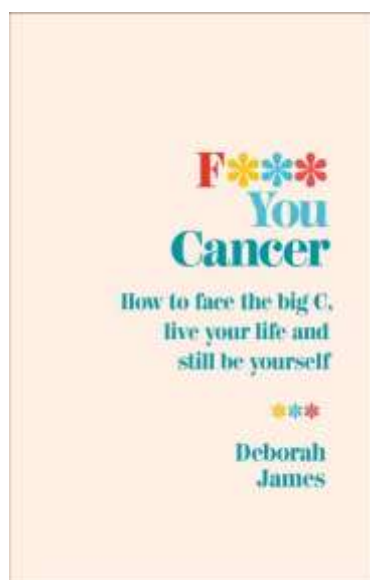


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT
RIGHT THERE WITH YOU**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



F* you cancer. How to face the big C, live your life and still be yourself (2018)**

James D.

London: Vermilion, 2018.

viii, 264pp.

Average star rating 4.3 (out of 5)

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This book covers every aspect of living with cancer and will be especially useful to people affected by bowel cancer. It is an appealing book with humour, sarcastic notes, and funny illustrations. It is easy to read and understand and the author uses appropriate language.

I like the optimistic approach – even with cancer you can enjoy life and have another glass of wine. I don't like the focus on bowel cancer, but that's because of my case.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (May 2019)

Many people would benefit from reading about the author's experience of bowel cancer and how it affected not just her, but those around her too. I certainly took from it the practicalities of what is ACTUALLY involved when you have bowel cancer – how it changes your life, what really goes on during treatment, how it will affect those around you – also the tips of how to make it more manageable and to keep as much of a normal routine as possible, particularly when children and a family are involved.

The flow of each chapter makes good sense and is structured in a way that is easy to digest and shows her journey and discoveries made along the way. It is not technical and is easy to understand. It is written in such a way that is heart warming, humorous and helpful. The way each section is written really helped with this too. Information that is short, simple and practical. I like the overall layout and design. I found the font size very readable and the spacing on each page gives manageable sections and learnings with clear points. It is well written with a very frank yet personable style that takes you on a journey with the author. This all adds to the compassion and empathy that could be felt while reading her account of her experiences with bowel cancer.

I really enjoyed the moments of humour in what is a very tough time for Deborah and for her close family and friends. I also got a lot from reading the practical tips and suggestions from not just the perspective of a patient but also as a friend or family member of such a patient. There are some excellent ideas that I had not considered when my own father was having chemotherapy and that I could have used, such as having one person as the key contact to give information to be shared to family and friends, instead of repeating the same story and information multiple times.

I had never considered the idea of writing a life list instead of a bucket list. This turns it from a to-do list into an opportunity to consider changes that we could make to do more of the things we enjoy and to stop the things we should no longer do, and then making them happen. This seems much more attainable and practical. There are also some excellent links to good sources of information towards the end of the book.

This is an inspiring account of what to expect, how to face such challenges, and tips to help in managing such a condition. This could be for a patient or someone in their close circle. I found it helpful to understand what a patient would go through and how I could be more valuable support to someone in such a position.

Lost father to abdominal cancer (36-45) (April 2019)

This book is suitable for anyone over 18; Debbie takes us through all aspects and emotions of facing cancer, looking at the diagnosis from everyone's point of view – patients, carers, family, friends – with tips on how to tell friends and family and fun ideas to help prepare children for the tough times ahead and make happy memories. I read it whilst I was having radiotherapy, having already had chemotherapy, but I think it is also good for anyone who has recently been diagnosed, as it gives a light-hearted look at how to survive all that lies ahead. Debbie has not had radiotherapy, but (as with a lot of experiences she has not been through), she includes quotes from those who have and, where needed, recommends websites.

It is very well written and easy to follow, starting with diagnosis – “this cannot be happening to me” and “joining the club you never wanted to join” – through planned treatment, surgery, chemotherapy and the fact that cancer can change all the best laid plans. With Debbie's type and stage of cancer there is no end date to treatment and this is talked about through the book.

The cover is quite plain, but the title stands out. It is easy to pick up and read, the general upbeat feeling is quite addictive. The way it is written, and the hand-drawn illustrations can have you bursting out laughing one moment and crying the next. There are charts and graphs as guides and ideas. Any quotations from other people are clearly highlighted in boxes.

It's great if you want to take your mind off the misinformation that well-intended people give you; it suggests polite ways to explain that you will not be taking their advice and lets you know that sometimes it is ok not to be polite!! There are also some very useful facts, with recommended websites throughout and at the back of the book, should you want to check any details or want any help. It covers all types of people; being on sick pay I could not afford to go out and buy the designer handbags and I don't wear make-up, but the idea of buying little treats after reaching milestones is a great one. It also includes tips and support for those around you, suggesting ways they can really help with things you need. Mostly I like that it made me feel normal.

It is full of information based on someone's experiences after being diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer. Not all the details will be relevant to everyone and I wouldn't suggest using it for in-depth information on your cancer, but it does help with deciding what is important to you and whatever that is, it's okay.

Although written by someone in their 30's, the mindset could be used by all ages. It gives a light-hearted look at cancer even when we know the symptoms, treatment side effects can be very cruel. I thoroughly enjoyed it; the title summed up how I felt about what I was going through and I recommend it to anyone feeling the same. The only downside was the disapproving looks from others when I was laughing out loud.

