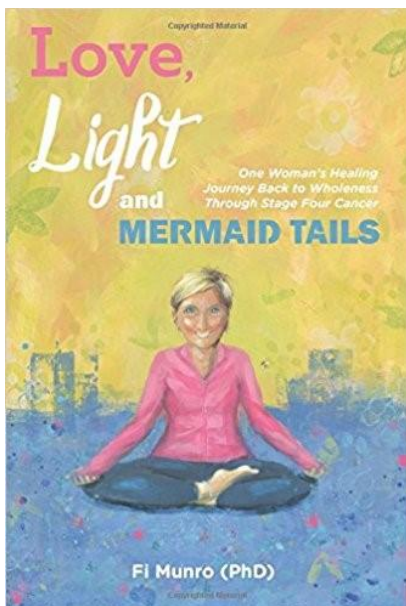


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Love, light and mermaid tails: one woman's healing journey back to wholeness through stage four cancer (2017)

Munro F.

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

204pp.

ISBN 9781548312923

Average star rating 4.5 (out of 5)

**Macmillan Cancer Support
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ**

These reviews were written by people affected by cancer and are their personal views and are not the views of Macmillan Cancer Support. These reviews, and the publications reviewed, should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this review or publication or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. For more information about the review process and how to get involved, please go to the end of this document.



I would give this book ten stars if I could. It is by far the best cancer book that I have read in the eight-plus years since I was diagnosed, and I've read quite a few! It is an open, frank account of life with stage 4 ovarian cancer. The author writes with complete honesty about her diagnosis, but her book is full of positivity and would be suitable for anyone who feels scared about what is happening to them.

It is such an easy book to read and it is nicely laid out. There is lots of great advice. The author comes across as someone who knows what she wants and is prepared to make sure that the people around her understand that. She wants to be treated as a person who has cancer and not a cancer statistic. I truly hope that she can inspire other cancer patients to become empowered to be a partner in their treatment.

I like everything about it. It is written with such passion and even though the author has stage 4 cancer, her passion for life shines through. I recommend it to anyone with any cancer. Even if you don't have cancer or know someone who does, it is still a book that you should read. Trust me. It's a subject that we don't usually read about unless we've been diagnosed but it should be on any book lover's list. I recommend it to cancer specialists and consultants as well. I would like to think that they would treat patients with more respect and understanding after reading it and understand that quality of life is sometimes more important than rushing into treatment.

Womb cancer survivor (46-55) (May 2018)

I could not put this book down. It is frank and clearly written and not a 'poor me' story and I found it rather uplifting. Whilst the author's experience is with ovarian cancer, much of the content can be applied to any cancer. Her descriptions of the diagnostic difficulties, tests, surgery and chemotherapy are detailed and helpful.

The cover and title are appealing and pique the interest. It is a lovely light book to handle and the font and layout appealing. I like the way the author writes. For a health professional, it is easy to understand. Some of the language might be challenging for some readers in terms of comprehension and a glossary would enhance the reader's experience.

I did not see any medical inaccuracies. The author clearly states that her approach to maintaining her wellness is not necessarily based on clinical evidence. I particularly like that she is giving advice on the do's and don'ts for friends and family. Clearly, the book benefits from the very personal and well-informed insights of this author.

It was a pleasure to read and review this book. I will follow the author's progress as I feel I have spent some time with her, albeit on paper. I will probably recommend it. I have a sense that it may be received better by a younger audience.

Retired oncology researcher and friend of people with breast, ovarian, prostate, bladder and haematological cancers (56-65) (April 2018)

This book will be useful for anyone – cancer survivor, carer, or anyone who wishes to embrace life with vigour and humour and live each day to the full. The author covers all aspects and even deals with recurrence in a positive manner.

The language is everyday easy, and the author writes with complete honesty and humour. The cover is a delight, and very cleverly done. It gives a true feeling for this fantastic book. I like the easy style, which helps you get to know the author. The only thing I dislike is the subject, and the reason it was written.

I absolutely love this book and was sorry to come to the end. It is such an inspiring, and uplifting book. I believe everyone, regardless of whether they have been touched by cancer, could take something positive from it. The author has opened her life up to us in such a way, that most people reading her book would be very grateful to have her for a friend. Well done Fi Munro, you have yet another admirer.

