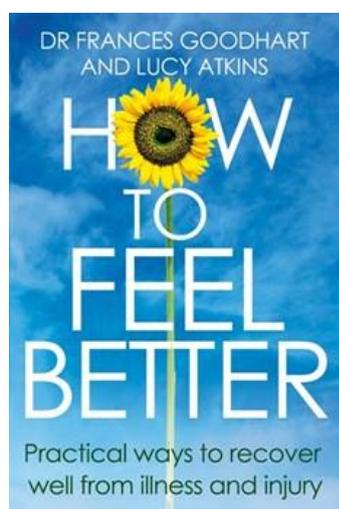


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



How to feel better. Practical ways to recover from illness and injury (2013)

Goodhart F and Atkins L.
London: Piatkus, 2013.
288pp.
ISBN 9780749958213.
£9.99.

Average star rating 4.6 (out of 5)

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This practical book is useful for anyone encountering a health or wellbeing challenge. It has suggestions on how to cope with the recovery process and new restrictions. It is about nourishing the mind and body, and how to re-focus following change. It also includes assistance for carers who need to be aware of their own wellbeing.

It is written in plain language and very easy to understand. The contents direct the reader straight to specific topics where there are strategies to help overcome such matters as stress, worry, sleeplessness, exercise or fitness problems, and more. The resource list at the end is very useful for locating support groups, associations or networks. Whatever the obstacle, this book should be on hand for guidance.

The author does not provide rigid regimes that must be followed for improvement but explains how to adopt a strategy to make a goal manageable and realistically achievable by selecting the mechanisms that may best suit you. I found it interesting to read the copious anecdotes of the various problems people have encountered, and most importantly how they have re-built or adjusted their lives to move on. Hearing how others cope can help you draw analogies and work out how the advice can apply to your situation.

I like the fact that such a wealth of knowledge based on scientific research concisely sits in this book, making it accessible to all. It also has entertainment value, referring to historic treatments and ideas that seem to have a slender, but nevertheless pertinent connection to the present day. It should be possible to alleviate some of the emotional and physical effects arriving with cancer and treatment by consulting this book. I, for one, will dip in to this little gem again and again.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (February 2016)

I love *The cancer survivor's companion* by the same authors so really looked forward to reading this. The beauty of these books is that they let you know you are not alone and that plenty of other people are going through the same experiences and having the same problems. I have had few physical problems with my treatment, but I have really struggled with the emotional fallout. I have looked disgustingly healthy all the way through and often see relief on people's faces when they see me looking so well;

everyone assumes you are fine. I enjoyed reading a book that aims to help you cope with the aftermath of serious illness. It helps you understand that you don't recover overnight and offers excellent advice on how to move forward. Patients, those close to them and health professionals can all benefit from it.

It is written clearly and is factual and practical. It offers good, down-to-earth advice. Each chapter stands alone so you can dip in and out at leisure. It covers a wide range of subjects, including coping with stress, depression and anxiety. It also covers relationships, exercise and diet. I can identify with so many of the quotes from other patients; some make you smile while others can bring a tear to the eye.

The first chapter discusses the old-fashioned idea of convalescence. In some ways a convalescence period is a way of recognising the seriousness of your condition. A three-week sick note implies all should be well again on day 22. With some illnesses and minor surgeries, it is easy to bounce back and be "normal" again, but many patients need extra help. The book illustrates possible hurdles during recovery and recognises that recovery takes time, detailing strategies that might make life easier along the way. There are notes for carers at the end of each chapter; this will help patient and carer gain better understanding of how to interact with each other.

I wish I had been given this book when I was first diagnosed. It is a must read for anyone with a long-term illness. Many of the tips are useful at any time of life so I think I will re-read it many times over the next few years.

Breast cancer patient (56-65) (November 2015)

This is one of the most practical, optimistic books on recovering from cancer that I've read. It is good at describing how living with chronic illness really feels but in an upbeat, optimistic (and non-judgmental) way. It will be useful for those who are trying to get back to being well and those who are caring for someone with a chronic illness, such as cancer.

The authors approach negative aspects of recovery, such as depression and fear, as natural parts of recovery that can be overcome. There's an invitation to try things at your own pace, without any pressure or sense that you 'should' be better by now. It has some very good tips on how to overcome negative reactions to illness (e.g. mindfulness or getting out into the fresh air) in a way that's right for the individual. Two chapters particularly helpful: 'How to cope with worries'; and 'Fatigue and what to do about it'. I particularly like the resources section, with recommendations such as The British Nutrition Foundation – very handy. There are also sections written with carers in mind.

The fact that it's called 'How to feel better' and is a relatively large book draws the reader in. The chapters are in a very good order, flow nicely and are easy to read – they are self-contained, so you can dip in and out as you wish. It is a very appealing book, written in an approachable manner and very easy to understand. The tone is easy going and optimistic, inviting the reader to do just as much as feels right and not to feel scared of 'natural' reactions to illness, such as depression.

