her own contacts/resources grouped by category. It is aesthetically appealing; the cover is eye catching and the font size and type make it easy to read. It is not a book to dip in and out of as the chapters 'tell a story' and so are best read in sequence. There are no photos apart from one of the author on the back cover.

The energy and knowledge that the author possesses in researching alternative treatments are impressive but daunting. Some treatments were overseas and most were paid for by her 'supporters', leading me to question how those without the same resources can follow her advice and path. However, this should not detract from the overall ethos and message, which is about taking back control in determining your

treatment options, helping yourself by better understanding 'what cancer is saying to you' and making changes in your life that make sense to you and are healing.

The author's belief and championing of alternative treatments (alongside more conventional treatments) means that readers need to exercise real caution and get advice before embarking on them. Many are well known, e.g. hot stone massages, acupuncture, vitamin C and B17, but some are what you might call unorthodox, e.g. kinesiology, Rife technology, coffee enemas, oxygen therapy. The author includes a disclaimer that the reader must speak with their clinical team and acknowledges that she acted against her oncologist's advice in some cases, for example, when she followed a particular diet. The central tenet of the book is choice and taking control of your diagnosis, with the author tailor making a treatment plan that worked for her. Whilst this approach is certainly liberating and at times inspiring, the cost, knowledge and resources to follow this path may be limited for many readers.

The book is worth reading as it is unlike most other cancer books I have read. It belongs in the section of books marked 'alternative' in that the author sees cancer less as a disease that must be battled but something that we must listen and learn from to be healed by it. It explains how cancer teaches us how to live and engage with fear and anger, rather than trying to tough it out or 'be positive'. By recognising and understanding the complexity of our emotions, the author argues that we can begin to see the choices that we have in a system that often overwhelms and unwittingly reduces our choices and sense of self.

It isn't for everyone. It may be more for those faced with a late-stage or terminal diagnosis as a way of drawing support, encouragement, hope and an understanding of the options open to them. It is a manual for those looking for support or someone to mentor and advise them through the journey to wellness. Not all readers will like it, given its slightly more unorthodox approach to dealing with cancer and planning treatments and at times the writing can read a little over-poetic. The 'letter to cancer' seems to over-romanticise her 'awakening' since being diagnosed cancer, and 'thanking cancer' for what it has taught her seemed to me a step too far!! However, as someone who has experienced cancer at a similar age, I could relate to much of the content and found it refreshing and genuine in its intent to support and encourage others to take control of their diagnosis and treatment. For that, it is well worth a read, including the supporting links and resources that she references.

### **Oesophageal cancer patient (46-55) (October 2016)**

This is most useful for the newly diagnosed, those about to start treatment, and the people looking after them. It is easy to understand and I like the straightforward words. It will give patients some moral support. It is little bit negative about health care professionals but may help them understand better the emotions of patients.

### **Health professional (36-45) (July 2016)**



This would suit someone who is a processed thinker, likes order and lists, perhaps someone newly diagnosed. Readers with perfectionist traits, who think and work in an ordered fashion will emphasise with the author and may find it helpful from a holistic perspective. The layout is ordered with a table of contents and a summary of all the other chapters in Chapter 1. At the end, there is a chapter titled "Supplement: Support Systems" listing documentaries, books, treatments, clinics, and practitioners, Yes to Life, diet, supplements and how to continue your journey with the author.

I admire the author for writing a book, finding her journey, listening to her body and soul, and doing what's best for her. There are tips and sources for further information and lots of advice. However, it wasn't what I thought it would be. I was keen to read it because I'd seen many good reviews but it is a difficult read – the content does not leap off the page as engaging. It is neither reference nor story-telling, and I found it boring in places. The author appears to be a processed thinker and very ordered.

It is a very ordered book and would suit someone that likes reading lists. It is a good effort from someone that's never written a book before, but there are better books out there. It might be suitable for someone newly diagnosed who doesn't realise that they should take charge of their own destiny. There is advice that the reader can take on board to provide emotional support and other information about living with cancer. However, the same advice is available from several sources and there is nothing new in this book. I'm pleased the author got this off her chest as she'll be able to focus on her own compass now and hopefully relax about her attention to detail.

### **Living with DCIS breast cancer (36-45) (October 2016)**

This is a personal account of one person's response to cancer and as such could be useful for anyone in contact with cancer – patient, friend, relative or carer. If someone is struggling to cope and willing to be directed about how to come to terms with their diagnosis, then it might be the book for them. I did not find it useful at all, even though it's written in the form of a self-help book with the author's own experiences illustrating the 'compass points' she recommends paying attention to.

On first examination, it is an appealing book. It is a nice size, with a typeface that is easy on the eye and not too small. The topics are introduced near the beginning and explained in detail in a way that makes it easy to navigate and easy to understand. The language is full of metaphors and expressions that I found sweet and sickly, but there is nothing complicated about it. The style is not to my taste as it contains too many overblown descriptions of the kind that I associate with bad poetry.

The author admits that most oncologists will not agree with many of her opinions, for example her belief in the efficacy of supplements and restricted diets. She describes the possible causes of cancer as including loneliness and sleeping in a bra. As far as I know, these suppositions have not been proved and might be unhelpful.

