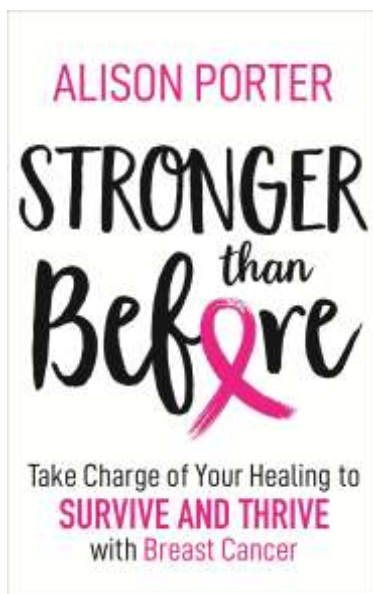


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Stronger than before: take charge of your healing to survive and thrive with breast cancer (2018)

Porter A.
London: Hay House, 2018.
256pp.
ISBN 9781788171601.

Average star rating 3.6 (out of 5)

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This book covers all aspects of breast cancer in an understandable way. It will be of most use to someone with breast cancer but also a useful resource for carers. It is very easy to understand. The content is presented well, and the terms used are not overly complicated. It is quite text heavy but, as the content is very relevant, this did not cause me a problem. The paper quality is good.

A really useful and informative book. I wish I had read it when I was first diagnosed. I really like that it deals with the emotional aspects of cancer, as well as the physical. In many ways, the emotional/psychological aspects are harder to deal with, because they are invisible. I also like the positive title; breast cancer is a tough journey, but when you come out the other side, you realise how resilient you have been.

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

A brilliant read that may help you to get through your breast cancer journey in a positive way. It is tailored towards helping someone with breast cancer specifically and will be extremely useful for those just diagnosed as it offers lots of useful advice, such as different treatments, self-help with body image, diet, exercise, and recovery. However, it will also be useful for anyone involved with a patient, as it will help them to understand better how the patient is feeling, and how to offer meaningful support.

It is written in a logical order, starting at diagnosis, and continuing through the possible cancer journey. It is extremely easy to understand, and the author explains statements in a simple manner that can be followed and understood at any level. There is also a reference list at the end that allows you to access any information that she has given in a more in-depth manner. The cover is quite plain, but the title simply states what it is all about. The bright pink breast cancer ribbon is eye catching.

This is a very useful book for someone with breast cancer. I like the way it has been written. The author has experienced breast cancer; this makes it more personal as she knows and understands what you are going through, emotionally and physically. There are lots of useful hints and tips that you can choose to follow if you so wish. It is also sensitively written. I have enjoyed reading it and would have liked something similar when I was ill previously.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (March 2019)



This book provides techniques on meditation and how to stay in the moment that will help when feeling worried, and advice on things you can do to stop cancer returning. It could be useful for anyone affected by cancer.

I found the book appealing and easy to read. I like the quotes at the start of each chapter and how the content is arranged in chapters within three parts. It flows quite nicely, and I found it easy to understand but I have done research into many of the things covered in the book. I did, however, read it twice; I read it quite quickly initially and decided it would be best to read it again before doing this review. I think that it is a good book to use as a reference.

I like how the book makes you think about what you can do to help yourself and to see breast cancer as a positive thing in that you can make changes for the better. However, the author states that there is evidence to show that radiotherapy and chemotherapy do not work; this may stop people from having them when there is evidence to show they do work. Although this book shows that you can choose not to have them, it is probably not in most people's best interest. After I read it the first time my lasting memory was that radiotherapy and chemotherapy do not work, which I think can be a frightening thought for many people.

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

This book doesn't have much information on breast cancer itself but offers advice on how people with breast cancer can look after themselves by taking control of their treatment and recovery using self-help techniques. It starts with tips to help you following diagnosis, through tips to help during treatment, finishing with tips for after treatment ends. There is no glossary, but technical words are explained in the text.

It is useful for those interested in learning more about self-help techniques such as mindfulness, meditation and complementary therapies that can help when you have cancer. Although it is about breast cancer, many of the techniques are relevant for people with other types of cancer or for anyone feeling stressed or needing help.