There's something very warm and friendly about this book, like having a practical and optimistic friend to hand! If, like me, you're trying to make sense of long-term illness, particularly cancer, this book may give you some solace. I really enjoyed it and found it extremely helpful. I gained a lot of insight and highly recommend it. If you're trying to rediscover yourself after a debilitating illness you might find it very useful.

Survivor of Burkitt lymphoma (36-45) (October 2015)

This book is different from and so much better than others I have read because at the end of each section – which is addressed to the person recovering from illness or injury – there is a specific section for carers. This gives excellent advice about how to look after yourself as well as the person you are caring for whilst they are recovering and if they are experiencing difficulties from depression, difficulty sleeping, or eating.

It flows well, for example, coping with worries is followed by coping with stress and then depression, fatigue is followed by sleep. The sections can also be read in isolation. It is very easy to understand, and the tone is understanding, empathetic, experienced, encouraging and conversational in style, as if the authors are sitting alongside, talking to you. It has an attractive cover, lacking any of the clichéd images often found on similar books of US origin! I like the tone and style.

It has practical tips for what may help if you are struggling to cope, for example with worries, stress, rebuilding confidence. It reassures that what you are experiencing is normal and includes quotations from people to illustrate their experience – people who have been in car accidents, had serious burns, or are cancer patients. The practical nature of the book is very useful, and I was able to put this to the test; it helped me understand how best to approach the depression and loneliness experienced by my mother-in-law even though she has not had a serious illness as such. I like the book's positivity; it often says, 'you can do this', 'you will get there' but with the scientific evidence why an approach works. For example, exercise lifts your mood because it releases hormones that make you feel better and re-oxygenates the blood. The interesting quotations from historical medical guides to convalescence, by people such as Florence Nightingale, show how past techniques are still relevant.

Although it is not aimed at cancer patients, it covers the after-effects of treatments – worry, stress, low spirits, rebuilding physical and mental confidence, rebuilding sexual relationships, starting to eat well, exercising. There is a good balance between emotional and psychological support and hard scientific facts. An excellent book that I would not hesitate to recommend to anyone recovering from serious injury or trauma and their carers. It's like having a personal guide to wellbeing!

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (October 2015)

I highly recommend this book to anyone. It has really good advice and loads of hints and tips for the patient, family and carers. It is brilliantly written and very easy to understand and there is a great resources section at the back.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (September 2015)

This is an invaluable guide for anyone living with cancer at any stage. It offers simple well-researched strategies for recovery and tackles the crucial question of HOW to get well. It takes the whole potentially terrifying process of diagnosis and treatment and breaks it down into manageable pieces, with well-researched tactics and tips to help at every stage. Designed to help patients and carers, it avoids jargon and highlights the all-important psychological issues that are so often underestimated. Having a long-term illness brings many challenges, emotionally as well as physically. With this book comes the promise of feeling just a little less overwhelmed.

It looks very appealing, almost like a novel and it flows well in a logical order from one chapter to the next. It's very easy to understand as it is written in layman's terms. There is a very useful resources section towards the end of the book too. I like the fact that the book is thoughtful and funny, practical and very realistic.

Every patient and every patient's supporters – advocate, relative, partner or friend – will find help from this book. By giving a structure to feelings that you might otherwise only be dimly aware of, or not at all until too late, it informs and guides the reader through the complex geography of appointments, illness, treatment and recovery. As families who have experienced a health crisis know, it can be very traumatic; even when the body is put back together, it's not always the end of the story. This is one of the first books I've seen that tackles the tough issues confronting people who have had a serious illness and offers practical advice. In the aftermath of a health crisis or traumatic event it can be hard to know where to start. As patients, their families and carers start to navigate the road to recovery, events can appear overwhelming. The well-structured approach can help people set realistic goals and will offer real hope to everyone on that journey. The pragmatic, step-by-step approach is relevant to a wide range of medical problems and offers sensible advice on everything from fatigue to rebuilding self-confidence. The text includes real stories that are easy to relate to and will offer hope to readers at a time when events can appear overwhelming.

I would recommend this book to anybody with a long-term condition and their families, as it shows it is possible to put quality back into life after a diagnosis.

Caring for father with prostate cancer, Friends with several people with breast cancer. (56-65) (September 2015)

This book covers all illnesses not just cancer. At first, I wondered why I was reviewing it but as I read I realised that we can all feel the same when coping with an illness whether it's cancer or a car crash injury. If I had read this at diagnosis or during treatment or after I would still have found it comforting and extremely helpful.

The chapters are in a logical order. I like the subheading of each illness followed by how one feels in that situation and then strategies to cope with those feelings. It is very easy to understand with no technical terms that I didn't understand. There is no glossary, but the level was perfect for me. I like the sunflower on the cover and the book attracted me but when I picked it up I kept looking for the word cancer before realising it was for all types of illness. I asked myself if it would help me to recuperate but am pleased I carried on because it was brilliant, for carers as well as those recovering from cancer or any other illness.

