



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

HEALING WITH WORDS: JOURNALING AND REFLECTING THROUGHOUT TREATMENT

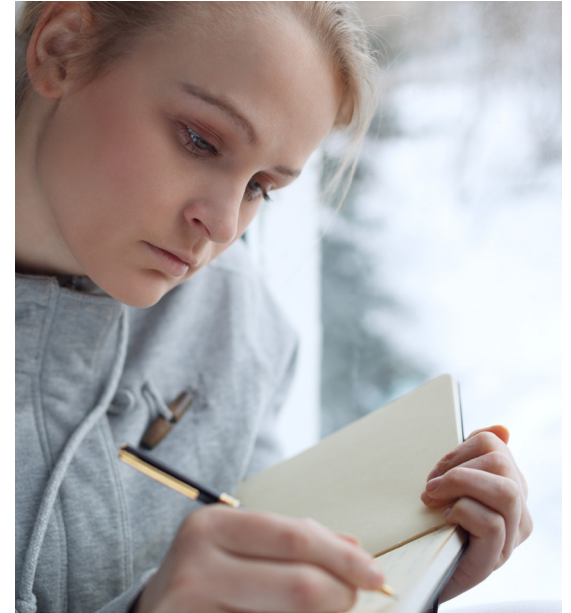
Writing can lower stress by helping people process feelings and clarify thoughts. Regularly journaling about your cancer experience can provide a comforting outlet and help you cope at any point during treatment.

GETTING STARTED

Few experiences in life are as difficult as learning that you have a diagnosis of cancer. Powerful emotions are stirred up, which can be overwhelming and frightening, with many people feeling as if their world has been turned upside down. Writing is a way to give voice to feelings such as fear, anger, sadness and loss that can be difficult to express aloud. It can also be a powerful tool for caregivers.

Before starting a journal, remember the following:

- It's the content that is important, not spelling or grammar.
- Find a private place to write where you feel comfortable, a space where you will not be interrupted.
- Choose the method of writing you prefer, whether it is pen and paper, a tablet or the computer.
- Try to write daily, stopping if you feel tired or overwhelmed. Many people find that setting aside a specific time of day, such as the morning, helps them to collect their thoughts and put them down.



RETRACE YOUR STEPS TO REFLECT

Writing about your cancer experience from the earliest stages of your diagnosis will enable you to retrace your steps and reconnect with the emotions you went through. You will be able to look back on your journey and remember how you were able to cope and keep moving forward. Seeing the progress you have made through difficult and frightening times can be inspiring and motivating.

TIPS WHEN JOURNALING

Remember that it is okay to begin slowly. Aim to write for five minutes a day, not necessarily about your cancer but about whatever thoughts come to mind.

Find the best platform for you. You may prefer to create a blog rather than use a notebook to record your thoughts.

(over)

There is no “right” or “wrong” way to journal. Writing is whatever you decide it will be—a story, a poem, random thoughts or words, memories, hopes and fears. Journaling can also be drawings or a scrapbook of sketches. Hopefully, it will provide an outlet for your feelings and, in time, will decrease your stress level. Dating each entry helps you look back at previous entries and reflect.

Create a journaling routine. Setting a routine can give you a sense of control. You may find writing in the morning helps you start the day or writing before bed helps you unwind.

Only you can know if journaling is a positive outlet for you. If writing causes you more upset than relief or is causing you to feel overwhelmed, perhaps take a break and find another activity that brings you comfort during this challenging time. Writing can be an important and helpful tool in your healing, but it is not the only method of support. An oncology social worker can help find other ways to cope for anyone affected by cancer. CancerCare offers free face-to-face, telephone and online support groups led by professional oncology social workers.

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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