Survivor of endometrial cancer (56-65) (March 2018)

Although the author is living with stage 4 ovarian cancer, her descriptions of how she has dealt with her cancer journey, her insights into living with cancer, and her perspective on life will be of interest and help to others with or without cancer. Anyone caring for someone with ovarian cancer will get a good insight into how the person going through their journey may feel. People seeking information about alternative therapies and diet to help with the symptoms will also find it useful.

It is easy to read and understand and the author explains things as she goes along. She covers the subject in a logical order and the way she does so makes the book very readable. It is an attractive book to look at, well set out in terms of the section headings and chapters and printed on decent quality paper.

I really like the author's honesty; her description of fatigue really resonated with me. Her suggestions for questions to ask medical staff and her advice on how to support someone going through cancer are excellent. I found the book very interesting and I like the author's philosophy on how she managed her cancer, diet, and relationships. Other people at odds with her philosophy may not find it quite as useful.

I wish that this book had been available when I had just been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I found it an enthralling account of the author's experiences, feelings and philosophy. Fi Munro's account of being diagnosed, going through surgery and chemotherapy, and living with terminal cancer is honest and informative and shows that life is still life and worth living despite a devastating diagnosis. I recommend this to anyone, with or without cancer; Fi's philosophy on her life and positive spirit are a wonderful example of how to live life to the full.

Ovarian cancer patient (56-65) (March 2018)

This was a gripping read, I read it through in one sitting. The author is living with stage 4 ovarian cancer, but her book has much to offer to anyone with a cancer experience, including relatives and friends. It is comprehensive and describes the whole journey from diagnosis (and before) to living life after treatment. There are lots of do's and don'ts for treatment, for friends and relatives. It is authentic, well written, well laid out, and very easy to read (not overly technical, so no need for a glossary). The title is catchy, and the book's size and quality are good.

I could identify with much of the author's journey. She does not pull punches, but at the same time is positive and encouraging. It is very much about living with cancer, rather than waiting to die and the emphasis is on the whole person rather than the patient. There is a bit too much about alternative therapy for my taste, but the information is good and will be useful for those into diet and lifestyle changes.

This book made me laugh and cry, its honesty and courage are breath taking. It is an emotional read that had me reliving parts of my own journey but overall it is a positive read with plenty of food for thought and useful information to take away. I would recommend it to anyone affected by cancer; there's something here for everyone.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (March 2018)

I gave this book five stars because of how comprehensive it is for quite a slim book. It covers absolutely everything to do with ovarian cancer – body, mind, emotions, spirit, as well as the author's full journey from diagnosis. It gives a lot of useful information but at the same time deals with emotional issues and how to live a healthy life after treatment. I like the fact that it is realistic as there are no easy answers. I also like that it shows there is always hope, even with a stage 4 diagnosis.

It is most useful for recognising the symptoms of ovarian cancer, the stages of diagnosis and treatment, and caring for oneself holistically at the end of treatment. It is also useful for those whose cancer is terminal. Although it is about ovarian cancer, there are aspects, particularly in relation to holistic care, that might interest anyone.

It is very easy to understand, although there is no glossary. It has a very attractive and colourful cover and the book feels nice to handle. The title enhances the holistic nature of the last section of the book. The print and layout are attractive, and you can dip in and out if you didn't feel like reading it all.

I very much like this book. It describes how a very young woman has a very slow diagnosis owing to her age. Once diagnosed, she reflects on her very hectic lifestyle and realises that changes are imminent. She describes how supportive her partner is in the whole journey. She describes her radical surgery in detail, her chemotherapy regime, and how she had a life-threatening infection of sepsis. This could be quite scary but is realistic and done in a non-threatening manner.

I particularly like how she addresses body, mind, and spirit without overselling non-conventional treatments. She leaves us to make up their own minds by showing what she has done but not recommending diets or supplements. Books often overdo the holistic approach and it would take a very brave person to refuse conventional treatment. The author has a good relationship with her doctors and discusses all aspects of her treatment with them. In the final section (Returning to wholeness), she discusses an integrated approach. Integrated is the operative word here because she is integrating conventional and non-conventional approaches. She describes how her life has changed and how, for example, she likes to walk in nature.

Fi shows how, despite the weaknesses she is left with, she is enjoying life better than before cancer – it has taught her to live life with joy. It did seem at the end that the cancer returned but later there is no evidence of it; we are left with the question of if this is the result of not only her radical surgery and chemotherapy, but also of the way she chose to try to eliminate environmental poisons from her life, for example from her diet, toiletries and cleaning products. I highly recommend this book.

