



# **SIMPLIFY** **CANCER**

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Man's guide to navigating  
**THE EVERYDAY REALITY OF CANCER**

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|  |    |
|--|----|
| WHY I WROTE THIS FOR YOU   | 4  |
| INTRO  | 5  |
| CHALLENGE #1: WHY ME?  | 8  |
| You Never See It Coming  | 9  |
| This Is Not The End  | 12 |
| How To Break the Chain of Non-Stop Thoughts about Cancer             | 16 |
| Stop Cancer from Running Your Life                                   | 19 |
| CHALLENGE #2: WHAT HAPPENS NOW?                                      | 24 |
| When You Have The Right Environment for Treatment                    | 25 |
| Your First Specialist Visit  | 28 |
| How To Make the Right Decision About Treatment                       | 32 |
| Prepared for Treatment   | 36 |
| Managing Symptoms During Treatment                                   | 38 |
| How To Differentiate Between Cancer, Side Effects And Unrelated Pain | 42 |
| CHALLENGE #3: WHO IS GOING TO BE THERE FOR ME?                       | 49 |
| Flying in the Face of Danger   | 50 |
| How To Get the Support You Want From People In Your Life             | 53 |
| 3 Reasons Why Some People Turn Away From You During Cancer           | 55 |
| Looking Out for Your True Supporters                                 | 58 |
| CHALLENGE #4: HOW DO I DEAL WITH WAITING AND UNCERTAINTY?            | 64 |
| How To Divert Your Thoughts Away From Cancer                         | 65 |
| How To Combat The Paralysing Wait For Results                        | 68 |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Poise: 1<sup>st</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm</b>     | <b>70</b> |
| <b>Placement: 2<sup>nd</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm</b> | <b>71</b> |
| <b>Purpose: 3<sup>rd</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm</b>   | <b>73</b> |
| <b>Any Day, This Can Be Taken Away</b>  | <b>75</b> |
| <b>OUTRO</b>  | <b>77</b> |

# Why I Wrote This For You

You did not die from cancer.

But – you lost control.

We all do, because from now on, nothing is for certain.

But you can put your worries off to the side, out of your way.

You can get off this rollercoaster of uncertainty and put an end to intrusive thoughts about cancer.

You can wrestle your power back from cancer by being in charge of the facts about treatment and beyond.

You can rally your true supporters around you on your terms, without awkwardness or imposition.

To leverage the experience of those who have went down that road before.

That's why the road is there, in the first place.

No, you did not die from cancer, and I hope you never will.

Now is the time to take charge of your life despite cancer.

That's why I wrote this for you.

# Intro

Cancer is a betrayal.

Imagine the woman you love, the one woman who shares your deepest secrets, who's there when you're most vulnerable, imagine that your woman is cheating on you.

And as betrayals go, you never see one coming...

But something tips you off.

Something that wasn't right...

Maybe it's one too many late night texts, or another excuse that starts to wear thin.

Maybe it's another story from her past that doesn't add up.

Deep inside, something is wrong and you know it, even when you can't pin it down.

After all, there is proof. No hard evidence.

What if you're just paranoid, or jealous? Isn't that normal, up to a point?

You cling to even the tiniest glimmer of hope that you got it all wrong, that it's all just one big mistake, that you'd wake up from this nightmare and things would go back to the way they were, the way ought to be...

Cancer hits you the same way.

If you could only go back to the way it was, the way life is meant to be.

The familiar world where you worry about being late for work.

Where oncologists are locked away in a hospital far, far away.

Where tomorrow is dependable and accounted for.

But...

There's no going back.

The well-trodden, familiar paths for navigating your life have disappeared, once and for all.

I know what it's like and I'm here to help.

I'm no medical expert or new age guru, but I lived through every word that you read here.

I know what it's like to be scared, scared and numb, all at the same time.

Screwed over because this was never supposed to happen.

To be angry at your own helplessness, at the mercy of the man in a white coat.

To have everything you know turn upside down, every future shrouded by uncertainty.

To have many of those around you stand idly by because they don't get it - they haven't been through it and don't know how to help.

I will share what worked for me and what I would have done differently, given the choice.

There are no flowery, sugar sweet quotes you can stick on a wall

This is a 100% honest, unbiased dive into what cancer is really like, the everyday things that no one tells you.

I'm going to steer clear of history and medical jargon to focus on how you can stop cancer from running your life.