I really enjoyed reading it; it feels as if the authors have read my mind about how I have felt in the past and written this book to give me the tools to deal with my illness. Note I have said illness, not cancer!

Living with cancer (66-75) (September 2015)

This book covers topics not usually cover and could help anyone after treatment. It made me think about my own journey and it will help me help others. The authors handle the topic very well, with even a bit of humour. It is a very easy, enjoyable book to read. The book has a lovely feeling, with a nice feel to the paper.

Recovered from breast cancer (46-55) (September 2015)

This book is most useful for coping with the stress and emotional needs caused by chronic or debilitating illness. Dealing with the practical side is one thing, but it can take a long time to get to grips with the emotional aspects and the uncertainty and worries post treatment. This steers you through the issues that might cause concern; it enables you to question your thoughts and feelings whilst encouraging you not to beat yourself up if you think recovery is too slow. It is particularly good for focusing on the issues that present themselves after treatment and is appropriate for patients, carers, family, and health professionals. It is very easy to understand and presented in a logical way that reflects the patient journey. It reflected and discussed a lot of the feelings and stresses I experienced when treatment was finished, and I was trying to get some normality back in my life.

It is great how it discusses the emotional needs of the patient and provides coping strategies, distractions, and management plans to help patients come to terms with how they are feeling, how to take small daily steps towards coming to terms with what they have just been through, and how to move forward. It won't fix things, but if you follow the principles it is a fantastic tool with which to rationalise feelings, adopt coping strategies and realise that recovery takes time.

There is a need for this book; I have my own cancer experience as well as six years working in Macmillan and there is not enough focus on aftercare and convalescence. Cancer is the pebble in the pond and the ripples are the many treatments, worries and stresses it generates. This deals with many of these; it's comforting to find that it touches on so many of the issues I was trying to cope with after treatment. It is a really good book; I wish I'd had had access to it when I was at my lowest.

Living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and lung cancer (56-65) (August 2015)

This practical, easy-to-read book is not exclusively aimed at people recovering from cancer but from any serious health issue – real-life examples and quotes come from those experiencing stroke, surgery, heart problems and brain injury, to name a few. It is as relevant for carers and partners as it is for patients, with useful 'Notes for carers' sections throughout that offer practical tips and support, including coping strategies and insight into the caring role (and its associated stresses and pressures).

It is divided into useful sections charting the process of ill health, including appointments, treatment, and recovery, providing tips and coping techniques for how to deal with each stage of the process. For this reason, it is suitable for reading at the earliest stage of diagnosis, during treatments and right through to post treatment follow-up appointments and recovery thereafter. It helps us to learn simple, practical ways to cope with the complex emotions that surface following serious illness.

The language is friendly and never patronising. The authors are a consultant clinical psychologist, who is experienced in working with individuals and families who are coping with life-threatening illnesses, and a health journalist. This great combination offers a knowledgeable, well-researched but easily digestible companion for those experiencing and recovering from serious illness. I like the use of personal thoughts and feelings expressed by patients and their loved ones/carers; they are easy to relate to and make the book more real and not dry or academic.

The font is a good size and I like the fact that the book doesn't need to be read from start to finish – the reader can dip in and out of the chapters as and when required to find coping strategies and tips for each stage of the journey to recovery. The back of the book contains useful resources detailing organisations and charities that offer support regarding a wide range of issues, including national and international charities, useful online tools/resources and details of relevant networks. It is a long book, so isn't that handbag friendly but a terrific book nonetheless!

It resonates with my experiences; the practical tips are useful and realistic, exploring deep-seated emotions, worries and concerns that I rarely had acknowledged. This for me is the immense value of this book; it offers an insight that helps recovery by explaining why we feel the way we do in a compassionate and empathetic way, it helps the patient to manage and control those emotions much better, aiding recovery and rebuilding a new life post illness. I especially found the tips regarding recognising and identifying 'thought traps' useful; these include procrastinating and 'worst-case scenario' thinking. Being better able to spot such unhelpful thoughts and learn how to manage them makes me feel much more in control of them. For this reason, I find this book empowering and have benefited from putting its practical tips and coping techniques to effective use. I refer to it often and recommend it wholeheartedly, not just to those affected by cancer – it is relevant to anyone with a serious illness.

Oesophageal cancer patient (36-45) (August 2015)

This is ideal to support a cancer patient or carer throughout the cancer journey as it deals with the issues that arise in a logical and supportive way. It is not aimed purely at people who have been treated for cancer or their carers but will be useful for anyone who has experienced a major illness, accident or operation.

It is an attractive book, easy to read and dip in and out of. There are helpful reference addresses at the end and as it is aimed at a wide audience, not just cancer patients, it provides support for many people. It includes quotes from medical practitioners from the past, which help to lighten the mood without being flippant or facetious.