Survivor of womb cancer (66-75) (February 2018)

This is an enjoyable read. It is very easy to understand and will be useful for anyone affected by cancer – patient, relative, friend – at any stage, especially at diagnosis. It is a good read for anyone, not just those affected by cancer, but anyone having a difficult time in life. Everything about it is uplifting, inspiring and heartfelt. I'm a recovering alcoholic and I'm learning to appreciate my life just like this amazing author. I like her positivity. She felt cancer had given her a second chance.

Sister of bowel cancer patient (46-55) (February 2018)

This is a very honest and personal account of a journey that affects far too many people. It documents clearly a cancer patient's journey from diagnosis through treatment and how she approached her journey by exploring the mind, body and soul connection. It is most useful for the emotional, spiritual and physical impact of how cancer affects every aspect of life. Fi's spirit shines through her words in a brutally honest account of how cancer affected her life.

Fi explains the treatment and technical aspects of her diagnosis clearly within the body of the text. The language used is appropriate for those affected by cancer. The title highlights Fi's approach towards an integrated and holistic lifestyle. The cover is appealing for women, young and old, and for those interested in exploring another perspective, one that adds another dimension to the "healing journey". This is a book that forms a bridge between mainstream and complementary medicine and thinking.

I like Fi's positive mindset, her vibrant energy and her reminder "to trust your instinct and do what is right for you"! She goes into detail about her various treatments and procedures; this is insightful, and Fi strikes the right tone and balance, not coming across as too clinical or impersonal.

This is a truly inspirational read. Fi's commitment to pursuing her healing through cancer with the power of her positivity is the clear message. Through the pain and suffering that her illness caused, Fi never lost her ability to be courageous in her pursuit of a healthy life, free from cancer. Her story is uplifting and will inspire others also affected by cancer to maintain a sense of hope, joy and love of life.

Carer (46-55) (January 2018)

I would not normally read a life story, but I have heard quite a few people praising this book, so I read it. I could not put it down. I have not read a book that has touched me like this before. I cried while reading it, but they were tears of comradeship and the word, "Yes" was in my heart.

Fiona Munro writes about her stage IV cancer diagnosis in an honest and positive manner. She does not dwell on the negative but focuses on each day and what it brought. She does not pretend that she sailed through surgery and chemotherapy and does say that some of her experiences of treatment were awful. She then moves on. I found it inspiring that she ensured that she was treated as a person and not a cancer patient. Her book will be helpful for all aspects of having cancer. The importance of mental wellbeing is stressed, which is invaluable.

Fiona takes the reader through her journey from pre-diagnosis right through her treatment in a way that made me curious to read more. It is very easy to understand, and everything is well explained without being patronising. The whole book is appealing. It treats a horribly serious experience in a direct but kind manner.

This book inspired me and touched something deep inside me. Fiona was only 30 years old when given her devastating diagnosis. I was 63 when diagnosed. I learned such a lot from her book. I am now on week four sugar-free. I have not felt so connected to the written word for a long time.

Endometrial adenocarcinoma and UPSC survivor (66-75) (December 2017)

I love this book, which is written from the heart. It's one young woman's amazing journey through a diagnosis of ovarian cancer, the removal of several vital organs, gruelling chemotherapy, and overcoming the medical label of incurable/terminal disease. Fi beat the odds by changing herself, her lifestyle and her perception of life. She adopted an integrative approach to 'wholeness' with a focus on the mind, environment, body and spirit, in addition to a focus on the gifts the dis-ease gave her in terms of happiness, love, beauty and kindness. Her approach is impressive. Her book is useful for all aspects of living with ovarian cancer or caring for someone with ovarian cancer, or for any cancer for that matter.

It's very readable with appropriate language and few technical terms. It is split into logical, easy to read sections, namely: Diagnosis; Treating the Symptoms; Returning to Wholeness; The Gifts of Cancer; Choosing to Live; and Stage Five Epilogue.

