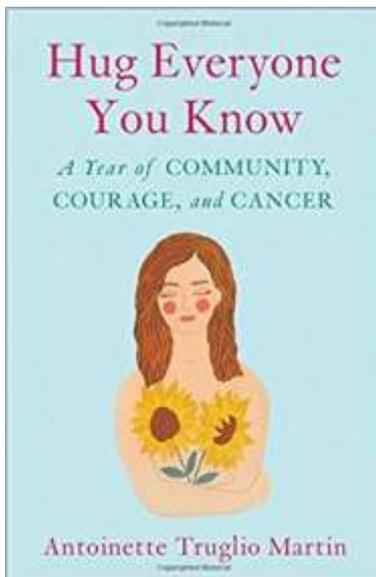


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Hug everyone you know: a year of community, courage, and cancer (2017)

Martin AT.

Berkeley, CA: She Writes Press, 2017.

299pp.

ISBN 9781631522628.

Average star rating 4.2 (out of 5)

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This is an account of a breast cancer journey from diagnosis, through treatment, to eventually being cancer free. It could be useful to those going through the same, at any stage of their journey, to see the experience of someone who saw cancer as a disruption or a bump in the road, as she has described it. It could help people go through their treatments as it's all detailed in chronological order. Not only does she ask questions that I believe will help others, she also asks professional advice and from people who have also been through or are going through the same experiences.

The cover design matches her story perfectly and the general layout is perfect. The title is used at the end of most of her emails to people she knew. I like how she uses her emails as diary entries to relay her story, exactly how she used them throughout her journey to keep her friends and family informed of her progress and feelings. The author uses language and terminology that everyone will understand. There is no glossary, but I didn't need one. When faced with unfamiliar language, the author referred to this herself and used this to ask others to explain. Sometimes when talking to specialists, not everyone hears everything and not everyone understands everything; this is quite common, not just for cancer but for all illnesses. She shares her experiences of this and how she had to ask others for guidance or reference making this situation as normal as she could when forced to confront her diagnosis.

Antoinette has produced an uplifting, brutally honest and often humorous account of her journey. She not only kept her memoirs for this reason, but she also chose to include every single person as a whole unit as she believed she gained strength and positivity from not just a few but from many people throughout her journey. She chose to share her journey through emails as she found this easier than having to call many people and repeat things, wasting time and effort she could save for herself and family. She could group people into one email, which made sense, and ask those who she needed for advice or support. She also had friends who were members of 'her everyone' (going through varying stages of their own cancer journey) whom she asked for advice whilst giving them encouragement and support. Although her journey had been relatively as expected, what she did not expect was her experience in her final stages during her 'radiation and humiliation' chapter which I'm pleased she chose to share. This account isn't a positive experience yet should have been the easiest stage for her. I am encouraged by the letter of complaint she wrote to that doctor and the positive outcome not only for her but for future patients.

Everyone had a part to play in her journey and she thanks them all equally for being a source of strength to help her overcome 'her bump in the road'. She said her diagnosis was "not a death sentence", but "an annoyance, not a catastrophe", "only a few months of disruption". Her upbeat, positive approach from the beginning gives her story an uplifting approach. She obviously had her down days when she screamed, cried and regularly fainted throughout her treatments but these incidents helped to give a real and honest account of her journey. Everyone's journey and outcome are different, but this is her journey and her honest account, and she chose to share everything, which made this story realistic and captivating for readers.

Family members have had breast cancer (36-45) (June 2019)

Anyone could read this book, but it is most useful for breast cancer patients. The parts that detail the author's experiences and her feelings at the time are the most useful aspects. It is very useful to explain treatments and feelings about treatment and useful for patients to know that you can survive treatments. I found it easy to understand. The cover design and everything else is good. I like how the emails are in a different typeface, but some are a bit repetitive and lengthy to read.

I like how the author describes the treatments she had and how she felt at the time. I like the fact that she was mostly optimistic about the future and didn't put her dreams on hold, e.g. building a new house, securing a new job. Reading about events outside her cancer experience also helped to keep the reader's interest.

The first part of the author's cancer journey was like mine, so I found I could relate to her experiences, even though procedures are slightly different in the USA. I felt involved in her journey and was sad to hear that her cancer had returned.

Former breast cancer patient (66-75) (June 2019)

I love this book. It is best read during treatment and will suit people living with breast cancer, their family and friends, as well as health professionals. It is very easy to understand. The cover is simple but effective with the pretty sunflowers replacing the 'boobs'. The size is perfect for taking with you.

I like the author's sense of reality when eventually faced square on. She tried hard to dis what was happening as we all do in a way, but I admire her honesty in the face of her fear. I share her phobia of needles! I really like how she 'introduces' her cast of email friends at the beginning so the reader can get to know them too and feel their support even as some had their own unwanted journey to complete.

I felt I could 'see' the author, her friends and family became almost real. I found myself imagining what her email 'cast' look like. Her journey through treatment, although scary at times, is explained in such an honest and real way that I wanted to hug everyone I know, including her!

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (April 2019)

This will be useful for any adult. It takes you from diagnosis to treatment and surgery. and is very up to date – the author uses social media to communicate with family and friends. She explains her treatment and its side effects and shows that life goes on whilst living with breast cancer.

It is in chronological order and easy to understand. Some terms are slightly different as the author lives in America, but all terminology is explained. It is nicely presented; the cover explains what it's about, with a basic but well-thought-out image. I like the short chapters and the typefaces differentiating emails from the main text. Overall, the tone is positive, and I love the use of “Hug everyone you know” on each page.

A great read, offering emotional support and positive thoughts about living with and managing breast cancer. The author explains how she manages to hold down her career, manage home life with children, have holidays and make her life enjoyable. She shows how invaluable family and friends are.