Living with breast cancer (46-55) (April 2019)

This has real practical advice and guidance for someone with bowel cancer. It is very informative, with tips and guidance for a range of situations and challenges that those with bowel cancer may experience. Key advice is broken down and highlighted to allow readers to understand it easily. Advice is based on first-hand experience and offers recommendations on improving the physical and psychological wellbeing of anyone with cancer. It covers many areas including: managing mental health and wellbeing; mindfulness; physical activity; coping with radio- and chemotherapy; coping mechanisms for challenging situations; a positive mindset; life after cancer; diet; physical appearance and changes that may occur; supporting children during treatment/diagnosis; relationships and how they may change; being a carer; meditation; side effects of treatment and how to manage these; and fertility.

The cover is striking and the title imaginative. The book is laid out clearly. Many of the chapters are broken down into sections, providing real and practical advice on a range of issues. Each chapter has take-away top tips that prioritise the advice given. Useful diagrams and tables illustrate key points and strategies; they help the reader understand the information. At the end are lists of resources and websites that will be useful for further reading and guidance. The book flows well and occasional humour brings some light-heartedness to the read.

This book is not only a personal account of bowel cancer, but also provides realistic strategies for someone with bowel cancer to improve physical and mental wellbeing during treatment and beyond. The areas covered are broad and will support the reader on issues from mindfulness to supporting your children after diagnosis. A key highlight is the simple, yet effective, top-tips in each chapter that summarise key points and provide practical advice. I particularly like the specific details on all kinds of situations that someone living with cancer may experience. The advice is honest, practical and concise, giving the reader a real insight into the many challenges experienced by the author but also, effective strategies to manage difficulties and improve physical and mental wellbeing. Common-sense, realistic advice is provided on all manner of situations, invaluable for someone experiencing them.

The book is specific to the challenges of living with bowel cancer, but many of the strategies may be valuable and useful to people with other types of cancer. The book gives excellent advice and guidance on how to cope mentally and physically with the side effects of cancer treatment. The recommendations given are based on the author's experience and not only offer an insight into these experiences, but also advice on how to improve physical and mental health.

A relative of someone recently bereaved (36-45) (April 2019)

Although the author writes about her own cancer, she writes for you and as a cancer patient it is invaluable. Use the book as a bible, read bits and re-read bits; it is full of advice, tips, useful information and insights into how to deal with cancer. It is useful for someone with cancer, their carer, family or friends, and health professionals, indeed anyone. It is a truly inspirational piece of work outlining the death-defying battle against stage four bowel cancer and the horrors that that entails. For me, at the beginning of my cancer journey, understanding that treatment is a waiting game was very useful. When you're close to death with a heart problem you don't have time to be scared. The prospect of chemotherapy was daunting, but nothing compared to what the author has been through. Reading about it motivated me to find out more by seeking out the experiences of fellow patients. It helped me be more dynamic when dealing with appointment problems and to minimise the waiting time for scan results; it made me push for an appointment for feedback rather than wait ten weeks.

There is an introduction to the author followed by ten chapters describing initial diagnosis, through treatment, how to tell the children, looking good and feeling better, support and relationships, mental well-being, food, to how to thrive. It's all there in logical order. I didn't notice any factual errors, however the index entry, "research, treatments, unavailable on the NHS", is not on page 54.

Title apart, it is a very appealing book, with lots of space in the text. Poignant, humorous cartoons illustrate the start of each chapter and each chapter ends with a list of useful tips. Tables and charts, flowcharts, and diagrams are included. Many sections are written by other authors, young and old, who have experience of certain aspects of cancer and its treatment. Technical details are kept to a minimum and the author's style is easy to read, using appropriate language for most adults. There is a comprehensive index but no glossary; however, it is not necessary.

It is very useful, full of practical hints and tips on how to deal with bad things, how to enjoy some of the better things, and how to have a better overall mental attitude towards your cancer. It's difficult to write anything negative about this book. It is a no-holds-barred account and there are disturbing passages, but they are real and necessary. If you aren't having chemotherapy, immunotherapy, chemo pumps and ports, I recommend that you don't read these parts; I found them raw and disturbing. Reading through the emotion and turmoil of the author's journey will make you cry. Overall a truly inspirational and motivating account of the author's journey through the cancer with a very positive mental attitude.

Living with prostate cancer (April 2019)

This great book is useful for all aspects of living with bowel cancer. It is easy to read and understand, straight to the point, and light hearted, even though it is a serious subject. The cover conveys the author's positive attitude. I found it inspiring. I cared for my father in his last two years and I wish I had read this book at the time. It has great references to organisations and I especially like the take-away top tips at the end of each chapter. It also includes other people's experiences of cancer and helps you realise you can still live a fulfilling life. Highly recommended.

Carer (bowel cancer) (56-65) (March 2019)

The author has bowel cancer, but her book will benefit anyone with any cancer, especially at the beginning of their journey – there are many tips and ideas around diagnosis and treatment. I thoroughly enjoyed it and it may also help a carer or family member to understand how a cancer patient may feel. It is easy to read, with great explanations, links to websites, references and top tips at the end of each chapter.