I highly recommend this book. I really enjoyed reading it. It is full of achievable, practical tips. I like the fact that it is very easy to read, and it recognises that carers need support too. I like the way that the authors avoid putting pressure on the reader and identify the fact that the greatest pressure can often come from patients themselves. I know from experience that it is easy to say what people want to hear or go into denial because of the shock of a diagnosis or accident. The authors appreciate that patients are often expected to “be better” very quickly and that the reality of the situation does not always occur until much, much later.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (July 2015)

This is useful for anyone who needs support with a variety of health issues including aspects of mental health. The most useful parts are Section 4 on low spirits and Section 6 (Rest cure). However, all the sections will be relevant in some way.

It is extremely well written in plain English in a way that lay people can follow without being intimidated by medical terms. The tone is pitched right; I felt as if I was being given advice, sometimes simple, but not in a condescending or complicated manner. The font is comfortable, and the cover eye catching. I like the ease of reading, and the fact that the reader can dip in and out or read sections to suit their interests; there are also useful cross-references. There is some humour and a feeling that the recommendations and tips are easy to follow.

On pages 118-119, the authors talk about the value of social media for conversations with family and friends and social groups. It does not mention the downside of these sites, of being targeted by trolls who can upset individuals of a sensitive nature or are in a vulnerable state of health. I have seen this on the Breast Cancer UK site.

I recommend it to anyone in poor health physically OR mentally. It is an informative book that can support anyone who feels they need guidance in understanding the effects of sudden changes in their lives. It deals sensitively with issues that can occur during the journey of recovery. The strategies to improve recovery rates are realistic and within the reach of most people. Patients and carers will benefit from reading this book. It is likely that it will be recommended to a wider audience not just those recovering from illness and injury. The sections on stress, depression and fatigue are relevant to many people who try to cope with the everyday pressures of modern life.

Recovered from breast cancer treatment (56-65) (July 2015)

I highly recommend this uplifting book to help you cope with the complications of cancer. It has simple, practical advice for those faced with the challenges of illness. It will be useful for anyone, recovering from an illness or not. You never know when the advice will come in handy.

It flows very well, from medical investigations and treatments to tips to help you at each stage of your illness. The language is clear and technical words are explained clearly; there is no medical jargon. It is a very appealing book, practical and realistic. The cover design is appealing – everything about the book has been thought of.

The advice is simple for those coping with a serious illness and the aftermath of illness. I like the helpful points and coping strategies for carers and families. The real-life examples help the reader relate to their recovery. The book has been well researched and will help people through some very dark times in their lives. I will be recommending it to everyone facing a serious illness. It should also be on the shelf in every doctor's surgery or hospital waiting room.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (June 2015)

This excellent book addresses an area largely ignored by the medical profession: how to get your life back after treatment. It covers many of the issues faced by cancer patients and those who have suffered serious illness or injury. It has lots of useful tips, but the best part is reading about your thoughts and feelings after treatment; at last, someone gets it! It is also good to see carers being addressed; it is a very difficult journey for them too and one that is often ignored.

It is easy to read, well written in plain English, and well set out. The cover is attractive, and the typeface is clear and easy to read. The paper could be better quality; it is a greyish colour that stops the print showing clearly.

I love this book. The authors clearly understand the devastating effects of cancer and that it is common for patients (and sometimes carers) to suffer PTSD. A lot of the tips are useful, but mainly it is about acknowledging that the problems are real. It is a bit like bereavement: you mourn the loss of who you were and have to work out who you are, people are supportive at first but then think you must be over it and, when you need it most, often withdraw support. During treatment, you are too busy fighting the illness; it is only afterwards that you are hit by the realisation that things will never be the same again. This book deals with these awful feelings very well.

I strongly recommend it. If you get nothing else from it, you realise that your feelings are normal and that someone out there understands. The hardest part of the journey begins when treatment ends, and the support is withdrawn.

Ovarian cancer survivor (56-65) (June 2015)

This provides emotional support and coping strategies for those recovering from any major illness or injury and those who care for them. It will be most useful after formal treatment has finished. It offers advice on convalescence and explains strategies for dealing with the mental and physical challenges of gradually returning to everyday life. Although not specific to cancer, it covers most of the challenges that a cancer patient may face, such as coping with depression, stress, worry and fatigue.

The authors handle the topics in a logical order, although not all the topics may be useful to everyone. There is a comprehensive list of topics, so readers can easily dip in to find the parts most relevant to their needs, and separate notes for carers at the end of each section. The content is quite general in nature and I did not notice any inaccuracies. The authors explain complex coping strategies and mental exercises in a straight-forward manner without talking down to the reader. The tone is not at all

patronising, but helpful and reassuring. It is well presented with plenty of interesting and pertinent historical quotes from past practitioners. The many case histories and quotes from present-day patients break up the text and illustrate the authors' points.

It offers practical help and many mental exercises and coping strategies to cover different situations faced by those recovering from illness. One of the best aspects for me was the way it made me feel that I was not alone in facing difficulties with such problems as rebuilding confidence and coping with fatigue. The chapter on fatigue is particularly helpful in acknowledging a side-effect of illness often neglected in our busy modern life. The quotes from historical figures, such as Florence Nightingale, are particularly revealing as they show areas of expertise that have largely been forgotten. I found the examination of common thought traps useful as a way of challenging the way I thought of things. The idea of standing outside myself to gain a more objective view was also useful. Some of the advice repeats what I have previously read elsewhere, but it is useful to have it covered comprehensively in one volume, and which offers a different perspective on some of them.