Wife of bladder cancer patient (66-75) (September 2018)

This book is most useful for those who feel alone. It could help them to feel part of a community but could remind them of their loneliness. The reader's frame of mind matters when reading this book.

It is easy to understand, in diary format, and the short, sharp entries are appealing. I really like the cover colours and a few people asked what I was reading. The cover is a good quality and feels almost velvety. The diary-style entries are a blessing for someone like me who experiences nausea and dizziness at times. I like the writing style, the design and the message. Very inspirational.

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



This is very much about the author's life at the time as well as the topic of breast cancer and will therefore appeal to anyone. The author provides an overview of her life and how diagnosis and treatment affected, and became part of, her life. It is useful in demonstrating that there is life to be lived around the diagnosis and illness.

The title conveys the sentiment of the book well. The cover is pleasant, and the layout and structure are easy to follow. It is easy to understand; it follows a year of treatment using emails between the author and her friends and relatives to frame the story. The author takes you on her journey of discovering all aspects of her treatment. As someone who has been through this process, I found it easy to relate to the terminology. The author has an engaging and personal style; although she focuses on cancer and its effect on her life, it's also about other aspects of her life.

It's a warm book, covering a difficult subject with honesty, which really helped me relate to the author even though our experiences of treatment were quite different. I

found it quite uplifting and motivating how she focused on the positive aspects of life during what must have been a very difficult time. I also think it helped that I have been through treatment and am coming out the other side – I am in a place where I can relate with other people’s stories but perhaps not looking for too many answers. If I had been at the early start of treatment I may not have gained as much from it.

This is a recounting of someone’s life through treatment and beyond. It does not provide practical detail and, as the author is based in the USA, some of her experiences may be different from someone in the UK. It is not fact based and so not useful for gaining information on living with or supporting someone with cancer. However, it is an interesting and at times uplifting book written honestly by someone who has experienced breast cancer. Read at the right time it is helpful, but it might not necessarily be useful to someone in the early stages of a diagnosis.

“Hug Everyone You Know” is a year-long real account of one woman’s journey through breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. From the shock of diagnosis to navigating life as a mother, wife and friend, Antoinette takes you on the journey with her and includes all aspects of her life. It is great to read a book from which, as well as learning about someone’s breast cancer, you also learn about them and their life.

I really enjoyed reading it, I found it quite a therapeutic and easy read, for someone who has come through breast cancer and is interested in other people’s experiences. It does not attempt to provide answers, it is not a reference guide although it does give an insight into what treatment was like from one person’s perspective. If you or someone close to you has been through treatment, then it is easy to relate to. It may be more difficult to relate if you are early into treatment or are looking for a book with more practical support. What it does demonstrate is the strength that can be found from within even in the most frightening of situations and the reality that life goes on alongside a cancer diagnosis; I really related to this and found the book uplifting.

Breast cancer patient; completed active treatment and currently going through reconstruction (36-45) (March 2019)

This well-written book is most relevant to people with stage 1 breast cancer, their family, friends, and carers. The author tells her story from diagnosis to the end of radiotherapy in a candid and conversational way – many people affected by cancer will be able to relate to her experiences and emotions, as well as those of her loved ones. Healthcare professionals could get an insight into the impact of breast cancer on the patient and learn from the examples of good and bad practice described.

The book is divided into three main parts, each containing several short chapters that make it easy to pick up and put down. The first part covers the author’s diagnosis and chemotherapy, the second details her radiotherapy, and the third her present health status. It flows well and is easy to follow and understand; I felt the author was recounting her story to me one-on-one. She keeps terminology to a minimum and provides clear explanations in the text as necessary. The tone is informal and friendly. The cover is tasteful, and the book is printed in a clear typeface on good quality paper. I particularly like the layout – like a diary interspersed with emails.

I particularly like the inclusion of emails between the author and her loved ones. It made the book feel more intimate and gave me an insight into the impact of cancer on the author and her loved ones. The author lives in America and I found it hard to relate to the geographical locations and hospital systems described. I also dislike the frequent references to boating and house moves. She received considerable social support and makes frequent reference to this. I struggled to keep up with her many friends and relatives and regularly had to refer to the cast of email contacts. I'm concerned that this may be depressing for anyone who lacks social support.

The book is ultimately an engaging and frank insight into the author's breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. It's appropriate for a wide audience. However, the author is a self-confessed nervous patient who doesn't normally cope well with medical procedures and her writing reflects this. I'm not normally squeamish but her descriptions of procedures, particularly lumpectomy, made me feel uneasy. It almost felt like her anxiety was rubbing off on me. That said, her determination to overcome her fears and face cancer and its associated procedures head-on shines through.

A relative of someone with breast and lung cancer (26-35) (November 2018)

This would be useful for anyone who is living with breast cancer to see how similar or different experiences can be and how life can still go on at times. The book also shows how important it is to communicate with friends and relatives. It is easy to understand as it is written in a diary format, with emails to and from the author. The style is chatty, uncomplicated and easy to read. The chapters are many, but short, which is excellent when you're tired or having difficulty focussing.

I enjoyed the light nature of this book even while dealing with a serious illness. Positivity and love shine through. The inclusion of emails to and from the author, as well as her diaries, break up the text, provide deeper insight and highlight the significance of communicating with loved ones whilst ill as it can equal support in bucket loads. It is serious, honest, and very readable.

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



I like the title of the book and understand what the author is trying to convey but I was bored as it is more about the author's life and not really about her cancer journey.

It just wasn't for me and I don't feel that it offers help or insight to cancer patients.

Ten-year breast cancer survivor (46-55) (April 2019)

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.

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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