



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)  
info@cancerca.org  
www.cancerca.org

fact sheet

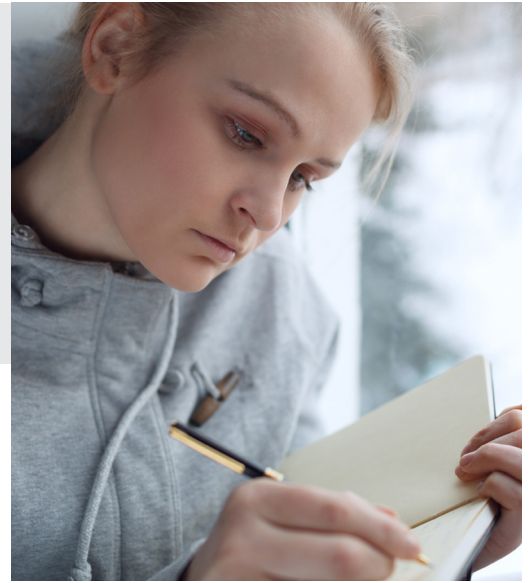
# HEALING WITH WORDS: JOURNALING AND REFLECTING THROUGHOUT TREATMENT

**Writing can help decrease stress by helping people process feelings and clarify thoughts. Consistently writing about your thoughts and feelings, especially after being diagnosed with cancer, can help you cope throughout 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 a voice to these feelings such as fear, anger, sadness and loss which may be difficult to express aloud. Before starting a journal, remember the following:

- It's the content that is important, not spelling and grammar.
- Find a 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 using pen and paper or the computer.
- Try and 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 on paper.



## RETRACE YOUR STEPS TO REFLECT

Having written your feelings from the earliest stages of your diagnosis will enable you to retrace your steps and read the emotions which were connected to that time. You are able to look back on your journey and read 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 sharing your story is a wonderful way to make a difference in the lives of others.

## TIPS WHEN JOURNALING

**It may be that you need to start slowly with your journaling.** Perhaps simply write for five minutes a day, not necessarily about your cancer but whatever thoughts are in your mind.

### **Find the best platform for you.**

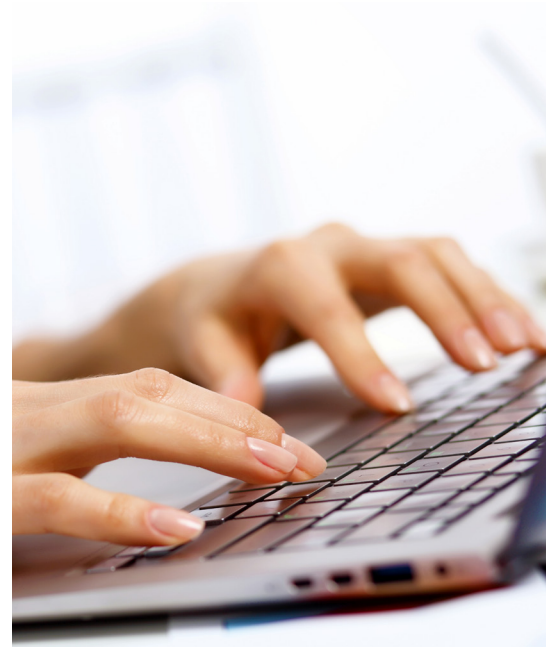
You may prefer creating a blog rather than notebook to record your thoughts.

(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 people 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 happiness or is causing you to feel overwhelmed, perhaps take a break and find another activity which brings you comfort during this challenging time. Writing may be an important and helpful tool in your healing but 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 professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/cancercare](https://facebook.com/cancercare)  
**Twitter:** [@cancercare](https://twitter.com/cancercare)



CANCERcare®

National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

© 2016 CancerCare®