The title says exactly how I feel about my cancer, so had me gripped from the start. I wish I had read it at the start of my journey. I like the author's honest approach, from her feelings about diagnosis, through telling her children, and treatment, to how she isn't going to allow cancer to define her. Her humour shines through but she is still informative and honest about her feelings. I highly recommend it. It guides you through treatment and the tips and advice would have really helped me at the time. Four years on, I found myself saying "yes that's exactly how I felt". It's reassuring to read that my feelings are ok. I also found the coping mechanisms helpful.

Living with incurable endometrial sarcoma in the lungs (46-55) (March 2019)

This is useful for anyone. The information on hospital and how to cope with chemo is good. It's very easy to understand; most people know the lingo. I love her attitude to it all, she's amazing – I've already recommended it.

Living with cancer of the appendix (56-65) (March 2019)

This open, honest book is mainly about Deborah James's cancer journey, how she has dealt with issues and things she has found useful or learned. She shares her experiences and those of friends, all working out how to live with cancer. There are short contributions from her children on how it is affecting them and what they are doing to get through it. It is an ideal size, easy to dip into. It is not too heavy and has a good mix of funny and uplifting moments among the more emotional aspects.

Overall it was enjoyable when perhaps I didn't expect it to be. Although it has some elements of information, this is not its primary aim. I would not hesitate to recommend it to patients, carers, family members for all cancers, not just bowel cancer. It is particularly suitable for people with a similar demographic to Deborah, i.e. aged 25 to 55, not necessarily in a relationship, and with or without children.

Lymphoma health professional (46-55) (February 2019)

When you read this book, it is like talking to the author! Her style ensures that the reader is fully involved from the get go. You are left in no doubt that she is sharing personal and practical information for the good of all patients. Although she recounts her experiences of bowel cancer, she makes every effort to include other cancers. Experiences are personal and varied anyway so the reader can take what is useful from the book and discard anything that does not apply to them. Because bowel cancer is rarer in young women, this is a unique insight into their challenges.

It is most useful for its common-sense advice about how you may feel from diagnosis to the all-clear, if that is your journey. However, for the author and most, living with cancer becomes the new norm. It's refreshing to hear from someone who knows the effect of chemotherapy on the mind and body and how this can be difficult to handle, not only for patients but also carers, who may feel they can't do right for doing wrong!

The author is a vibrant, modern, professional woman and the title should make the reader aware that there will be no sugar coating in content or language – how refreshing! Any technical information has been researched well and the author has amassed a plethora of experts around her to advise appropriately. The summary of salient points at the end of each chapter is helpful.

This is a practical book about coping with the physical and emotional journey of cancer. I like the author's honesty, her helpful hints and tips, her positivity. It is like reading a book by a friend. Other books may give more technical insight, but this hits the mark at a practical level. A no-nonsense account from the heart with good advice and tips to make a very difficult subject more bearable. Bravo Deborah!

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (January 2019)

This practical, down-to-earth book provides a lot of information in a non-textbook style. It focuses on the experiences of a 36-year-old woman living with stage 4 bowel cancer. It is particularly relevant to people of that age range but also to anyone with cancer. It covers a variety of topics but is most useful regarding chemotherapy and the experiences, physical and emotional, that result from treatment.

It is well researched – with details of organisations – written for a wide audience and easy to understand. It is well designed: the title catches your attention and the coloured asterisks stand out. The layout is good, guiding you to chapters that may interest you, so you can dip in rather than read it cover to cover. A cartoon-like illustration at the start of each chapter adds to the less serious tone, even though it is a serious topic. The bullet point summaries at the end of each chapter are useful.

I like the matter-of-fact style. The information is down to earth but given in a more personal way than an information text. She describes her experiences and reactions honestly. Much of her advice is personal, and readers will relate to this. My only issue is the frequent swearing which, although conversational, is often unnecessary and could offend. She also refers to drinking a lot; her experience of going to the pub whilst carrying her pump is so far from my reality that I could not relate to it at all.

The title captures the feelings of most people with cancer and the content backs it up. The topics are wide ranging and relevant, although perhaps more to younger people. The author's feelings and experiences are reassuring and normalise it in some way; seeing them described by someone else takes away some of the concern that only you feel that way. The book doesn't have answers but acknowledges that everyone's experience is different and directs the reader to a wealth of other resources if they wish to find out more. The reassurance that "it's OK not to be OK" really resonates.

Living with bowel cancer (56-65) (January 2019)

I recommend this marvellous book to people with any cancer. It is a useful handbook to read cover to cover, or to choose a specific chapter depending on the situation. I like the advice provided. It does not include any fake 'new' treatments, a lovely relief.

It is well-designed, with an eye catching and dramatic cover. (It attracted curious glances from fellow commuters.) The language is conversational and easy to read. My only criticism is the overuse of exclamation marks in the first half of the book.

It is wonderful, my absolute favourite of all the books I have reviewed so far. I would be proud to recommend it to others facing cancer. It is useful, full of practical tips and makes the cancer journey (in whatever form) a little bit easier to bear. It is sensitive, funny, poignant, dispels many myths and empowers the reader. It is one of the only books that patients and families need (with [The Royal Marsden cancer cookbook](#)).