This very useful book offers solutions to common problems and strategies for changing the way patients and carers approach them. The practical suggestions help give a feeling of progress, but the book also encourages-necessary self-acceptance. It would be useful to any cancer patient who is seeking to move on after treatment. This is an area that often seems to be forgotten or neglected by health workers who are understandably focused on 'curing' the cancer. In my experience, once treatment had been completed, I felt that I was facing the future very much alone. The topics raised in this book would help patients to cope with this type of feeling.

Living with long-term side effects of breast cancer treatment (56-65) (May 2015)

I have worked in mental health for 30 years and this book is long overdue! It's a very accessible self-help manual for anyone that has ever been affected by anxiety, stress or worry. It is very useful as a support for patients with any life-changing condition, and carers, to help them cope better with the emotional fall-out caused by a serious diagnosis. It should be core reading for anyone in the caring professions for an insight into how crippling anxiety can be, and how it can be managed effectively with the right attitude and approaches.

It flows well in general, although it often refers you to a specific chapter, so it may be necessary to flick back and forth. It is written in an easy to read style, accessible to all levels of education. It is cross-referenced throughout, making it easier for the reader to access the advice as they need it, and has details of resources for further information or help. The tone puts the reader at ease, and the authors use anecdotal evidence to good effect. However, due to the stigma around mental health issues, readers might be embarrassed to let others see them reading it; the title is obvious!

This book is essential reading for EVERYONE! I shall be recommending it to anyone that I think could benefit. I also recommend it for 'prescribing' by GPs as a first option, rather than medication, for anxiety-related disorders!

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (May 2015)

Even though I will never recover (only bounce from one treatment to another until no options are left), this book, which promises practical ways to recover from illness, has given me strategies for dealing with illness and treatment as well as the knowledge that if I'm not feeling better by now, after chemo, it's not my fault. The way my body feels has a direct effect on my mind and how I feel about myself and the authors show the patient how to tackle these thoughts. It is great for those ready to move on and start to feel better. There is also a small section for carers at the end of each chapter, although they are short and could perhaps be extended in a separate book. The most useful chapter for me was that on fatigue; this affects me the most and I now know that to prioritise, plan and pace is essential. I also like the repeated strategies, such as the 3 p's and building a "case for the defence", the things to avoid, such as all-or-nothing thinking, labelling or catastrophising, and the practical employment of proven strategies offered in layman's terms.

It is easy to understand, written in a direct and friendly tone. It has a good index. The author describes the book as a "how to feel better kit [to]...carry with you" (p. 265) but it's not a small book. Nevertheless, the large print meant I could read it in the bath without my glasses! The paper is responsibly sourced, and the layout is good.

This brilliantly simple book shocked me into realising that we no longer value convalescence. Using snippets from nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature on convalescence, recovery and the status of the patient, the authors aim to show us that it is not our slowness in recovery but society's changing attitudes to this phase of "health". I recommend it and I'd give it to health professionals and carers as well as those directly affected by cancer.

Living with secondary breast cancer (46-55) (May 2015)

I was immersed in this book from the start. I immediately wanted to highlight topics, thinking of the people I know who are recovering from illness and surgery that would benefit from it, as well as their carers. I like the fact that the authors are saying "it's ok, it's going to take time, don't rush, try this, try that, you will get there". It is easy to understand, in everyday language with little, if any, jargon. The cover is attractive and the font a good size for a comfortable read. The layout is easy to follow and the chapters flow easily. I got the impression that the authors had lots of experience of patient recovery and this, with the quotes from patients, gives the book its positive "been there, done that, got the t-shirt" feel, not patronising but reassuring.

My father died from his brain tumour, but aspects of this book would have helped my mum. I work with a woman who had an aneurism and she would benefit from it too; she worries whenever she has a headache that she is going to end up in hospital. A family friend is recovering from a broken hip – his wife is rushing everything and has not stopped to think long term. I will have to think hard about how to pass this book to her, but it will be of immense value. My aunt, who died from cancer, was a great believer in taking time to convalesce, something recommended here. In today's busy world, there is an expectation that we need to get up and back to normal far too quickly. This book puts it in perspective.

Father died of a brain tumour (46-55) (April 2015)

This book deals with emotional wellbeing for anyone who has had a serious health problem or who is caring for someone recovering from illness. It will be most useful for dealing with the anxiety and stress of living with and after cancer. It has very interesting strategies for dealing with stressful situations and identifying the cause of the stress. The authors emphasise that it is ok to show how you feel and accept help when you need it. They explain well that we are not all the same and have different needs and give permission to take the time you need to recover rather than feel pressured to get back to fitness just because others have done so faster. I like the 'Notes for carers' that point out that it is not only patients who need support; families and carers also suffer from stress and need coping strategies. I like the explanation of 'thought traps', getting stuck in a circle of unhelpful thought patterns that may not be facts but rather an assumption of the worst scenario.