I dislike quite a lot about the book. The author comes across as smug and selfish. She is fortunate in that she is intelligent enough to research her condition and has enough money that, although she is worried about her family's financial future, she does not have to navigate the benefits system. She has a network of people who can put her in touch with the medical and complementary practitioners she describes and friends who will cook organic meals and raise money to pay for her complementary therapies. Much of this is of the reach of many people. I felt that she was selfish in her insistence on getting the medical staff to do everything her way; if every patient acted in this way, hospital admin would probably grind to a halt.

I don't like the way she takes what she did with her diagnosis and turns it into a list of instructions for others; for example, she says that the cancer patient must learn everything they can about their disease. While this worked for her, it will not work for everyone, and someone who prefers to follow their doctors' instructions without question should not be made to feel that they are wrong.

The only thing I like is that it appears to be an honest attempt to convey techniques that have helped her and that she believes can help others. I think this book is useful for the kind of person who wants to be told what to do. Ironically the author tells us to question whatever medical staff say, but she seems to expect us to follow her rules unquestioningly, even the ones that tell us to make up our own minds!

I might pass this book on to friends to get their opinion of it but I will not recommend that they read it. I am giving it two stars because it has an honesty that I admire, but it doesn't deserve more because it is such an irritating read.

### **Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (July 2016)**



I don't like this book and didn't find it useful. The cover is attractive as is the title but the title does not reflect the tone. It is in a logical order but does not flow well. I didn't notice any inaccuracies but I don't agree with the criticism of NHS oncologists and chemo departments. The discussion of treatment in Mexico is not appropriate for UK readers. She also questions the treatments suggested by her oncologists. Cancer patients have faith in their oncologist and it is a source of comfort to know that the best treatment is being given. I don't like the never-ending lists of things that the author thinks are important, e.g. what we expect other people to do for us, what we don't like and our feelings. I was not aware that diet was important to cancer other than eating healthily. Reading that the author cannot drink red wine or eat chocolate or sugary things rang alarm bells. I don't like sweet things but cancer patients have enough to contend with without depriving themselves of something they like.

Far from being the Cancer Whisperer, this book shouts loud and clear to everyone what they should expect. My expectation of living with cancer is to live as normal a life as possible and get on with living and achieving what I can.

### **Living with lung cancer (Over 75) (September 2016)**

This book is most useful for the emotional aspects of diagnosis and treatment. It is easy to understand and does not use much technical language. It is divided into sections and there is an outline at the beginning, with advice on which chapter to start with depending on your circumstances. I did not find it particularly appealing. The quality, style, and layout are good but the cover is not to my taste. I found the tone rather off-putting. It feels as though the author thinks she is superior to other patients because of her approach to treatment. A lot of the text is unnecessarily dramatic and "flowery". It feels like she is trying too hard to be profound or inspirational. It could have been much more concise.

Some of the information about the emotional side of cancer is helpful but I do not like the unscientific attitude to treatment. The author talks about various treatments as if they are legitimate alternatives to conventional treatment. I don't feel there is enough warning about the dangers. For example, she takes high doses of laetrile, which can be very dangerous and is condemned by various UK health organisations and charities. There is a small disclaimer to the effect that people should do their own research, but it feels as if the author is legitimising these treatments by mentioning them and ought to provide a more balanced viewpoint. I also disagree with the notion that cancers are caused by our emotions.

This book would be much more useful if it dealt only with the emotional aspects of cancer as this seems to be the author's area of expertise. I would be very careful about recommending it because I wouldn't want anyone to be misled by the dangerous information about alternative treatments. Please research these unproven treatments and "experts" properly and discuss with your medical team before using any of them; they can be dangerous and the author doesn't give legitimate scientific references to support her claims. I strongly object to the suggestion that people cause their own cancer by not dealing with emotions. Many cancers are genetic, at least in part, and there are usually multiple factors involved.

### **Living with metastatic bowel cancer (Under 25) (August 2016)**

This book may help some people restore their confidence but I cannot recommend it as it contains the author's choice of conventional and alternative treatments, some of which are described by the British medical profession as dubious.

I didn't find it easy to read as there is much repetition. I didn't notice any inaccuracies but the book is filled with claims that have not been established. It is well produced but the cover design is poor quality. The author's professional work is concerned with creating courses to empower people and the book is a little like a lecture.

It has some useful elements, such as self-belief and confidence, but the author takes doses of Chinese herbs and is obviously wealthy, travelling to Mexico and other places to receive questionable treatments, and has an expensive diet. Even if readers wanted to follow the same path, many would not have the resources.

It could suit those with a similar mindset but it was the hardest book I have ever read. I am mainly conventional and the author embraces alternative medicine so this was bound to be the case. However, her attitude was hard to take. For instance, after her

first consultation a nurse approached her with details of her next appointment; "But you didn't ask if I was available" said the author. This is early in the book and my hackles rose; after that it was even harder to be objective. However, despite my views, I have tried to review the book honestly and fairly. There is no doubt that my review is far from good but the author is very ill with cancer and I sincerely hope that her chosen path has a happy ending. However, I cannot endorse the use of unproven treatments.

**Bowel cancer patient (66-75) (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](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

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