This book has a message for everyone: focus on the gifts of any given situation; react positively; make conscious choices. Fi says she is more alive than ever. It is very useful in terms of what she did to return to 'wholeness': reducing stress; letting go of deep-seated negative emotions; avoiding negative people; taking time out in nature; having fun, joy, happiness and laughter; avoiding harmful environmental products like plastics, household cleaners, water, candles, makeup, deodorants; having an organic, plant-based, raw-food diet with minimal meat that includes green smoothies, ginger, garlic, turmeric and curry powder, alongside avoiding all processed food, sugar, gluten, dairy and alcohol. (I found "The Dirty Dozen" and the "The Clean 15" particularly useful.) The sections on deep breathing, yoga, practicing gratitude, meditation and energy and touch therapies are also very useful but most of all I love the section on trusting your instincts. I've bought my Eco-egg (p. 105). They had a 50% off sale, so I took advantage and brought several as presents.

Living with DCIS, early stage breast cancer (46-55) (December 2017)

This is useful for anyone recently diagnosed with ovarian cancer, going through any part of treatment, or indeed after. It is split into two parts: the first is the author's experience and her diagnosis and treatment; the second is about being healthy in mind, body and spirit. If someone wants to read just the second half, which is more about wellbeing and health, it could be picked up and read just for that part.

If I saw this book in a shop or library, it would grab my attention. The cover looks appealing and the contents well set out; the chapters aren't too long and there are lots of breaks so it's easy to pick up and put down. It is very easy to understand and written in a straightforward manner although I was disappointed by the typos. There aren't many and they didn't take away from my enjoyment, I just feel it's a shame.

This book is incredibly positive, coming as it does from someone diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. It is very honest but whilst the news is not always good and the things she endures are horrendous, Fi always looks on the bright side. I appreciate that everyone deals with things differently, but the strength of the author to get through what she did and carry on with her life is amazing. Fi changes her life in so many ways after diagnosis, from learning and training to be a yoga teacher to things like her diet, not buying anything wrapped in plastic, and making her own shampoos and household cleaning products. She details how she has achieved all of this in the second part of the book and I found it fascinating. I've even exchanged my usual washing powder for the eco egg that she talks about!

There isn't anything I dislike about this book apart from the few typos mentioned above, which are just a bit annoying. Even if you don't want to read Fiona's story of her diagnosis and everything subsequently, the book is worth a read for the second half alone, even if you only take away one thing.

Friend of ovarian cancer patient (36-45) (November 2017)

There are very few books about ovarian cancer and this is worth a read for anyone affected. The best time to read it is after starting treatment. The author had some difficult reactions to treatment and someone who hasn't yet had their own experience of treatment may be put off. Once you have had treatment, these parts are easier to read as you can see that the author's experience was at the worst end of the scale.

The topic is in a logical order and it is easy to read and understand with no particularly technical words, but there are quite a lot of typos, more than I would expect in a published book. It looks appealing, with a cover that is appropriate to the content. It feels like a good thickness for reading. The tone is positive throughout.

Given the author's prognosis and her experience of treatment, it is a very uplifting read. I have a different type of ovarian cancer and have had a different experience, but found it easy to identify with the author, probably because her approach to life after diagnosis is very like mine. However, it does drag at the end. The author repeats herself and the later chapters seem to be there for padding, they do not say anything new. At times, she is a little patronising; she treats discoveries about herself as if she is the only one who has ever made such discoveries and now sees it as her job to tell everyone about them. Maybe this is because she started out as a blogger; this does create a different writing style, and she tries to mitigate this by saying "personally I think X" or including caveats that different things suit different people.

There are some helpful tips, from what to pack for hospital to how to feel good post treatment. Anyone could easily take just one of these tips on board to generate some positivity post diagnosis. There are also many positive messages. I identify with many of these as I have taken a similar approach to life following my diagnosis. I think I like the book a lot because it reflects my own views in so many ways.

There are some negatives to the book: Sometimes the author is a little patronising, occasionally there is too much emphasis on her additional business activities and the later chapters don't seem to add much more to what has already been said. However, she is engaging enough for me to want to know about her other business activities, what I see as patronising may not appear that way to others, and it is a common writing practice to restate important points many times in a book, so these aspects should not detract from the overall positivity of the book.

It has been good to read something with which I can identify so much more. I have a different type of ovarian cancer and a different experience but was still surprised by how much more I could identify with this story compared to stories of people with other cancers, such as breast cancer. I encourage anyone affected by ovarian cancer, or indeed any type of cancer or life-changing diagnosis, to read it. It is very uplifting and something that I may well go back to. I certainly intend to lend it to friends and family, particularly those who have a deep-rooted fear of cancer, so that they can see how attitude plays a significant part in our health and quality of life.

Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (September 2017)

This is, without a doubt, one of the best books I have read about cancer. Fi Munro has unpleasant symptoms and is eventually diagnosed with inoperable stage four ovarian cancer. After chemotherapy and huge lifestyle efforts, Fi reaches the accepted criteria for surgery. She describes her experiences, but most importantly, at each stage of treatment, draws together what she has learned and compiles generous lists of practical tips. After successful surgery and its traumatic aftermath, Fi describes her recovery to the point of now being in remission.

Rather than be a passive patient, from the start Fi asserts her interest in her cancer and its treatment and develops an equal relationship with her team in the discussion and planning of her treatment. As a professional researcher, she uses her skills to get to the bottom of each discovery about her cancer. After the medical aspects of her recovery, she explores Life and what is important about living. In what will surely be a surprise for many, she states that cancer has been a gift. Rationally so. She realises what is important for a happy and fulfilled life: living in nature, friendship, loving, beauty, being mindful of every positive experience, and making the most of each moment. She describes how to remove as many toxins as possible from our environment, and what dietary changes can help maximise the immune system. She describes the many benefits she has gained from meditation and yoga and considers the causes of cancer in a logical way. As for mindfulness, about which she writes a lot, this is not a theoretical set of approaches adhered to without analysis, but clearly a central part of how she lives each day. I felt humbled to read her conclusions, and by the generosity with which she shares her knowledge and insights.

I like everything about this book! Fiona describes her signs and symptoms and her sense of devastation on her diagnosis of stage four ovarian cancer. She describes what happens next, with her chemotherapy, personal efforts, and surgery. She draws together the things that are positive and presents numerous lists of valuable tips – not just for those with her cancer but anyone having treatment. Fiona has a warm and engaging style. She is very likeable, and highly intelligent. She does not use much jargon, but when she does, she explains it well. She writes about her diagnosis and treatment in chronological order, and then writes about personal attitudes, love, beauty, friendship and, exercise and diet, alternative therapies and the importance of living mindfully in the moment, appreciating every day we have. The cover and title comprise my only criticism. They do not do credit to the profound and valuable contents. Oh yes... and she recommends that those with cancer should aim for equal partnership with their cancer team. Not everyone has the intellect and the confidence to do this, and not every consultant embrace an equal partnership in this context.

Fi's life-affirming attitude is useful for anyone who has ever sought a happy and well-lived life. It is a memorable book, both for the enormous number of practical tips and for the more in-depth insights into the practicalities of having a truly mindful approach to each day. I recommend it to anyone, with or without cancer. There is plenty of interest for people with all sorts – and stages – of cancer, and others too. One of the central messages is that, no matter what our diagnosis is, we can take charge of our health, never being passive to the situation, but living life to the fullest and allowing ourselves optimum health.

Friend, Former health professional (head and neck cancer) (56-65) (September 2017)

This book is helpful in many ways for those recently diagnosed through to those who have been living with cancer for a time. Whilst it is primarily the account of the author's experiences of living with a cancer diagnosis, it contains lots of useful advice for people supporting others through diagnosis, treatment and beyond. I like the advice in relation to supporting people in the period immediately post treatment.

It is an easy read, helped by explanations of any technical terms. Fi tells her story in a logical order, from diagnosis, through surgery and chemotherapy, to beyond – living with an incurable cancer at a relatively young age.

From the "Authors note", I knew it was going to resonate well with me; Fi describes her book as "pitched as an inspirational story... from a late-stage cancer warrior". The opening paragraphs of the "Happiness" chapter sum up the tone of the whole book and how Fi has embraced her diagnosis, the opportunities it has brought with it, and insights into how she maintains her positivity. She is very candid in sharing her experiences and practical suggestions, but equally acknowledges everyone is different and not everything suggested will be right for all.

Fi offers lots of practical ideas for people faced with a diagnosis to take back some control, for example, feeling included in formulating the care plan and in re-evaluating priorities. She writes a great description about living with fatigue, relating it to having cups of energy, choosing how you use them and the impact of using up too many cups. This is a great way of articulating it and demonstrates that you have control of what you do with the precious supply of energy. She also has an extensive list of example questions to ask when facing surgery – a great source of reference for patients and their loved ones at a time when things can feel very overwhelming.