Bone cancer survivor (26-35) (January 2019)

I wouldn't have chosen this due to the title (ok, I am the anti-swearing type), but I saw it in the library and was aware of the author's podcast (*You, Me and the Big C*), so skimmed it, and decided to read it. I am very pleased I did. It deals with cancer diagnosis and a recurrence to Stage 4 diagnosis in an honest and inspiring way. I like the practical tips and clear illustrations. It is well written and very easy to read.

I recommend this inspirational read to anyone living with or caring for someone with Stage 4 cancer. I do not have the same cancer but could relate to the experiences.

Living with metastatic breast cancer (56-65) (December 2018)

I am a follower of Deborah James on her Instagram blog @bowelbabe, and podcast *You, me and the big C*. When I found out she had written a book I couldn't wait to read it – it didn't disappoint. It is a fantastic, inspirational book giving an honest insight into someone living with stage 4 bowel cancer. It's an easy, humorous, well-written read and reassuring for those who feel they are alone. I recommend it to anyone who has been given a cancer diagnosis, not just bowel, and to carers.

It gives insight into bowel cancer through the eyes of the author. She details her journey and gives "take-away top tips" at the end of each chapter. The book is very detailed and is split into easy to read chapters. She also includes the experiences of others with cancer. It will be great for someone starting their treatment to read about the processes and procedures that happen through the eyes of someone living with cancer herself. It would also be great for carers as they can get an insight into the journey for themselves. Deborah also puts a lot of her own thoughts in the book, and it's nice to read that my thoughts were the same and I am not alone.

The book goes from diagnosis through to current day and is well written and easy to understand. Deborah does not use any technical words that are not explained and there is no need for a glossary. The cover design is very simple, but I think it's the title that draws you in the most. The typeface, size and layout are good and the

quirky little images at the start of every chapter are a great addition. A “Resources” section provides a lot of useful information and websites for help and advice.

I love everything about this book. Even though I have had a different type of cancer I enjoyed reading it and getting the views and perspective of a different kind of cancer and treatment. Deborah details it very well and gives her own thoughts and feelings too as well as technical information. I particularly enjoyed the closing chapter (From Survivor to Thriver) about life after cancer.

Diagnosed with breast cancer at 33 and with the faulty BRCA2 gene. Treatment includes lymph node biopsy, double mastectomy, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and a bilateral oophorectomy (26-35) (October 2018)



This book is aimed at people living with cancer, but may be useful also for carers, partners or friends. I would also say it's aimed most at younger people under 50 or thereabouts. It is most useful for living with and despite cancer, practical tips for managing and self-care, reliable sources of information, and talking with others (including children) about cancer. There is an excellent resource section.

I would describe it as a cancer book for the “Hurrah-for-Gin” generation (30-, 40-, 50-somethings). It is relatable and appealing particularly perhaps for younger people with cancer. It is easy to read. Terms are largely explained, and the language is jocular, and informal. Chapters seem to follow in a logical order, building on previous chapters. The tone is positive, humorous and lively.

I like Deborah's spirited style of writing; it felt a little overbearing in the initial chapters, but it grew on me once the book got going and helped make a lot of difficult topics more digestible. There is little shying away from some of the realities of cancer, but equally there is a clear message that even in the most difficult of circumstances you can still find a way to live that is fun and meaningful. The emphasis is very much on living not dying. I really liked several the practical tips and ideas like having a routine for your life as much as a routine for cancer. The chapter on talking to children is very good and has some great ideas for parents on how to have these conversations and things to do. I like that it seems to be aimed at younger people living with cancer and discusses some of the challenges particular to having cancer when you are young, for example having a young family, a career.

This is not really a factual book on cancer more a support/self-help book. Overall, I really liked it and would recommend it to others, particularly those aged 30-50 living with cancer, and those wanting advice and positive messages on how to live life despite cancer. The style of writing is not for everyone. If you are not okay with swearing, or jocular humour around cancer then this is not for you. In places it feels quite directive in terms of advice and I'm not sure everyone would relate to their cancer in a “f*** you” kind of a way.

Former breast cancer patient (36-45) (May 2019)

A very poignant and honest account of a very difficult experience that affects the whole person. It is most useful for what to expect from diagnosis, treatment, and afterwards – not just the physical, but also thoughts and feelings that will help support people at the start of the journey.

It is an eye-catching book and you want to pick it up. The title is great, and I think will attract lots of younger people. It is easy to understand, which is important – someone just diagnosed will be given so much information that the last thing they need is more medical terms or phrases they don't understand. There is a relaxed and natural tone; it allows the author's honesty to be portrayed in a way that can engage the reader.

It was great as a professional to understand a patient's perspective. It is a very personal and realistic experience of cancer and the cancer journey. I enjoyed her humour and her brutally honest thoughts and feelings and how that changed her whole way of thinking and living.

This is a great book for people affected by bowel cancer, but only when they are ready and feel they want to explore what the cancer journey may hold for them. It is very honest and may be too much for someone just diagnosed if they are struggling.

