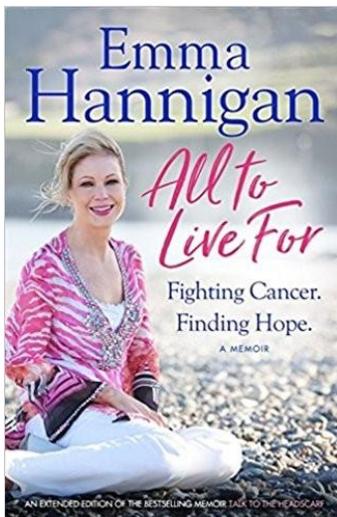


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**All to live for. Fighting cancer.
Finding hope (2017)**

Hannigan E.

London: Headline, 2017.

328pp.

ISBN 9781472250926.

£14.99.

Average star rating 4.1 (out of 5)

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The author writes from her experience with the BRCA1 gene, but I found her explanations of her experience with the removal of her breasts and her ovaries, plus the additional cancer she has had since, really enlightening. It will help anyone who to understand, cope, and come out the other side of cancer. The author explains each stage in depth, using words that are easy to understand. The font is easy to read, and the size of the book is just right.

I feel like I know the author; she writes about her home, where she lives, her partner, children, and parents. You feel as if you know her and can picture where she lives. I think her book would be extremely helpful and an insightful read for those with this type of cancer; she explains each stage of her illness in detail, and this would help not only those with this cancer, but also family and carers alike.

Relative of someone with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (46-55) (December 2018)

Emma Hannigan is an accomplished writer and this book is an extended edition of her bestselling memoir, *Talk to the headscarf*, in which she shares her cancer experience. Her writing skills and personal experience of cancer have combined to produce what many people who are touched by cancer would call their 'go-to book' whenever anxious or concerned about the future or their prognosis. It is invaluable for demystifying the cancer journey, and one individual's experience of breast cancer. It could be read at any stage and the language is appropriate for all. The content is rich because Emma goes to great lengths to explain and describe in detail.

It a frank and honest account of Emma's experience. Her journey is emotional, but the book is extremely engaging, and Emma almost becomes a good friend as you read; her story is genuine and even funny! She attempts to outsmart cancer at every opportunity; she is feisty, brave and inclined to take cancer by the throat and throttle it! When she is low, she is sincerely honest, and your heart reaches out to her, but she does not seek sympathy and no matter how many times she hears that cancer has returned, she bounces back with valour. She is a wonderful example to us all. If I had just been diagnosed with cancer, or indeed, someone close to me had been, I would recommend this book without hesitation. I can't praise it enough – just read it.

Breast cancer carer (56-65) (July 2018)

This is a good book for anyone who's been diagnosed as BRCA+, not just people with breast cancer. Emma was BRCA+ and had her breasts removed, but she developed a rare and very invasive cancer sometime later.

Emma lived in Ireland, so all her experiences may not be the same as in the rest of the UK, but this is not just the story of her cancer journey; it answers all sorts of burning questions, clearly and logically, but also with a sense of humour. The accounts of how she keeps her children informed and involved will be helpful for parents in the same position.

I have this on Kindle, so can't comment on how it looks, but it's beautifully written, with lots of humour. It's very easy to understand. Emma started writing chick-lit books (they're much better than that) after she was diagnosed, and this is very readable. I do love a well-written book! So many cancer journeys are irritatingly badly written (NOT everyone has a book in them, sadly!) but Emma writes well and involvingly.

If you're looking for a book about being BRCA positive, this is it. It's beautifully written, with lots of humour and positivity, and it deals with all sorts of family issues, as well as treatment and the nuts and bolts of coping with cancer when you're only in your 40s with young children. Emma is a total inspiration and I'm so glad I read this. By the time I'd finished reading, I realised I would have loved Emma as a friend and I felt I knew all her family, they were so well-described. I'm sure she had low times, but she always writes encouragingly and with humour.

In remission from ovarian cancer – BRCA+ (66-75) (May 2018)

If your cancer is common, e.g. breast, but also a rare and recurring cancer, you will find something in the book that you may not have experienced anywhere else.

I found it easy to understand because Emma is great at giving context and explaining the what and why. The cover is not appealing to me and so it took me a while to pick up the book and commit to reading it. It felt good in my hands though and the pages, although thin in my version, seemed to help me to progress as they are easy to turn.

Emma's take on her experience is hard going because she has been through so much, but there are also light-hearted moments that really convey her personality. I also really like the short chapters. I often experience nausea, so being able to get to the end of a chapter in between breaks is valuable. I'm glad I read this.

Rare cancer patient (acinic cell carcinoma) (36-45) (May 2018)

Emma Hannigan, a married woman with two young children, doesn't spare the detail on how cancer has affected her life, emotions, and relationships. Her book is very useful for someone who has just been diagnosed and is looking for hope in the future, especially anyone who has endured recurring breast cancer – the author has endured multiple diagnoses and many different treatments.