The authors give full explanations throughout the book, which make it very easy to follow. The cover is appealing but the paper quality is not as good as it could be. The layout is good, but illustrations would break up the text and make it more interesting.

It is a pleasure to read a book that acknowledges that patients vary in their recovery from serious illness and that some need more time and help to regain strength and confidence. This does not mean they are weak or less able than others but individuals with very different needs.

Colorectal and breast cancer survivor (56-65) (April 2015)

This book is useful for anyone who has any sort of illness and also their carers so they too know how to help the patient deal with their problems. It is probably most useful following treatment. It is useful for dealing with the emotional effects of cancer; it doesn't go into any information about cancer.

It has several useful sections including: How to deal with the medical team; How to cope with anxiety and worry; How to cope with depression; Confidence; Sleep; Fatigue; Sexual matters; Eating well. These are all issues that might affect someone with cancer or anyone really. This is why this book is such a useful tool for personal development, ill or not, and why it is useful for carers as a coping tool.

It is easy to understand and can be picked up and used as necessary. The cover is nice, with a large cheery sunflower. The blue and yellow are appealing to the eye.

I really like this book because it can be used on a long-term basis; it can help emotionally, and it shows how other people can have the same problems as you, so it makes you feel less alone. I like the fact that you can refer to it and it can be used as a self-help tool. You could perhaps use it in combination with journal work.

I definitely recommend it from diagnosis and through treatment; it can help you deal with the many issues along the way, in particular, the long waiting times for results of scans and investigations. It is a book that helps you cope and could be used daily to lift the spirits.

Living with womb cancer (66-75) (April 2015)

This book explores practical ways to recover from illness and injury; most topics are significant to any long-term conditions and trauma and the skills learnt are transferable. It will be most useful once clinical care is completed, when health professionals advise patients to get on with life, yet they are still traumatised and have lots of fears and questions surrounding their health and wellbeing.

It is relatively easy to understand and signposts to other useful sites. The tone is one of empathy, which promotes normality at a very difficult and vulnerable time. The 'TIPS' sections work very well together with quotes from patients.

My most favourite word in the book is 'convalescence', something that has somehow got lost over the years. Everything, from new strategies to relaxation techniques can only be achieved if the body and mind get an opportunity to recover FIRST from the trauma/illness. We live in the fast lane and there is pressure to 'get back' as soon as possible but this can result in a downward spiral, prolonging recovery and often re-entry into yet another clinical intervention. I also really like how the authors consistently addresses carers' needs equally at the end of every chapter

Having a deeper understanding of some of the topics in this book will give individuals permission to take up the support that Macmillan offers – it will begin to make good sense and to seem relevant. My only concern is that it is a very powerful book; if individuals become too dependent on it, they may fail to seek further help.

Living with the consequences of breast cancer (46-55) (April 2015)

This is excellent. Why has no one thought of writing a book like this before? It is not useful just for people with cancer but also for those with injury, stroke, heart attack, even broken bones; the list is endless. Medical personal should also read it.

It is broken up into readable sections, easy to read and follow and you can dip in as and when you want. It breaks down the jargon of treatment and long-term illness. The cover is interesting; what is the significance of a sunflower? This alone would not draw my attention to it, which is a shame; it might not stand out enough to become the best seller it should – it should shout out 'buy me, you need to read me'.

I love that it helps you through the maze of appointments, treatments and recovery. I might be wrong, but I think this book is a first. There is plenty of advice about what to do when you have the illness or injury, but nothing at all in an easy read form on how to recover. It is destined to become a recommended and much-used book for patients and carers and the medical profession. Highly recommended.

Secondary breast cancer patient (56-65) (March 2015)



This will be useful for those recovering not just from surgery but from any sort of cancer or long-term illness. The authors understand the issues and have some useful tips for resolution. It will suit anyone needing to get back to normal during and after an illness. There are also useful sections for carers.

The contents flow naturally and deal with anxiety, depression, and fatigue, for example. There is inevitably some overlap in the advice as the same tips can apply across the themes, but overall the book flows well with many useful things to consider. It is written in an easy, informal style that is easy to understand. There are no overly technical terms that aren't explained. It is quite a large paperback; perhaps it could be released in a smaller, more accessible format to make it easier to carry around and read, or with more summary sections.

I'd recommend it as a read for useful tips – don't be put off by the size!

Living with secondary breast cancer (36-45) (September 2015)

This covers all illnesses from diagnosis to recovery so anyone who has had a major illness could relate to parts of it. It is not a book to read cover to cover but choose your chapter and you will be surprised by the honesty. It flows perfectly in everyday language, the tone is simple, and technical terms are explained in the text. The typeface is excellent, and the cover explains all. I like that it covers, with examples, the fears, the excuses and the reasons why we experience what we do, when we have to deal with illness and recovery. It deals with the problems everyone goes through and I recognised a few of my own. The only reason for four stars is that it is not just about cancer; personally, this is a good thing.