There are 4 parts to this book, one for each main challenge that you can't turn away from:

### **1) Why me?**

Like a hit and run, cancer can never be fair, or just, or make sense. But you can reign in the onrushing tide of panic and the crushing helplessness of it all. Discover how you can break the chain of non-stop thoughts about cancer – it's counter intuitive, but it works!

### **2) What happens now?**

When cancer is the last thing you expected, how do you start dealing with cancer in a measured, rational way so you make informed decisions about your treatment? How to deal with uncertainty of everyday life, what to expect from treatment, how to work with your medical team and keep your sanity in the midst of it all.

### **3) Who can help me get through cancer?**

It's awkward talking about cancer, and yet don't want to sideline people you care about, without being overdramatic or dismissive and why some people fade away when you need them most. You can have the support you want, on your terms.

### **4) How do get through the constant waiting and uncertainty?**

Cancer is like life during wartime when you are constantly waiting for something happen. Another scan, another check-up, the excruciating wait for results... You're always on edge, but there is a way around it. You can put your worries aside to have the life you want despite cancer.

Thank you for looking out for yourself, now is the time to use every tool at your disposal to get through this!

# Challenge #1: Why Me?

## You Never See It Coming

Nothing and no one prepares you for cancer.

It explodes into your life with a myriad of sweeping, one-sided questions about life, death and everything in between.

It drives you mad with anger - why me, what have I done to deserve this?!

Scared - what if the treatment doesn't work?

Is this the end, am I going to die?

Guilty, even - could have I done anything, anything at all to prevent it, or to catch it before it spread?

Worried and anxious - is the cancer growing?

This invisible enemy, it's here, and I'm powerless to stop it...

Could this be happening, to me?

When you had cancer shoved in your face, the craziness and the injustice of it all, they get to you...

Sometimes you can't stop thinking about it, unspoken fears are always there, at the back of your mind.

You wrestle with the cancer verdict, numb with the shock of being plunged into the icy depths of unknown, as the reality of cancer refuses to sink in...

Worse than that – this shock of being diagnosed with cancer holds you back from focusing fully on treatment and the life you want despite cancer.

The precise moment of your diagnosis becomes a trap, but it doesn't have to be that way!

You can disconnect yourself from the experience by changing the way you look at it.

Easier said than done, but there is a way that helped me, and it just might work for you too!

So try it on, see if it fits:

Imagine you are in a theatre.

There is no one there, but you.

You are in your seat, waiting for the show to begin...

You look to the stage, the lights are down, it's very still and quiet...

The curtains crawl away to the side, the lights go up, you look up at the stage, and it's a scene you recognize in an instant...

It's the time you find out you have cancer.

What was that like?

If you are in your doctor's office, are you sitting down?

What is the first thing that races through your mind?

What are you going to do next?

As you go back to look back on that moment in your life when everything changed, you also can't help but think that this is something that has already happened, and no matter how crazy things have turned out since, you have already lived through this experience.

You are not up there in the lights, you are in your seat, a silent observer, and in a way, what's unfolding on stage has nothing to do with you because it has you have already been through it.

You see it for what it is - a profound shock that has already set in, and now you're dealing with it, as best you can.

What you have now is only a memory that holds no sway over you anymore.

So you get up, and walk away.

You are heading towards the exit sign that is flashing away in the distance.

You can tell that there is more happening out there on the stage, but like yesterday's weather, it had nothing to do with you anymore.

You are walking away from your diagnosis away from the shock and the injustice of it all, towards the present time where you are in control of the situation, where you put your energy into dealing with treatment and the life beyond.

You are done fighting against it, you are done with things happening and now you are taking charge of this new reality of cancer.

Hopefully, this puts some distance between you and your diagnosis, and you might want to play through this scene a few more times when it gets too much and you can't believe you landed in cancer...

The worst of it is already behind you – the numbing unreality of the diagnosis, the helplessness of it all, the fear of facing the unknown can now be replaced with actively dealing with your disease.

Getting cancer is never deserved, just or fair.

We cannot stop it from coming into our lives, unasked – no one can change that, but we can accept it for what it is, and that gives you the power to change and influence just about everything else – how you cope with treatment, your choice of

This is **Accept**, the first step of the 3 step process for putting cancer in its place that I call **AIM** because the aim is to set cancer aside in a place where it's no longer running your life.



Accepting cancer is the perfect opportunity to make peace with it, and move forward with treatment on your terms.

It's a formal acknowledgement that cancer is here, contained in a place where it is no longer running your life, where it's on the sidelines.