Upper GI Cancer Nurse Specialist (May 2019)

This covers a wide range of subjects around cancer, chemo, and life in general. Whilst it is one woman's experience, it will be of value to anyone going through bowel cancer, chemo in general, and their partner or carer. I wouldn't advise reading it at diagnosis; a new patient has a great deal to absorb and resolve first. Once life has settled, it is an excellent guide to cancer, chemo, and everything thrown at you. How useful it is will depend upon circumstances, but even though I'm not having chemo, I still found it interesting, informative and useful, and benefitted from reading it.

It isn't a chronological journey, but in a structured, logical order that is easy to follow. It is written in plain language. The content of each chapter is relevant to the chapter title and stays on track. The cover is simple, with clever use of colour in the typeface; the exact opposite of cancer, often perceived as black. The title expresses the content simply and sets the tone. Throughout, the author draws on her background in teaching, and later in writing. Her writing has opened doors that won't be open to many but proves that life with cancer can go on in a positive way. Where the author hands the baton to another for input, they are always female, apart from her son. The author has also given her cancer a gender (male), and a position on her family tree.

I like how it is written. It's one person's experience of cancer, their journey, their observations, coping mechanisms, and a desire to pass this on to help others. The artwork at the start of each chapter is monochrome, which suits the easy-going style, and helps set the scene. At the end of each chapter is a reminder of the key points raised, a little like a work presentation, but useful nonetheless. In the chapter about explaining a cancer diagnosis to children, the contribution from the author's children gives an interesting insight to how children react to cancer in a parent. The book is filled with life experiences from the author and others, making it interesting, full and rounded. At the end is a comprehensive list of resources for information and support.

The only part I don't like is that on radiotherapy. The author didn't have radiotherapy so that part is by a friend who had radiotherapy for breast cancer. A friend who has had radiotherapy for breast cancer twice describes it as relatively easy compared to chemo; the radiotherapy is at a low dose, as it has very little of the body to penetrate. I was hoping to learn more from this part of the book as I'm to have radiotherapy, but to a much deeper part of my body, so the side effects will be that much greater. I feel that whilst the author is trying to cover as much ground as possible this should have been written by someone who has had radiotherapy to a greater degree, however I do concede that breast cancer is a very common female cancer.

This is a full, well-rounded book, with much more useful information than the cover suggests. It is a very interesting, informative read, packed with life with cancer, and one I enjoyed reading. It is quite useful for anyone under going chemo in general, especially if having several sessions, and bowel cancer in particular. It could help anyone in a similar situation, particularly as cancer can be a lonely journey at times; knowing that someone else is experiencing the same or similar, is reassuring that what's happening to you is not unusual. It may also be useful as something with which to compare your own journey with cancer. I felt quite empowered to chase a few things of my own cancer wise since reading it. I will probably recommend it. Why not! After all, that's exactly what the author has experienced.

Prostate cancer patient (56-65) (March 2019)

I like the simple yet colourful cover and the illustrations inside. The book is easy to understand, and I like some of the descriptions. However, it does go into detail and although it is sometimes good, it wasn't all relevant to my condition.

I had melanoma medulloblastoma (Under 25) (February 2019)

I wish I'd had this when I was diagnosed. It would have been so useful, even though my cancer was different; it has so much good advice on how to tell people, cope with appointments and work out how you feel. It will also help carers to understand what a patient is going through and how to help.

It's friendly, helpful and chatty; I have followed Deborah on Instagram (@bowelbabe) and I felt she was sat next to me while I read, like a friend who has experienced what you are going through. Everything is well explained and in a great order; it's exactly how I processed my diagnosis. Her shared experience is priceless and makes it funny along the way. I recommend it especially to anyone diagnosed with bowel cancer – it's nice to know you are not alone and I imagine it will be a huge comfort. As someone who has been through a different diagnosis it was nice to read that I wasn't the only one who felt certain ways. There were elements that weren't useful for me but for those with the same or similar cancer it will be a godsend.

In remission from cervical cancer (26-35) (February 2019)

This is first and foremost a comprehensive, compassionate guide for anyone going through, or in recovery from, bowel cancer. It could almost be called a guidebook, interspersed with James's experience of cancer and testimonies from survivors. It covers the most important aspects, from dealing with diagnosis, breaking the news to loved ones, the physical and psychological impact of treatment, lifestyle changes, nutrition, exercise... Each chapter covers an aspect of cancer in bite-size chunks, meaning the reader can dip in and out if they wish. James writes with a fluidity and without pretension. She manages to put you at ease, to the extent that you feel like she is talking to you, and only you. The writing is often funny but, obviously, with a serious undertone. James can laugh at herself, without making light of her illness. The cover is minimalist and doesn't give much away about the content, although the title does give a general idea of the author's sense of humour and approach to surviving cancer. There is no imagery, apart from an illustration to introduce each chapter, often quite amusing.

It becomes clear early on that the author possesses a sense of humour, e.g. Chapter 4 "Chemo Farts" where she describes how she could, "produce a stench you thought was only possible for a year's worth of decomposing cabbage!". There is also an extremely informative guide to the ins and outs of chemo in the form of tables and flow charts, plus suggestions on how the reader could journal their journey. However, it does start to feel like some advice is repeated in different words. Some of the dialogue sounds clichéd and one gripe is James's indulgent use of exclamation marks! The book seems to be geared more towards women (Chapter 7 "Where will I find shoes to match?"). I doubt this is intentional, but that's how it comes across.