The book has lots of messages to help instil positivity and hope. The overriding tone is positive, but Fi doesn't shy away from the low points of diagnosis and treatment, such as the ordeal of telling friends and family. In many instances, Fi reflects on low points and finds positivity in them. I could relate to the emotions she describes on finishing chemotherapy; relieved to have got through it but concerned about what would happen next. It's refreshing to find a book that meets two gaps in the market when it comes to accounts of cancer experiences: firstly, it is a detailed account of someone with ovarian cancer – a cancer type not widely profiled in the media; secondly, it's an uplifting account of someone with advanced stage cancer that has relevance for others affected by advanced stage cancer, irrespective of cancer type.

Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (August 2017)



This is especially useful for patients when they have just been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, but also for those caring for them. It is very easy to follow and understand, with no complicated medical terms. The author's descriptions of diagnosis, treatment, and emotions are well documented and flow logically. There is a very relaxed and friendly feel to the text. One can sympathise and empathise simultaneously and be encouraged at the same time.

I like the positivity, the easy reading, the friendly 'girl- next-door' type of chatter, and the matter-of-fact way in which subjects (like colostomy bags) are discussed. This book is particularly relevant for anyone with ovarian cancer but also very readable for anyone with a terminal/incurable cancer diagnosis. I also recommend anyone supporting someone living with cancer to read it.

Living with ovarian cancer (66-76) (April 2018)

There are few books about the ovarian cancer journey, so this will be useful for patients (scary for carers or relatives) to help them live well after diagnosis. The book is in two halves: the first comprises the author's cancer journey and hints/tips on wellness and spirituality; the second half is more general – living as healthily as possible after a cancer diagnosis – and probably useful for anyone with cancer.

I congratulate the author on a book with so much helpful information about living with cancer; she clearly has helped many people and raised awareness of a difficult-to-diagnose cancer through her writing and public speaking, not to mention her fundraising. However, although it is easy to understand, the style irritated me such that it distracted me from the content. Not one, but two, people are credited with proofreading, but the punctuation is eclectic, to say the least. Typos like "a rye smile", "would have to be worm at all times", "where" instead of "were", "elevate" instead of "alleviate", "vines" instead of "veins", while amusing, show a lack of attention to detail. If you feel your audience requires an asterisk in the middle of 'sh*t', find another word. That kind of censorship is ridiculous nowadays. Nor am I a fan of exclamation marks to demonstrate enthusiasm. Other people may find the author totally on their wavelength, but I think it shows disrespect for the reader to go to the trouble of writing a book but not check things properly. I found the cover and title terribly twee and messy. Adding PhD after the author's name presumably lends the book gravitas, but the author isn't a medical professional and it is misleading. Rant over.

I'd feel hypocritical recommending this book, since aspects annoyed me so much! I would have given it three stars, but that would be churlish, given the amount of useful information. It is useful for those who don't know what to expect after a stage 4 ovarian cancer diagnosis, although, unlike many cancers, symptoms and treatment can vary a lot. The "integrated approach" section is full of helpful information about living a healthy life, physically and mentally. Read it and see what YOU think. You will inevitably find something helpful within its pages.

In remission from ovarian cancer (66-75) (September 2017)



If I were to sum up this book in just three words they would be confusing, emotional, and condescending. My confusion started with the cover. Given the title, along with the bright colourful cover and the, almost, cartoon-like portrait of the author, I was expecting a sometimes-light-hearted account of the author's cancer journey. However, I did wonder why the author of such a book would need to inform the reader, on the cover, that she has a PhD. My confusion only increased once I started to read the book. Was this an account of the author's journey or was she trying to write a self-help book for others on their cancer journey? In my opinion, it ends up being neither. My conclusion is that she was telling her story, along with the PhD information on the front cover, to establish her credentials for offering self-help advice. The author herself seems a little confused as in one part of the book she states she does not "fight" her cancer as fighting suggests a hatred of something and she does not hate her cancer. Yet throughout the book she refers to herself and other cancer patients as "warriors", who, I believe, are defined as soldiers or fighters.

Where the author talks about her husband, her family, the support they provide and her obvious love for them (and vice versa), she does so with feeling and emotion. I am not ashamed to say that when reading those sections I had a lump in my throat or tears in my eyes. I just wish she had stuck to telling the story of her journey and left out all the "advice" sections. Had she done this I think I would have found it a more powerful and a more motivational book.