Acceptance is no weakness – you are not giving in to fate and circumstance, it's putting a stop to the tyranny of the unknown.

So let's make a deal with cancer, let's put together a treaty of sorts that spells out how you are going to strip cancer of its power.

This can be your formal agreement with cancer, if you choose:

“You are a part of me.

And it's a part of me that I don't like.

You appeared out of nowhere, unasked, but I'm willing to live with it...

For now.

You do not, under any circumstances, control my life.

You cannot direct what I do, or don't do.

So let's agree on this...

If you are a part of me, then you will never stop me from living my life the way I want to.

I am going to talk about you with everyone I care about, and I'm going to tell them how I'm doing and how they can be there for me.

I am going to live passions and do things I love with people I care about, every single day because with or without you, this is the only life I get.

And when the treatment is done, I want us to go our separate ways.

Let's try to stick to it, shall we?

These are my terms, and this is my last and final offer.

Take it, and leave me be.

Signed,

You"

This is a representation of the contract I made with cancer – yours may be worded differently to reflect who you are.

In that case, make your own version and when it's ready, put it on your wall, or your fridge, next to your bed, anywhere it will serve as a reminder of where you are with it.

Cancer is here, but it's not running your life.

Now, you can channel your energy and your strength into getting through treatment and having the life you want despite cancer.

## This Is Not The End

In the beginning, the old life you had before cancer runs parallel to your new reality with new worries, new fears and hope – these two lives never meet.

In a way, they are the mirror opposites of each other.

In the old, familiar life, you wake up, have your breakfast, you do the things that need to be done and you talk to those who are willing to listen to what you have to say.

You then leave some room for your other life, and you squeeze in some time aside for your medical appointments.

The problem is, you still worry about scan results, and whether this weird ache is a side effects, a tumor or something totally unrelated...

It's in your head and you can't stop thinking about it!

It gets to you that much more because it's too big and too scary to stay in the background.

And it's tough because the way things are right now are not what you want them to be.

You need cancer eliminated, to never even happen in the first place, and yet it's here, watching your every move.

This constant worry about what you want and what is, this tension is pulling you apart, taking away the energy you need for your treatment and your recovery.

But the thing is, how long can you get away with this double life?

It's as hard as thinking about two different things at the same time.

The amount of mental effort you put in to strain and pressure you are under right now is unlike most challenges we come up with in life.

Right now, you are at the epicenter of a force of nature that demands a personal response.

For me, it began catching myself in the act of telling people what they want to hear and being honest and direct about my life, the way it's right now.

When my wife asked me how my day was, I told her about some of the replies I had from folks on the testicular cancer forum and how that made me a little more prepared as to what I can expect.

When my boss asked me about how I'm getting on, I said I'm worried about how long it will put me out of action for.

This started a conversation He was adamant that I need to look after myself first, and the job will still be here when I'm ready.

When my friend asked me how my day was, I told him I'm freaking out about starting chemo and staying hospital and what I'm going to do with myself when I'm there, and he brought me a book to read at the hospital that cheered me up.

Becoming honest and direct about life and cancer has become incredibly liberating – and all of a sudden, you are having a real conversation about things that matter in your life right now, with real people who genuinely want the absolute best for you!

When you make a cancer a part of your daily life, you save yourself from having to come up with the right thing to say or being the hero.

This is the **Integrate** part of our **AIM** framework where you purposefully make cancer a part of your life so that deal with it in the most holistic and controlled manner, not some story that has nothing to do with you.



These two lives, before cancer and the now, they are one and the same and the easiest way to fuse these two lives together is through ongoing communication and direct involvement with your people.

How do you know what the person next to you is thinking about right now?

You don't - unless they volunteer to explicitly tell you about it!

It's no good guessing - even when you know the person well, you could be completely off track.

It's the same with cancer – yet we expect people to understand where you're at, what you are going through and how they can be there for you (or stay out of the way).

So don't make them guess, be upfront and direct about what is happening in your world right now!

What's on your mind?

What's bothering you now?

What's keeping you up at night?

What scares you the most right now, and why?

What do you need?

More importantly, what do you want?

If it's your partner, talk about it every night, maybe if you do something together maybe a daily walk or a quick sit down after dinner.

Even if for only five minutes a day – do whatever you to keep your partner from guessing about where you're at.

When it comes to keeping your friends and coworkers in check, you don't need to keep them guessing on what is the right thing to say or if it's ok to ask.

When you send a group email before or after a milestone (say when you get your test results or about to start treatment), it becomes so much easier – you don't have to repeat yourself every time!

