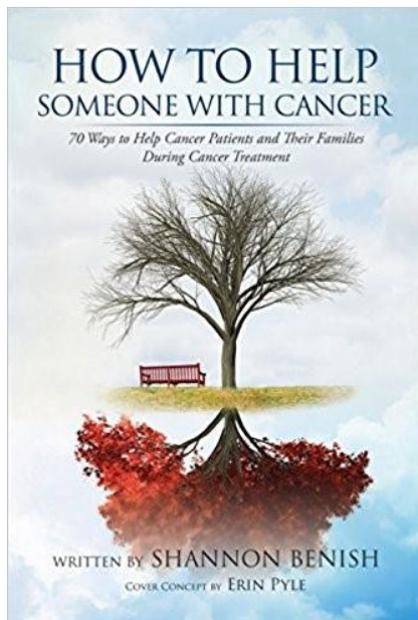


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**How to help someone with cancer:
70 ways to help cancer patients
and their families during cancer
treatment (2016)**

Benish S.

Rebel Redd Books, 2016.

114pp.

ISBN 9780998422800.

Average star rating 3.1 (out of 5)

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There is so much information to be taken from this book and it's done so well. It would be good for anyone living or coping with cancer; it's very informative from beginning to end and an interesting journey that the family take together.

It is very easy to follow. The author handles the topic in a great order and technical words are explained, which I found very helpful. The cover has a lovely picture and the title is to the point so you are ready for the beginning of the book. The paper is a good quality. The photos inside would be easier to see if they were in colour.

This is a very interesting and informative book, with lots of advice and lists of organisations who can help you, your family and the person who has cancer. It will help anyone understand and try different things to help the person with cancer.

My dad had stomach cancer (36-45) (March 2018)

This would be useful for anyone affected by cancer, especially family and friends, and a great book for health care professionals to recommend to a patient's family and friends – family and friends often feel lost and don't know what to do or how to help the patient through treatment and beyond until they can look after themselves.

It is set out in a logical order and easy to understand, good old common sense. It is an attractive book to look at and the title alone would draw people to the book. It is a light and easy book to read, you can dip in and out. The typeface inside is good and I like that it has a good index to help you find what you're looking for. There are good little paragraphs called "Did you know" at the end of each section.

A great reference and guide book to help families and friends understand what a someone or their family may need when they are going through treatment. I enjoyed reading it and will take it to my Macmillan information and support centre to pass on to whoever needs it. It is written for an American audience, so some suggestions and information are not relevant. I would give it five stars if it was written for the UK.

Breast cancer 2011 (66-75) (February 2018)

The author's daughter had cancer (she survives) and so with the knowledge of hindsight, the author has compiled this list of ideas of what people can do to help others with cancer, any form of cancer. It is a book that could be useful anywhere for anyone as one never knows when the occasion is going to arise.

It is very easy to understand as the topics are ones with which we are all familiar. I like the ease of reading. The layout allows the reader to dip in and out – each idea is no more than two pages long – or read the book from cover to cover. The ideas are, in some cases, obvious. But when in such a situation, the obvious is not always so.

The suggestions range from giving a Netflix voucher, through offering to care for pets, giving a list of 'things I can do to help', to donating your hair for a wig. All valuable, but some more zany than others. The one aspect of the book that is difficult, is that many of the contacts, websites, and organisations mentioned are American. This, of course is fine, but for readers outside of the US such things may not exist. Alternatives may be available.

Altogether, a useful book for anyone and everyone; we never know when cancer may strike or in what capacity.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (January 2018)



This is a practical guide with 70 diverse suggestions of how to help families and friends looking after someone with cancer. It has big and small ideas as well as practical examples and suggestions in ways that even busy people can manage.

The recommendations cover diverse areas but the underlying topics (whether they cover advice on how to help with gifts, social activities, practical help around the house or finances) are not grouped together but dispersed throughout. There are also sections called "did you know" that offer information on foundations, charities, quirky developments in cancer care and other facts.

Shannon Bennon's language is easy to read and to understand. She avoids all technical or medical jargon. Although it is not an inspirational read, it clearly does what it sets out to do. Each of the 70 ideas is numbered and there is an easy to follow guide should the reader want to look at a certain topic rather than read the book cover to cover. There are also photographs of the author's daughter Erin during her cancer treatment in various settings with family, friends or volunteers. The photographs root the book in reality and make the suggestions and advice very real.

Every reader looking for ideas on how to help cancer patients and their families will find advice that they can relate to. and make use of. It is perhaps best suited to those to whom cancer is a new experience and who may be starting to think about the effects of serious illness on others. A lot of the ideas are common sense, but then common sense often fails us when we are faced with a new situation.

The book covers helpful advice and suggestions for those affected by cancer in many ways. Although some suggestions seem costly or time consuming (e.g. donating laptops, organising fund raising), most are practical and affordable. Although people with cancer may have different needs depending on their age and stage of illness and/or treatment, there are many ways in which to offer support. Doing small things for a family affected by cancer can make a big difference.

Nurse (56-65) (February 2018)

This book is very easy to understand and the sections make it easy to read. It may be useful for friends and family but I wouldn't recommend it only because most of it is common sense and most people would do these things anyway. Some of the websites are useful but some are American and not applicable to people here.

I have friends and family who have (or have had) cancer (46-55) (February 2018)

This is a nice, slim, good quality book, very easy to read. However, there are difficulties at times as the book is very much directed at an American audience and does not translate well to the UK. Many of the suggestions are specific to the USA – websites, charities, and school terms – although in some ways it is universal.