In remission from colon cancer (66-75) (July 2015)

Although this book is not specifically about cancer, most of its content is relevant to cancer patients. The sections at the end of each chapter for carers are particularly useful; they can dip in rather than read the whole book if they don't have the time.

The psychological aspects are particularly helpful. Once treatment is over, people assume that the patient will want to celebrate and will be back to their 'old self', whatever that means. This gives the patient permission to still feel low, tired and anxious but at the same time explains why this is and has helpful tips to overcome this without dictating a time frame – each patient is different. Although this might be frustrating for those who have spent many months looking after a patient, this book will help them continue to support their loved one and have patience for a bit longer.

It is divided into manageable chapters that can be read on their own. It is easy to understand without being too simplistic. The tips and exercises in boxes stand out, so you can read these rather than a whole chapter if you lack time or energy. It's also easy to go back and re-read the important bits.

It focuses on the mental aspects of recovering from a serious illness, which often take longer to heal than physical aspects. Seven months on from treatment, I feel fitter and healthier than before diagnosis, giving the impression I am back to 'normal'. Psychologically I have some healing to do; this book helps me accept that it's ok.

Finished active treatment for breast cancer (36-45) (June 2015)

I started reading this book with some scepticism: what advice could it possibly offer? I soon warmed to it, however, and most patients and carers will benefit from it. It is concerned with how to address negative thoughts to reduce stress and anxiety and considers diet, sex, sleep and exercise, something for every patient and their carer. It will also be useful for anyone with a potentially life-changing condition. One of its strengths is that it considers the position of carers from various points of view and offers them advice on coping with their role.

It is arranged logically and flows well. There are many sections and bullet points and for most people it is likely to become a handy reference work after the initial read. It would be better to number the sections; the range of typefaces used to indicate the hierarchy of the sections does not work well. I did not notice any inaccuracies, but the proof of the pudding will come when the reader attempts to apply the approaches advocated. One of its great strengths is that the language is easy to understand.

It is an interesting book and will be useful to many patients/carers because it takes an unusual approach to many of the problems raised by serious illness. I like the fact that, wherever possible, it provides advice for carers, who in many cases are saddled with a thankless task that must ultimately threaten their own health. Most of the advice appears to be helpful but its effectiveness can only be established when it is used in earnest. However, there will undoubtedly be times when all patients and their carers will benefit from some of the advice. Overall, a valuable addition to the library of anyone undergoing diagnosis, treatment or recovery from cancer.

Living with bowel cancer (66-75) (June 2015)

The advice in this book can be applied after treatment and during the recovery process. It flows well and the author cross references the reader to other chapters that handle certain issues; this is good as different people will find some techniques more useful than others. There is no glossary, but all terms are explained in the text. The cover design is simple but sets a positive tone. The format makes it clear and easy to read and the 'Tip' boxes are a great idea.

I like that it draws on the experiences of many people; this gives a rounded view of how people can put advice into practice. It is great that it deals with rebuilding relationships between partners; a couple of women I have spoken to have said that this is one of the most difficult aspects of recovery. It could expand on this to talk about how patients can reconnect with their children to aid recovery. The change in relationships with children will affect how a patient recovers.

My mum had breast cancer (given the all clear in April) (Under 25) (May 2015)

This is definitely good for putting recuperation into perspective and for friends, carers and relatives to understand why the psychological impact can take longer to improve. It is probably best used when people feel that they're not making progress as they should. It should give them the confidence to say that where they are and how they are progressing is right for them and not to compare themselves with other people.

I like the language; the authors don't dumb down but do occasionally use very basic language to make a point, e.g. kicking you in the gut; this made me smile. The cover is very 'up' and calming, the colour scheme works well and is eye catching and the font size is good. The tone is conversational – for the most part it feels as if the authors are having a discussion with you – I like this approach. I like the quotes from people who have been there. I could really relate to their comments and feelings. I also like the sections at the end of each chapter for carers – often these key people can be forgotten. There is however, much repetition, e.g. in relation to Thought Traps, building the case for the defence and as I got to the end of the book I started to skip over these as I felt I'd read it before.

It is best used for reference than read cover to cover. Repetition can turn people off; if you try to undertake all the actions suggested you won't have time to actually live; it can be difficult to know if you are stressed, worried, fatigued or depressed and can't sleep so you have to look at each section – picking out a single topic and following the suggested actions would be more beneficial. I will probably recommend it for reference for trying to improve one element of how you're feeling.

Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (April 2015)

This book does not reveal anything new but puts everything together very neatly; much of this wisdom is in proverbs, but there is other that is state of the art. It is most useful at diagnosis, but it is good solid stuff that will work any time. You never know what might catch someone's attention. I would have liked this book sixty years ago. The chapters on anger management and sex are particularly useful.