I must stress that my comments are purely my opinion of how parts of the book made me feel. By about page 14 or 15 I felt I had realised why the author felt it important to mention her PhD on the front cover. It felt like an attempt to establish pre-eminence that allowed her to offer advice to the reader on how to deal with their cancer. Sadly, I did not see it as advice but more "this is what I did, and it was the right way to do it".

I found the lists (questions to ask; dos and don'ts; foods to eat, foods not to eat; drinks to drink; cleaning materials to use, for example) frustrating at first and by the time I got to the "returning to wholeness" section of the book that frustration had turned to anger. It didn't matter how many "warnings" she included about how it was a "personal choice", I felt she was telling me how to live my life and doing it in such a way that she was trying to lay a guilt trip on me if I didn't do it her way.

I am extremely pleased that her lifestyle changes have made her feel so much better, physically and mentally. I am also pleased that she has the time and the money to make these changes, such as cooking everything from scratch and making her own cleaning products, however cancer is not a purely middle-class disease. A single mother trying to bring up two kids, hold down a full-time job and deal with her cancer is unlikely to have the time or the money to make these changes.

This book would have been extremely powerful if the author had stuck to telling her cancer story. Instead her attempts to direct other people's lives turned me off completely and made this book a chore to read rather than a joy.

HPV cancer of the soft pallet and throat cancer (46-55) (April 2018)

This is probably most useful for explaining some of the emotions and effects of cancer and its treatment. My experience was different, and it would not have prepared me for much of it but may have given my carer a valuable insight into why I behaved as I did! It has detailed information and good ideas about coping with the effects of cancer and treatment, but more basic information would be good too.

I did have to flick backwards and forwards as it does not follow a continuous timeline, but it still makes sense. It is clearly and simply written; any jargon is explained in the text. I have some sight impairment but found the text clear and easy to read. The cover isn't appealing, and the title is nonsensical – suggestive of hallucinations...

I like the honesty and little comments such as leaning over the trolley when shopping (I do that!) but I don't like the overemphasis on lifestyle changes; much of it is her opinion (she does state that) and not medically proven. It could put off some... me included. Simple tips, such as having perfume-free lotions for the dry skin you get with treatment, would be better (perfumes can make you feel sick during chemo). The statement that her terminal cancer has been put in abeyance simply by following a healthy lifestyle is OTT... if that were the case it could save the NHS a fortune.

It is an easy read with some good insights into living with cancer, but the author is far too happy about it all. I can't believe she never has a bad duvet day or questions her lot in life. She makes it all sound very simple! It could distress or annoy those with less of a what-fun attitude, and some would be cynical about the holistic approach. Cancer is such a personal journey that it is impossible to explain how others may feel. It is reassuring to read about shared feelings but can leave people wondering why their experiences are different. It can also cause unnecessary anxiety to those starting their journey rather than give the reassurance they are seeking. Some things echoed my experience, but others seemed to trivialise things I found difficult (and the author didn't). But some parts are excellent, such as the advice for carers – the section on “what to say” and “what to do” is insightful – and her emotions, which goes some way to explain the sometimes odd or difficult behaviour of cancer patients.

Living with ovarian cancer (56-65) (January 2018)

This is a very personal account of one woman's cancer experience. It is not for the faint hearted but contains useful advice and thoughts and ideas about how to cope, as well as a recounting of symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. I would not have picked it up – I dislike the cover and title immensely – but it is easy to understand. All medical terms are explained in a way that anyone can understand.

Stage 4 cancer is about as bad as it gets but Fi carries on with admirable positivity. However, I found it almost too positive. Whilst she acknowledges her depression and anxiety, this is almost trivialised by the apparent ease in which she managed to overcome it. Personal experience tells me that this is not always the case. I also felt uncomfortable reading about the alternative treatments. Not my cup of tea. However, there are some very important messages here; the primary one being listen to your body – you are the one who knows it the best.

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



I found this book a bit of a mixed bag. The author writes an honest account of her journey through cancer and her treatment and recovery. She has some interesting ideas on what she used to help her, for example random acts of kindness – not a new idea but nicely carried out and with some follow-up comments from the recipients, energy and touch therapies. However, some of them are not discussed in the amount of detail I would like. I like the fact that most of the book is focused on what to do to help yourself feel better, but it suffers from poor proof-reading with lots of spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

The author had ovarian cancer, so the book will potentially be useful to those with similar cancers and their carers. She provides an optimistic viewpoint and is quite inspirational in that she could train as a yoga teacher during recovery – this may give people hope to achieve unexpected things, even during difficult times. There is a small section called “Supporting someone after treatment” aimed at carers but mostly it will be helpful for people who want to look at different ways to help themselves when being treated for cancer or recovering afterwards.