Despite the serious subject, I enjoyed, if that is the right word, this book. James's advice is reassuring, bordering on comforting. Her attitude towards the unexpected in life – and death – is refreshing and uplifting, "We need to accept that death and bereavement are part of life... by normalising the conversation around it we can start to live". She manages to blend compassion with straightforward advice based on her experience. It can sometimes be a little brutal, telling it how it REALLY is (or might be). However, I doubt readers will be especially perturbed by anything.

Former carer to terminally ill mother with Grade IV Glioblastoma (36-45) (February 2019)

Deborah James's book is based on her experience of bowel cancer, but it isn't all specific to bowel cancer. It is an account of physical and emotional aspects with practical tips: what to ask professionals; managing treatment; directing family and friends to provide effective support; and living with the knowledge that your cancer is incurable. It begins with the shock of diagnosis and covers issues such as chemo side-effects, emotional wellbeing, and relationships. Deborah shares her experiences of surgery and chemotherapy and includes others' accounts of radiotherapy. It is helpful in highlighting the emotional drain of diagnosis and treatment.

It is an easy read, with lots of humour as Deborah reflects on her experiences. Any terminology is well explained. The title, style and illustrations reflect her personality, which comes through in her *You, me and the big C* podcasts. (The kids thought the title was rude; it took some explaining to convince them that it is OK in this context!)

I really like the section on how to help children; it has lots of useful suggestions on how to talk them about diagnosis, tease out their concerns and focus on making memories. The children's questions for their mum and their suggestions on how they could help are insightful. I love the candid way Deborah relays her experiences. She comes across as highly practical, determined to share her experiences and do all she can to prolong her life with cancer. I wouldn't recommend it specifically to someone with bowel cancer – it is not a guide to bowel cancer and what to expect – but highly recommend it to people who can relate to Deborah, for example, diagnosed relatively young, facing cancer with a young family and/or learning their cancer is incurable.

Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (February 2019)

My grandmother died from bowel cancer, but this could be helpful to anyone as they approach treatment, whatever their cancer. It addresses key aspects of dealing with cancer and these insights could be useful pre-treatment. There are the more obvious physical side-effects (hair loss, sickness, fatigue) and some less obvious (changing relationships, needing to rely on other people, work commitments). It could give carers a useful insight into what the person with cancer is dealing with physically and psychologically, which they may find difficult to articulate. I don't think it is relevant just for bowel cancer, although it does have specifics about that type of cancer.

It is an appealing book from first glance. It is a good length and the font size and short chapters make it easy to read in stages. The illustrations are very relatable. The language is appropriate for the audience and the author explains technical terms. I like the light-hearted tone and her honesty and openness, especially about her diagnosis and ongoing treatment. It opened conversations with friends and family about my experience, which has been beneficial post-treatment. I like the summary tips at the end of chapters, the advice along the way, and the perspectives of others affected by cancer. There are useful links to relevant support networks and charities.

I don't like the brief and somewhat passive reference to the mental side-effects of diagnosis and treatment. For me, this was the biggest side-effect and challenge of cancer and ill-discussed by the medical profession, in cancer literature, and here. But perhaps the author didn't have this experience or wish to discuss it. Because of this, I would not have been able to finish reading it just after diagnosis: it didn't touch on or deal with the psychological impact on me at all. I would also have found it too difficult during or right after treatment. Only now, 6 months later, can I read something like this – even now it's quite difficult. I found the constant references to putting on some lipstick, or a nice dress to 'cheer yourself up' difficult to read, and belittling of women in general. I found this particularly difficult to comprehend and relate to, especially when reflecting on my chemotherapy experience, it feels like a far-fetched approach to treatment.

I don't recommend it to someone with cancer, but I do to someone close to or caring for a patient. It gives them some insight into a world they may not know much about, into the experiences around cancer diagnosis, not just bowel. I recommend people read other books as well for a broader range of perspectives and experiences.

Hodgkin lymphoma survivor (26-35) (January 2019)

The author had a diagnosis of stage four bowel cancer with additional tumours in the lungs at the age of 35, and with two young children, a job as a deputy headteacher and an active life, her world was turned upside down.

The book travels chronologically, with advice throughout, and is easy to understand. The author does not use jargon, nor give any detailed information about her medical status at any time. It is a standard-size paperback. The font size is larger than average – which suits me! – and there are line-drawings at the beginning of each chapter, lending a humorous element to the book.

I like the author's style. She has the best intentions, distilling her experiences into advice for others in similar circumstances, and immediately, the reader feels an affection for her. She writes in a chatty way, as if to a friend, and the reader is drawn into her life. She urges readers to prioritise themselves, reward themselves, have fun, despite the ordeals that chemotherapy presents. She is generous with her information, drawing from extensive research; her resource list and tables are of great value. There is little information about treatment; we know that surgery and chemotherapy are involved, but there are no details. There are no photos of her, apart from a tiny face-shot on the back, but an internet search shows many pictures of her looking like a supermodel; she is undoubtedly attractive, confident and popular and plans are underway for her appearance on "Strictly come Dancing".