The ideas, once digested are simple and thoughtful, many are common sense. It is an informative book and highlights the life-changing situations of needing to relocate across the country for treatment for a lengthy period. I empathised greatly with the upheaval for the entire family when children must be separated at times for treatment vs schooling and the wider family take control of the home. There are some great ideas for supporting the family whilst so far from home, BUT, and it is a big but, many of the charities and schemes are related to the USA; these options do not appear to be the same here.

It may encourage others to help in a more thoughtful manner, rather than the traditional “pop round for tea” less intrusive way. The ideas of rotas, for food deliveries and bin days, are helpful but there are many suggestions that need to be Anglicised. I spend a lot of time in the US and feel this book would be very helpful there; it just needs tweaking for the UK. It's very informative and thought provoking and a simple easy read.

Carer and volunteer (46-55) (January 2018)



This is a personal account of some of the things the author found helpful whilst supporting her young daughter through her cancer journey.

It is free of jargon, has an attractive cover, and is well laid out in terms of headings, with each section looking at a different topic. These sections are well signposted but similar information appears in more than one section and each section starts on a new page with sometimes only a few lines per page. The waste of paper is annoying.

It is written from experience and from the heart but doesn't live up to its title. I like the fact that the author is a mother who supported her young daughter through her cancer journey. She understands the stresses and strains of cancer on the family and suggests ways to help from experience. However, it feels rather light on content and some of it is relevant only to an American audience so there are probably better books available. Most of the relevant hints are obvious without reading this book, for example putting out the rubbish bins, or sending cards.

It would be better as a pamphlet than a book. For me, it falls between a personal account of a family's experience of cancer and a guide to helping people affected by cancer, but does neither particularly successfully. It would have been better as a condensed booklet rather than an expensively produced book; at times, the suggestions feel rather obvious and trite.

I am a volunteer supporting people affected by cancer. I have also had breast and ovarian cancer and am still being monitored by an oncologist (56-65) (Februayr 2018).

This book offers 70 ways to help cancer patients and their family during treatment. It is a practical guide for those wanting to support someone facing cancer and its treatment. It offers suggestions and ideas for how to help. Although not written for those with cancer, it still has some useful suggestions for patients themselves as to how to ask for help and support in a way that others can more easily respond.

The suggestions and ideas cover the whole cancer journey, including how to support someone with cancer if you live some distance away. It might be particularly helpful for supporting someone undergoing treatments such as chemotherapy or surgery as it includes tips for those spending time in hospital or feeling ill and fatigued. The author is a mum whose young daughter, Erin, faced a lengthy cancer battle and so offers a perspective on how to support a child/young patient, which is good, although many of the suggestions are general and cover all ages. It did make me think that it would be very helpful for those wanting to support a young family member or a child's classmate who is facing cancer as the tips include supporting them with schoolwork, school communications, and gift ideas for music downloads and online film subscriptions, which might particularly appeal to young people.

It is relatively short and easy to read and dip into as it is numerically ordered, with one suggestion per page. However, as the author notes in her introduction, some

suggestions are repeated more than once, making it repetitive at times. There is a simple classification at the beginning, including headings such as Finances, School, Fun, and In the hospital; this is useful for quickly dipping into.

The author is American and uses terminology that is perhaps not so familiar to the UK reader. It also contains a lot of links, resources and American webpages that are provided to support people with sourcing items, finding resources and places of support which are of no use to the UK reader. It did leave me constantly thinking "I wonder if we have that in the UK" which got a little frustrating!

The style is relaxed and conversational, appropriate to its content and purpose. However, given it is written and published for an American audience, many phrases are unfamiliar or sound very 'Americanised' to our ear, such as suggestion 51, 'Take Garbage cans to curb on trash day'. Whilst the writing is not too difficult to understand, it did make me feel at times that I was reading about someone else's lifestyle and experience that I couldn't relate to my own. An example is the references to medical care costs; our wonderful NHS means that most patients aren't faced with medical bills, but the author suggests that people might want to contribute to/crowd-fund to ease the financial pressure.

I didn't like the cover photo. It is empty and bleak and doesn't reflect the warmth and heart of the book. The book is about supporting people, acts of kindness, and really connecting with those facing cancer, but the cover looks more fitting to a book about bereavement or loss and may put people off reading it. The book is personal with a lot of story-telling and a few black and white photographs of Erin (the young cancer patient), her classmates and family. A few infographics with some simple statistics help to break up the text. It also includes several 'Did you Know' boxes with interesting (although often American related) facts or stories detailed.

I like the author's style; she shares many positive and heart-warming examples of people reaching out to Erin and her family. I like her openness and her genuine and poignant aim to help others support those with cancer. The overwhelming message is to find ways of showing you care and offer help – even a seemingly small act of kindness shows you care and will mean a lot to the patient and their family. I could relate to this 100%; some of the smallest things – like receiving a lovely card, a text or a neighbour offering to collect my son from the school bus on days when my husband struggled (due to being at the hospital with me) – still touch me today, several years later. This is the point that the author makes throughout the book and she is right, "small gestures can have an enormous impact... YOU have the power to make a huge difference to someone right now. YOU can make what they are fighting just a little bit smaller" (her emphasis). That is the value of this book; if it makes people think more about how they can help (much of it is non-monetary help) and offer their support more confidently, then it's achieved a lot.

I gave it a low score not because it is poorly written, it isn't, but purely because it's for an American audience. Many of the links, resources, or sources of support provided are irrelevant to the UK reader. It felt frustrating to know that a large part of the book was of no relevance to me. This isn't the authors fault, we just need a UK version!

Oesophageal cancer patient (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

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