The contents pages are clear and include the extra information at the end of the book Emma tells her story from her original diagnosis; her thoughts, feelings and treatments for each diagnosis are in a logical order making the book easy to follow. She manages to explain most of the technical procedures in a non-technical way and some questions and answers at the end deal with a couple of technical questions with good explanations. There are a few choice words, but this reflects the author's honesty at the time of writing, so they are in context. The front cover has a simple photograph of the author allowing the reader to relate to the person they are reading about. The print is clear and easy on the eye and there is a good overview of the book on the back page that is a good representation of how the book is written.

At the end, Emma describes some of her challenges in dealing with cancer – such as lack of appetite, eating healthily, and caring for your body – and what worked for her. There are also some questions and answers based on her knowledge and questions she herself asked but felt silly doing so. This may help someone with breast cancer understand the process or procedures more easily and they can be referred to again and again. Emma offers a lot of tips for dealing with several issues and there is a very good explanation of the stages of cancer and what that means.

This offers so much to the reader, not only showing how determination and positivity can play a large part in getting through the journey but also offering many useful tips that Emma found worked and what is needed throughout hospital stays, treatment, recovery, dealing with children, and family life. Emma discovered her cancer was down to the BRCA1 gene; this meant that her risk of developing ovarian or breast cancer was greatly increased, and she took the brave decision to have her ovaries removed and have a double mastectomy. There is no pretence with this author and the reader is drawn in to her warmth and her ability to deal with difficult situations with humour and intuition. Her strength of character is obvious, but she also has no fear in calling on her family, friends and practitioners to walk with her on her journey.

This is probably the most useful book I have read; this is down to the candid way that Emma reports on how she was treated and what she experienced that she wished she had known beforehand and how she passes on this knowledge. Anybody with a breast cancer diagnosis will find it very useful and I therefore definitely recommend it.

Caring for someone with breast cancer (46-55) (February 2018)



This book provides an insight into the emotional and physical impact of genetic testing, diagnosis and treatment. It covers 12 years and 10 cancer recurrences, including genetic testing, diagnoses and treatments, despite preventative treatment to reduce her risk. It's most relevant to young women with triple-negative breast cancer caused by a faulty BRCA1 gene. The author also has dermatomyositis (a rare inflammatory disease) so it's particularly relevant to people with both conditions. It's also useful for those wanting an insight into cancer from a patient's perspective.

It is organised chronologically and easy to follow and understand. Emma uses some medical terminology but provides explanations in the text. I noticed some spelling mistakes, but they didn't detract from my enjoyment of the book. The cover shows that there is life after cancer. I was disappointed that there are no photos inside. It is a heavy book, but the chapters are short, so it's easy to pick up and put down if you find it difficult to hold for long. The typeface and font size are easy to read.

The book is wide-ranging and informative. It offers shared experience and lots of useful tips on supporting yourself or someone else through treatment. There's an informative section with additional information, such as descriptions of the stages of cancer and answers to common questions about cancer, at the end.

I particularly like the tone. It's informal, open, honest and witty and shows how positivity and humour can help you get through cancer. Emma holds nothing back. She comes across as very resilient and determined in the face of cancer and I found her attitude inspiring. The book does feel a bit rushed and repetitive at times, but I think this is largely due to the number of cancer recurrences the author experienced.

Relative of someone with breast and lung cancer (26-35) (February 2018)

This book is best read by those experiencing breast cancer and/or the related treatments as it is a very personal account of cancer. It is very logical; from beginning to the present day. It is written in a very upbeat and chatty style which is easy to read and to understand. The lovely cover doesn't make it stand out as a "cancer" book and so, I suppose, could attract many other readers too.

I like how upbeat and positive it is and how real. Emma did and does not live or write about life trapped in a cancer bubble. There are some wonderful tips embedded in the narrative of illness and treatment, e.g. a nail varnish sold by Tesco that will disguise ugly nails, a good fake tan, a chicken soup recipe (yet to try). I also like the "silly" questions to ask medics.

I didn't think that I would enjoy this book – yet another story of a woman with breast cancer – except that Emma had cancer ten times! I salute her and all that this book endeavours to do. What I found different is that Emma continues to live with cancer. So often, books like this are very positive because the author has survived cancer and is cancer free. But this can be difficult to read about for those who have cancer that they will always have. I think that Emma has got the balance right; hope and positivity, but also "this is how it is". Altogether an amazing woman who manages to balance truth and harsh medical procedures with warmth and humour.

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



This is easy to read but I could not finish it because I lost interest in it, unfortunately. It might be bad timing as I had read several cancer journals before this and I did not feel engaged with this one.

Health professional (36-45) (August 2018)



This is very easy to understand but I feel it is too long winded.

Breast cancer patent (46-55) (September 2018)

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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