It flows well but some humour would help, some cartoons making the point. I can think of a dozen and would sketch them gladly. It is also the wrong size; most potential readers spend a lot of time in waiting rooms, so it should fit into a pocket. Otherwise, the layout is easy to follow – the result of considerable effort.

It is very middle class, even prissy (witness the comments about the summer house and birdsong – a lot of people do not have a tree), but readable and easy to understand. The constant assumption that we have a team of experts is irritating. There is an ever-changing group of experts and you see the lead clinician once then a different face at each visit, only the clinicians ever see the MDT. If you live, you see a gamut but never at the same time and your carer rarely meets any. Ditto the constant use of the word support; translated, this means you have no right to demand anything but maybe, just maybe, it might be possible. I know that this is against the purpose of the book, which I believe is to position us between la-la land and the pits of despair, but it is important that the reader trusts the content.

Living with renal cell carcinoma (Over 75) (April 2015)

This book offers good practical advice for anyone needing to rebuild confidence in the aftermath of illness. It fills a big gap in the market by covering an area not usually addressed; that of 'the space between illness and health'. I particularly like the fact that it is UK-centric. There is too much emphasis on 'Mindfulness' and 'Thought traps', but that is just a bugbear of mine. I'm sure many will find it a positive. It is easy to understand and there is a very useful resources section as well as an index. It is well laid out and is in a generally acceptable form. After the first paragraph I could not wait to get into it, however, the pace lessened somewhat after that.

It offers useful coping strategies for dealing with stress, depression and fatigue by using real life examples at times. It is about taking back control of your life. I felt empathy with the writers when they discussed how feeling better is not just a physical thing but also an emotional one and that emotional suffering can last long after physical symptoms are under control. There is good practical advice here, much needed in the aftermath of serious illness where there can be debilitating consequences, particularly for confidence and self-esteem.

Breast cancer patient (66-75) (April 2015)



The usefulness of this book for someone with cancer will depend on their prognosis. It may be useful for those recovering from treatment who are expected to recover. There is a useful section for carers at the end of each chapter. It is very easy to read, and the layout is good, in a clear, good-sized font. The structure is clear and coherent, and it is easy to dip in and out. The language is very clear and accessible.

Some of the advice is counter to what I received from doctors and medical professionals, e.g. concerning diet and appetite. I lost 28 lbs when I was ill and was advised by my doctors and medical team to eat whatever I could manage. My mum was advised the same when she lost her appetite during chemotherapy. The book advises against eating 'fatty' foods, but I was told the opposite and that I would not get 'fat' eating fatty foods! My doctor also told me that I was unlikely to put on any weight while my body was recovering as it was busy repairing itself. This proved to be true and was helpful to me as it relieved me of the anxiety about my weight, and I returned to my normal weight gradually during the following few months. This will not be true for everyone, but I urge caution.

The main thing I took away was the idea of convalescence. I am recovering from a serious illness and several of the themes resonated for me, as well as with my experiences during my mother's illness. The authors make the point that, these days, two states exist: ill health, and wellness. The bit in between, the idea of convalescence and recovery, is glossed over or not acknowledged at all. This is a real shame, as it is perhaps the most important part of the process. For me, this is where the book is the most useful: it is helpful to read that it is okay to take as much time as needed to recover. There can often be a pressure to be 'well' once a period of treatment or an operation is over, and an expectation (perhaps from well-meaning friends and relatives and employers) as to when and how this should happen. It is

helpful to read that there is no set time, that it can be hard to recover treatment and surgery, and that it is okay to spend time recovering. I found it useful as well to read about the emotional effects of illness, particularly something like cancer where your relationship with your body changes, and indeed your body itself may change because of treatment. It is important to recognise the emotional effects of this, and in this respect the book would also be useful for carers and those close to the patient.

Overall, it is anodyne, but does make some assumptions, such as access to a medical team with seemingly unlimited time and resources. I was able to control my medical treatment and had a large team taking care of me, but my mother had about ten minutes with her consultant every three weeks or so at most, things were often cancelled at the last minute, they did not have the time to discuss everything with her (or even with me) and she was able to exercise very little influence. It also assumes that the person is expected to get better. Whilst some of the advice (e.g. fatigue) would have been useful for my mother, the rest would not; she was so unwell that I don't think she would have been able to process or deal with all that the book 'asks' of its reader. The onus is very much on the individual to help themselves, and that isn't helpful for everyone. It may be more useful for illness in general.

Cared for mother who died of lung cancer (36-45) (January 2016)



This book did absolutely nothing for me. I turned the pages for something that might strike a chord with my experience. I'm afraid it did not. I didn't find much that might help cancer patients apart from trying to be positive and have a healthy lifestyle, nothing new here. It is well researched with a wonderful index, but the layout is rather plain, on not the best quality paper. It is pleasant enough, but it doesn't have specific ideas for coping, helping, or caring during any stage of cancer. It generalises issues rather than confronting them. It seems rather glib and would not do much for cancer patients. There are many excellent books with specific help for cancer patients.

Head and neck cancer survivor (56-65) (March 2015)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.

It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.

We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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