The thing that is not so good, is that her advice is based very much on what she values most. She constantly urges readers to wear 'lippy' and killer heels, reward themselves, drink wine and eat what they like to feel good about themselves. That makes her feel good – that's great. Appropriate exercise and a good diet is great advice, undoubtedly. But not everyone can feel better by wearing lipstick, buying treats or wearing heels. Not everyone is as pretty, self-confident and talented, so it may backfire, making readers feel inadequate. There are many other ways to feel good about yourself. She advises people to ask others for help weeding the garden or doing the shopping, again good advice. She also describes quality time spent with her young children (great) but how does she cope with the children and household chores when she has been in bed, ill and depressed for many days at a time? She mentions her husband rarely, and dismissively. Have they separated? How did she gain help during these times? This would have been interesting to read. Perhaps that is being intrusive and nosey as a reader, but as she is so open about intimate aspects of her life (e.g. farting, vomiting), it seems strange that these important practicalities are omitted. Despite this, you have to admire this feisty woman.

This book may be more useful for young-minded females who prioritise looking fabulous. For others, there is still some advice that is useful. Valuable parts for me are the contributions from other people she has encountered, and the testimonies of her two children. As for the book's usefulness, yes, I think many people will find it useful, not least because of the author's resilience and spirit. She does appreciate her life and she values living – and expresses this very well, drawing every pleasure from life. When it comes to advice, the reader can judge whether this is right for them. It is her strength and likeability that shine through.

Former health professional; former carer; friend (66-75) (January 2019)

Deborah James is living with bowel cancer, but I still found this informative and useful. It is refreshing, humorous, and matter of fact, allowing the reader to verbalise feelings and emotions perhaps previously quashed. It goes from diagnosis, through treatment, to how life continues, but in a different way. It made me realise that some of my thoughts are ok, not inappropriate; it somehow makes it ok to have cancer.

The cover reflects the author's no-nonsense approach. I was not impressed with the title. I know it is hard hitting but it is unnecessary. The language is accessible, and the many subheadings help the reader to navigate. I found myself dipping in and out and feeling energised afterwards.

I hugely admire Deborah James; she is an inspiration and I have just started listening to her podcasts. Her book is great for anyone affected by any type of cancer. I really enjoyed it; it empowered me to do things my way without feeling guilty. Even after several years, cancer still affects me, and this book provided the tools for me to verbalise some of the feelings I had been bottling up.

Breast cancer diagnosed June 2015. Chemotherapy, radiotherapy and mastectomy. Diep Flap surgery December 2017. (46-55) (January 2019)

Listening to and hearing someone's point of view, thoughts and concerns is a great help to those living with cancer and those who care for or live with them. It can be difficult to understand how it affects your emotions, daily life, and behaviour; often reading about other people's experiences helps you understand better.

I am not familiar with the symptoms of bowel cancer but from my point of view there are no factual inaccuracies. I found it easy to understand; the language isn't too technical, which means that those who are not familiar with the terminology will be able to understand it. I like the simplicity of the cover, the layout and the typeface.

I like that it includes her feelings when she found out and how it affected her family. I can relate to her easily, perhaps being a similar age helps. She doesn't take herself or life too seriously but at the same time she also cares a great deal. I like how it's written – it's informative but with a fun edge. I don't like how the frequent mentions of "The cancer club"; it almost alienates those who support, care for, and help us. I understand the reasoning behind it, but it is mentioned more than necessary.

I found this book useful as an emotional support and a little bit of managing and living with cancer. It is comforting to see someone dealing with it so well but nice to know that everyone has good days and bad days. I think if I'd have read this book during one of my bad days it would have been quite beneficial. I recommend it to anyone looking for a good read but not if they are after lots of information on how to cope with all aspects of living with cancer. As a cancer patient now in recovery, I would have found it a great read before or during treatment; perhaps hospital waiting rooms could include it alongside the usual fiction, non-fiction books. It's a distraction for someone with any cancer, not just bowel cancer.

Living with cervical cancer (26-35) (January 2019)



This could be useful for anyone having, or recovering from, chemotherapy; there is very little about surgery or radiotherapy. The author speaks frankly about the challenges she faces with altered bowel habits, vomiting, and a colostomy. She puts these topics out for discussion and sends a message that readers can still be sexy, attractive and enjoy all the things she considers to be feminine, whilst undergoing treatment. She signposts well to agencies that can help and to reliable information sources. The inputs from Brenda Trenanden, Emma Campbell and Rhiannon Bradley are informative, inspiring and hopeful. The chapter about explaining to children and the inputs from the author's children are fabulous.

The book is a good size to pop into your bag and the cover grabs attention, with its contemporary colour and typeface that looks like it is trying to appeal to a young adult audience. The content is generally in a logical order; it does jump from subject to subject but there is a good index and it is simply written so this does not adversely affect the read. The style of writing suggests a fast pace, and the short chapters and paragraphs make it easy to put down and pick up again without losing the thread. It is a quick read that does not require intense concentration. The technical terms are mostly familiar and relevant with definitions when necessary.

The top take-away tips at the end of each chapter are a helpful summary and the exercises and suggestions may help with goal setting, treatment schedules, side-effects, and talking to family. However, sadly, I dislike a lot about this book. At times, it is flippant when it needs it to be serious. It gave me little information about what happens in chemotherapy and if I were about to start treatment I would be concerned about the extent to which I would vomit. I am also concerned about the extensive references to wine with scant attention paid to whether it is safe to drink during treatment and the need to drink responsibly (which comes much later in the book). Also, much later, Chapter 10, comes advice about the need to balance wearing high heels with fragile skin and neuropathy, probably after the reader has been inspired to wear high heels to treatment with all the possible consequences.

