

What does it mean to “find your way through cancer”?

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Author of *Finding Your Way Through Cancer*

Having cancer launches you on a journey through an unpredictable and disquieting world. There are many ups and downs along the way, and it's easy to lose your bearings or be knocked off course. Among the many challenges facing you, one is just to navigate this journey in a way that is right for you.

I say that because there is more than one attitude or approach to take when dealing with cancer. There are many ways of feeling about it, many ways of resolving the trials and dilemmas it poses, and many ways of coping with suffering. There are also many ways of defining, in your mind, what you need from your loved ones and what they need from you (for example, do they need you to be optimistic and upbeat, or realistic and honest about your true feelings?). In dealing with all these issues, the right path for you may not be readily apparent. I hope my book can help.

The nature of cancer and the medical treatments for it require something from you – namely, to be grounded in the essence of who you are, in your true and best self, and to respond in ways that honor your emotional needs. At times, you may feel overwhelmed or depleted, and yet if you reach down inside yourself, as people in distress often do, you may find a renewed capacity for resilience and resolve that can sustain you through all the challenges you are confronting. I hope my book will help on that score as well.

In one sense, the journey of cancer is a bodily one, involving physical suffering that you can only do so much about. In another sense, however, the journey is in your mind and in your emotions, and your control is primarily in this domain. Although cancer happened to you, there is a sense in which you can happen to it. It has power, but so do you. You are in charge of what it means and what it does to your soul or inner self.

Cancer does not happen in a vacuum. It happened to *you*, and you have a personality, certain strengths and weaknesses, a personal history, and your own life story that you have been living. You also live in a world of loved ones; you have a personal relationship with them and they have their own feelings and reactions. *All this has a bearing on your emotions and on your response to your illness.*

The book consists of ten free-standing essays on topics that are relevant to most people with cancer. You can read the essays in any order you wish, focusing at first on those of special relevance to you, perhaps saving others for another time. In the Introduction to the book, I give a brief synopsis of what each essay is about. These short synopses will help you determine whether the book could be helpful to you.