It is different from factual books on cancer because it looks at coping strategies. It offers emotional support through self-help techniques for people having treatment, for example meditation, complementary therapies and different diets. It is helpful for those who want to learn how to gain a sense of control by taking care of their whole mind and body during and after treatment. It includes information on relaxation techniques to help with the stress and uncertainty at each stage of your treatment, information on complementary therapies, and nutritional advice to help improve your health. It also suggests questions to ask your doctors at each stage, and how to gain the confidence to challenge them if you have concerns or do not agree with them.

Daughter of breast cancer patient (36-45) (April 2019)



This book is easy to understand, and the language is generally quite simple. It's an appealing book to look at and would make me want to pick it up and read it. It could be useful for someone to understand what it's like to deal with the raw emotions of breast cancer and the feelings associated with it. It is a bit too flowery for a health professional as deals more with the emotions around breast cancer and spiritualism.

I like the sections on communicating with family and friends, and what to say and what not to say, and I identified with the author on what she had to say about things. I felt that sometimes it didn't apply to me as she kept mentioning losing one breast and never referenced losing two like I did. The section on diet is a little patronising in places and some people might find it a bit trite. I am quite a positive person but if you are not overly positive or you are really struggling you might find it irritating and some of the recommendations unachievable. Mindfulness and spirituality are not things you want to be told to consider if you can't face getting out of bed.

I like aspects of this book and there are some helpful parts. It has some good ideas to think about being positive and does articulate in places how rubbish having breast cancer it can be. I get friends and family to read the bits around communication. If you want advice on diet and alternative therapies, it would be a good read. However, it's a bit of a marmite book and not suitable for all audiences – some people may think that it is a bit patronising in places.

Living with breast cancer (36-45) (August 2019)

This book is useful in explaining the types of breast cancer and their treatment. It is most suitable for someone with breast cancer and their partner or carer. I found it a little muddled to read, as it goes over the same topic in different chapters. There is no glossary, but I don't think one is needed. It is quite appealing to look at, and the information in boxes and different typefaces made it pleasant to read.

I like the chapters on nutrition and mindfulness, especially the "inner smile meditation". I don't like that the author questions NHS advice for treatment. Not every reader has access to the complementary therapies suggested, nor the money to attend overseas clinics. Sometimes the NHS is the only route available.

It seems aimed at a certain type of patient. I was happy with my NHS experience, but anyone who is seeking alternative treatment would benefit from this book. Some of the exercises and advice can be used in conjunction with conventional treatment.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (March 2019)



I didn't find this book useful, but some readers may find some of the meditation exercises helpful. It is perhaps best suited to people who have not yet had treatment and have the time and resources to research their opinions. A lot of the information is basic, you will need to look at the references for deeper explanations on some topics.

It made me incredibly upset and angry, and I found it difficult to write a review. The title is *Stronger than before*, but I have not read a book that is so opinionated and insensitive to readers. The author states that she had surgery after diagnosis and elected to go with complementary therapies instead of radiotherapy and chemotherapy. This is great, but those of us who have already chosen these options and had treatment know how difficult it is to decide what to do for the best. The health risks are there, whatever you decide. But what we don't want is to read is all the negative risks and side effects and to feel that these haven't been considered.

If you are a BRCA1 gene carrier and have already had treatment and prophylactic surgery, then you certainly do not want to read the author's statement, "sadly, all those women with the BRCA gene mutation who have been terrified into removing healthy breasts actually have the same survival rates as patients who do not carry it. That's a lot of disfigurement and pain for no gain." The author refers to a study in *The Lancet* on women under 40. This is a complex study that is not easy to understand. The above paragraph is fleeting, and I don't think the author has considered the effects that it could have on readers. Everyone has their reasons for choosing their treatment option: they may have been told that they have an aggressive type that has spread very quickly; it may have spread to the lymph nodes or vascular system; they may have family history that has already affected them emotionally.

There are so many factors to consider and just because someone chooses to opt out of orthodox treatment doesn't give them the right to scare the hell out of others who have already decided on their treatment options. Most people who choose to read a book like this will probably have already made their choices and are looking to move forward emotionally. They are most likely looking to arm themselves with some knowledge and positive input on how they can improve their environment, diet and lifestyle. I don't feel that these types of statements are helpful – the title is misleading.

Living with breast cancer (46-55) (February 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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