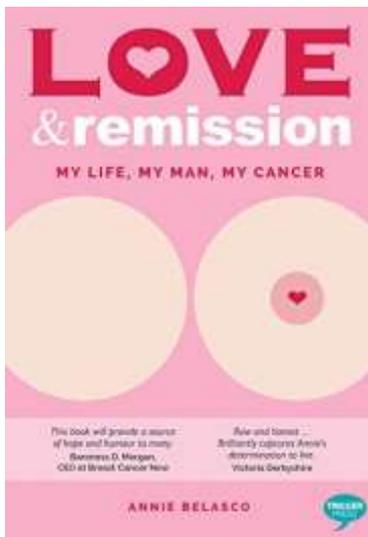


**MACMILLAN
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RIGHT THERE WITH YOU

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Love & remission. My life, my man, my cancer (2018)

Belasco A.

Trigger, 2018.

282pp.

ISBN 9781911246732.

Average star rating 3.6 (out of 5)

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This is a raw and honest insight into the reality and hardship of cancer, treatment and life post-cancer. It will be helpful for carers but scary for someone with breast cancer or having treatment at the time of reading. I have a different type of cancer from the author, but still found it interesting and incredibly relatable, because there are so many overlaps, particularly with respect to the mental health side-effects of cancer.

I love the way it is written. The logical order allows you to understand the evolution of Annie's cancer story. Explanations of medical aspects are included in the text but in subtle way so that the book reads like any ordinary book, rather than a medical leaflet. I really like this and that there are some technical/scientific references but not so many that it alienates the reader. I love the bold cover design but it's a shame that the cover is pink, and that 'Love' is the word that stands out most in the title; I feel this draws attention away from the focus of the book.

I love this book. I found it engaging and relatable and love Annie's open and raw style, which make it a powerful story that I was touched to read. The frequent references to the mental health aspects of cancer and life after cancer are brilliant; I've never come across this level of reference before and it really normalises something that is so prominent in the cancer world. I love how she discusses her mental health and how she processes things, copes or doesn't cope, and seeks help through the book; this speaks powerfully to my own cancer experience.

This brilliant book tells a real and honest story and gives great, raw insight into the reality of cancer, through the eyes of someone in their 20s. I am a similar age, which is perhaps why I found it so relatable. I highly recommend it to survivors and people in remission (provided they are open to reading a story about someone else's cancer), family and friends of someone with any type of cancer, or just someone wanting insight into an unfamiliar life experience.

In remission from Stage 2 Hodgkin lymphoma (26-35) (May 2019)



Annie Belasco describes her experience of being diagnosed with stage 3 HER2-positive breast cancer in her mid-twenties. It will be of interest to young women with a similar stage and prognosis. Annie had a range of treatments – single mastectomy, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, targeted therapy (Herceptin) and fertility preservation – before going into remission and she describes these in some detail. Her account of the social and emotional impact of cancer, including her experience of dealing with fear and anxiety, may resonate with those in a similar position.

It is an easy read aimed mainly at women. Annie avoids jargon and only discloses her stage of breast cancer at the end of the book. The gossipy, conversational tone makes you feel she is speaking directly to you as a friend. The chapters are short and easy to digest, and her writing is open and accessible to a wide audience. She does frequently use terms that some people might find inaccurate and offensive, such as “infected by cancer”. The cover is synonymous with breast cancer, despite the author claiming she dislikes pink. The typeface feels quite thin and light against the bright white pages. There’s a small photo of the author on the back but no photos or illustrations inside the book, which is disappointing, and I would prefer a more comfortable typeface and font size.

This is an honest account of the highs and lows of living with breast cancer as a young, single woman. It contains a good mix of cancer and lifestyle anecdotes and kept my attention with just the right amount of detail. Overall, I enjoyed it, but the author came across as self-absorbed and over the top at times.

A relative of someone with breast and lung cancer (26-35) (February 2019)

I wasn’t sure about this at first. I didn’t warm to Annie’s twenty-five-year-old self and I would not subscribe to her lifestyle. However, as it went on, I warmed more to her. She was annoying at times, but I can see where she was coming from. It is easy to read, with little jargon. I’m not keen on the cover, but the typeface is easy on the eye.

The focus on anxiety and depression, and in Annie’s case, paranoia, is refreshing. I found her attitude and behaviour extreme and unrealistic until I came to realise, as did she, that they caused by the trauma of cancer at 25. I felt very sorry for Sammy but admired him, and Annie’s mum, for their stance; they stuck by her and weathered the storm. One of the most salient moments was when Annie realised that she had never really said thank you and wrote her mum a letter to say so. It got me thinking; have I, in detail, expressed my gratitude to those around me. I don’t think so.

So, this book made me think. It was refreshing to gain another insight into the world of breast cancer. An insight that is so important and so often glossed over. It made me think and want to read it. At times I was frustrated and annoyed with Annie but admired her and her recognition that therapy would help. And it did. Now I’m off to write my letters...

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



I am not sure who this book would be useful for. It highlights the impact of cancer on a young person's life, their family and friends, covering physical and emotional aspects and the effects on fertility of cancer at an early age. The author was a party girl who worked and played hard, looking for love and her ideal man. Suddenly her world comes crashing down when she is diagnosed with cancer, she loses all hope of finding someone to love her. It may appeal to younger women with breast cancer or it could be one of those books that anyone can read.

The title and cover are appealing and eye catching. It is easy to understand – the author describes her feelings loud and clear – but there is a lot of offensive language. It does describe her anger and feelings during treatment and how hated to see breast cancer charities in their pink t-shirts alongside other cancer charities, all trying to be jolly and happy fundraising for breast cancer. By the end of the book she became a fundraiser herself, recognising the great work of cancer charities.

I persevered with this book. It has a fairy-tale ending and I enjoyed the change in the author's attitude and emotions after treatment with support from a professional counsellor, family, friends and boyfriend (now husband) and how she finally becomes a mum. I dislike the bad language – there is a lot – which may put off some. It could be useful to young women, but I don't know if I would recommend it.

Breast cancer 2011 (66-75) (July 2019)



This is a book that people will love or hate! It's an account of the whole breast cancer journey from diagnosis, through treatment, to recovery and life after cancer. It feels like the author's personal diary rather than a book for the reader. You can feel her emotion strongly radiating from the words she uses to describe her feelings.

The book is not visually appealing; the cover is a little too simple, and the design a bit bold. I didn't notice any inaccuracies and it is easy to understand but there is a lot of swearing. Some people might find this funny, others intimidating; I tend to the latter.

This is an overwhelmingly emotional book. I felt I was on an "emotional rollercoaster" and I could feel the author's strong anger, bitterness, excitability coming off the pages. However, it has provided a good insight into the emotional turmoil felt by a lot of young cancer patients, and the help they need to get through it!

Friend of someone with breast cancer (Under 25) (September 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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