The author writes an account of her journey through cancer, so it generally follows a timeline. It’s divided into three main sections – Diagnosis, Treating the symptoms, and Returning to wholeness – so it is in a logical order. There are no obvious factual inaccuracies and it is mostly a personal account of cancer but I feel that it is “waffly” in a few places, e.g. when she is discussing meditation and yoga, and I find her style too flowery and “romantic”, “you see in an oncology ward there are no arguments, no stress, and no hatred” (p. 152). I know this is her experience but, unfortunately, I found myself disagreeing with these sorts of comments.

The author writes in a chatty way that some people may like but I found it a little colloquial in places. It is written for the layperson, but I would like to see proper citations for the resources mentioned in the text. For example, she mentions “When breath becomes air” (p. 169) but not the author and she does not provide a reference list at the end. She mentions (p. 14) “some studies have linked dairy products to the spread of some cancers” – a reference would be useful. Are they proper scientific studies? She does seem to have read around the subjects she discusses but we are taking her word for it, “The earth’s field has a normal lower frequency range of 7.8 Hz” (p. 99). What field? This is not explained. Apparently, her PhD study looked at how time in nature is essential for children – it would have been interesting to hear more about this and how we can apply it to adults.

The cover is appealing, colourful, with a painting of the author looking happy in a yoga pose and a couple of small photographs of her on the cover and inside. It is a decent length – 178 pages – and easy to read. There are no illustrations but no complicated tables or long, overwhelming lists. The general layout is clear with a good size typeface. As mentioned, I did not always care for the tone of the author, in many places it was overly positive for my taste (“I loved...my scars... from the very first day I had them” (p 161).

I like the author's honesty. She discusses her experiences with a colostomy bag, something not often spoken about. She discusses her previous life, when she was madly rushing about trying to be "successful". She mentions that she has lost friends during her recovery – a not uncommon situation but important to discuss as I see many people talking about this on cancer forums. Overall, she has a positive message about being grateful for small and everyday things and offers hope to late-stage survivors. I like the sections about being in nature and random acts of kindness

I do not like the sections discussing cancer and its causes (p. 88). "Why do we think that treating the symptom (i.e. the cancer) and not finding and treating the cause (i.e. the dis-ease) will resolve the situation long term." She has a point that we need to look at our lifestyles, but many cancers are genetic and no amount of reducing stress and anxiety will reduce their incidence. "Cancer is not an external source" (p. 90) – well the causes can be, for example UV, environmental toxins. The author is keen to discuss alternative healing therapies but does not go in to any details about why they are helpful, e.g. crystal healing (p 131) has no discussion about how this is supposed to work or what it is supposed to do.

I found the spelling mistakes and grammatical errors annoying. There is no need for these with spellcheckers and I note there were two proof readers.

A few examples:

- "How could he possible think that this was..." (p. 17)
- "...gave a rye smile" (p. 17)
- "...treatment induced side affects..." (p. 76)
- "...I'd lost one if my greatest passions..." (p. 79)
- "In all honestly..." (p. 91)
- "Add a cupfull..." (p. 121)

I think this book is useful for giving readers some ideas to think about during their recovery. Can I improve my health through food, trying different therapies, how can I help myself be more positive? Page 48 has a useful list of questions that ovarian cancer patients may want to discuss with their doctors and page 4 has a section about telling others about your disease. Ovarian cancer patients may find it useful for its positive message and because the author had this relatively rare cancer.

I somewhat enjoyed this book from a personal point of view. The author provides positive suggestions for how to help yourself in difficult times and an honest account of her journey through cancer but the generalisations and sweeping comments need more clarity. I may be being a bit harsh by only giving it two stars. I had high hopes for it and the author does discuss a wide range of topics honestly and with a positive attitude. Unfortunately, I find spelling and grammatical errors distracting. I would also like the author to provide robust references to many of her claims and perhaps more details on her specialisms, such as being outside in nature, yoga and meditation.

Uterine cancer survivor (46-55) (February 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

© Macmillan Cancer Support, October 2018

Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SCO39907) and the Isle of Man (604).