I would rate it higher but for the flippant approach and swearing (and I swear quite a lot myself) , which detract from some very good helpful content. The book may inspire you, pick you up if you are feeling down, show you another way to live with your cancer, but it does not provide facts and information about managing and living with cancer; you will need to follow the signposting in the book for this information. I recommend it only to the target audience: young, adult females.

Living with lymphoma (56-65) (March 2019)

This has some useful ideas for coping with treatment, for example, chemotherapy, and some good ideas about being kind to yourself. However, it is a personal account and not everyone will react to treatment in the same way. It is best for those who have started treatment and have been well informed of what may happen – e.g. the side-effects of chemotherapy, surgery, radiotherapy – or those caring for someone who has been well informed.

Overall, the content is in a good order; obviously, some things can occur under more than one heading. I found it easy to understand but I have a health professional background. The cover is plain but to the point and the layout is easy to read.

I enjoyed this book as it is easy to read, and you can dip in and out. I initially thought it was going to be more factual. I will probably recommend it if the person is well informed about their own treatments and possible side-effects. There is a lot of information on chemotherapy side-effects, which could frighten someone if they haven't received information from their cancer team. It must be remembered that everyone's cancer journey is personal and not the same as anyone else's.

Living with colorectal cancer and liver mets (56-65) (February 2019)

Although the author has bowel cancer, her book is not specifically related to bowel cancer and will be useful for anyone newly diagnosed who wants to know how someone else got through treatment. However, it may disappoint someone expecting it to be about bowel cancer. It covers how it feels to be newly diagnosed, how she coped, how she talked to her children, and aspects of treatment, so it will be useful for someone wanting an insight into how it really is.

It is easy to carry around (you can slip it into a handbag). The cover is plain but designed to attract readers, which it does, and the paper is reasonable. There are no photos, but there are simple illustrations at the start of each chapter. The chapters are well defined with subheadings, which makes it easy to read; you can put it down and pick up again easily. The tone is fun, honest and open. As expected from the title, there is strong language at times; this may not appeal to all readers.

I like that the author chose to write her story as it is an effective way to share with and support others. It is easy to understand, and the author writes in a friendly, open manner. I like the contributions from others who are coping with cancer or caring for someone with cancer; they give a balanced viewpoint. It is lovely to see a chapter about how to talk to children and the contributions from the author's children.

I must be honest and say that it isn't a book that I particularly like. The author seems blasé about some aspects of cancer, but I appreciate that everyone copes differently. That said, I think it would be difficult for someone struggling with diagnosis or feeling very fragile. I don't like the swearing – it doesn't add anything of any use or benefit. I don't like the constant references to the heavy use of alcohol. I accept that the author uses alcohol as a coping strategy, but she should have made the point somewhere that this is not ideal and should not be taken as advice. As a health professional, I do not advocate heavy use of alcohol as it can affect certain treatments and symptoms.

The author gives the impression that she is affluent. She suggests that people should treat themselves during treatment and refers to buying champagne and wine; this is out of reach of many people financially and made me feel that she lives in a different world from me. When I had treatment, I found it hard to make ends meet, let alone buy expensive treats. She also moved back to her parents for a short time when diagnosed and going through treatment; again, not something many will relate to.

I think the author missed a wonderful opportunity to write about what it is like to be diagnosed and to live with bowel cancer specifically. When I was diagnosed I looked for books that talked about my specific cancer because that is what I wanted to know about. There are plenty of generic cancer books out there already and it would've been great to see a book specifically about bowel cancer. Some material in the book is widely available and could have been left out; it would have been enough for this to be included in the resource section at the end. I am referring to subjects such as mindfulness, exercise and diet, which the author includes but only touches on.

It is a readable resource for people wanting an insight in to cancer generally. It covers cancer in general terms and is the author's experience, so it would be useful for some to read. I wouldn't recommend it specifically for bowel cancer.

Living with ovarian cancer (46-55) (October 2018)

This book puts a positive face on cancer; it offers advice to those living with cancer and those living with those living with cancer. It is useful for day-to-day living and getting through each day. I particularly like the chapter focusing upon children. It is very easy to read, in very chatty language. The paper is quite cheap, but the book feels good to hold.

I like the friendliness and optimism, but it is almost too optimistic. It is remarkably positive, and I can only applaud the author. There are many tips based on experience about what can work when you are ill, from chemo and chemo shopping to what to say and do with your children. It basically advises you to live your life. My favourite chapter is about children – what to tell them and things to do with them – the best being those written by the children themselves, their experience of 'mummy having bowel cancer', 'things you can do to help', and 'questions we asked.'

Whilst all this is great, I once again find myself reading a book about someone who has had a diagnosis and treatment, with the expectation that the reader has had chemotherapy. Not everyone has this treatment and indeed does not need it, but still must live with cancer and all that it has to offer daily. There is no advice for this, for having the sword of Damocles hanging over you. Maybe I should get writing!

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (October 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.

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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