Get them involved - get your partner, or friend to come with you to an appointment or treatment to be the second ear and just listen, in case you miss anything or forget.

Having someone with you is the most welcome distraction of all – you can talk about anything other than cancer so you don't have to keep your head full of worry on the way to the hospital or the agonizing torture of the waiting room.

People who truly care about you are going to be grateful because you just made it easy for them to support you.

Yet because you are at the center of it and melting these two realities together will not give you a poor one, it will free you from worrying about it!

This is what Integrate, the second part of our AIM conversation is all about – charting the course away from uncertainty to lead the life you want despite cancer.

## How To Break the Chain of Non-Stop Thoughts about Cancer

You never believe you'll come into cancer.

A fairytale monster no more, it comes in through the backdoor, puts its feet up on the coffee table and refuses to leave.

It only take one worry thought to trigger a chain reaction, and before you know it, they start to multiply and grow, day after day, to the point when you can't tell them apart – what started with a random headache, now has you thinking about dying miserable and alone.

You don't want to collect your worries and keep them locked in, you want to draw those worries out in the open, break them apart, examine each one and deal with it separately.

It's kind of like things that get in the way of us understanding each other.

Misunderstandings that aren't dealt with immediately snowball into awkward, misshapen things that hang over you.

Deep inside, you know there is simply no way around it – you need to bring those worries out into the open so that you can deal with them and get on with your life.

A powerful way to draw those meddling thoughts about cancer is to write them out of yourself.

You can do it incredibly quickly with no thinking required, and here is why it's good for you...

First, you will instantly feel that much better because you got rid of the deadweight that has been holding you down.

You breathe easier when you get things off your chest, and by writing it out, you don't even have to talk to anyone in person so there is no need to filter anything out or find the right words to tell your worry the right way.

Second, some are going to surprise you because you will see it from another angle and there might be an obvious workaround that did not jump out at you because you never looked at it that way.

It's like a friend who can't figure out a way out of a situation they are in – they are so caught up emotionally they can't tell what went wrong or how to fix it, yet it's completely obvious to you from the outside looking in.

Third, your worries are going to become manageable because right now, these worries you have about cancer, things that don't feel right, things that are bothering you, they build up over the top of each other and you can't even tell them apart!

So you have this giant storm cloud of uncertainty hanging over you, and it's not getting any smaller...

But when you extricate your worries out of your mind and onto the paper, they can't hide behind one another and now, you can see each one for what it truly is and find a way around it.

Now, you don't want to wreck your head about what to write – there an easy way to get your worries of your head as fast as you can.

Using this prompt to get your worries to come out of hiding:

“The thing that scares me the most about cancer right now is...”

And start writing!

Don't think about it – just go for it.

It's for your eyes only, so you don't need to filter anything out, let your mind do the talking!

I prefer pen and paper to write things down because of the finality and physical function they bring, but use whatever works for you – your phone, your computer, or a voice recorder.

Now that you have a list of worries, examine each one and challenge it:

- Why do I feel that way?
- Who can help me with that?
- What is the next step I can take to resolve it?

This way, you analyze your fears and work out a plan of action immediately. Let me share 2 quick examples from my experience:

“What scares me the most about cancer right now is that I won’t be able to work, lose my job and we’ll have no money to live on” – honestly, I never looked at it in quite those terms until I wrote it down, but working through it made things a lot easier...

I had a conversation with my manager where I explained how I will be sidelined for several months, spoke to colleagues and the big boss who were incredibly reassuring to give me the peace of mind I needed over money.

“What scares me the most about cancer right now is that the treatment won’t work and I’m going to die” – I could not wait for things to take their turn when confronted the harsh reality of dealing with cancer...

So I took this out to those who can help – my specialist and cancer survivors.

Having the encouragement and support from folks on the testicular forum has been immense and my oncologist reassured me about my chances and explained other options available with salvage chemo or a medical procedure if things don’t go to plan.

Moving fears and worry from inside out into the world as soon as you can helps get it out of your way.

No more nasty surprises –you know what’s coming and how to deal with it.

This is **Move On**, step 3 of our **AIM** path towards peace of mind during cancer, to move on with your life despite worries and uncertainty.



There are other ways that can help to deal with the craziness your life turns into when you are diagnosed with cancer...

If you are fortunate enough to have people consistently ask you how you are going and you had enough of repeating yourself over and over again, then it’s a perfect opportunity to share out your wild ride through cancer start through a blog or email.

It's easy to do and you can get things off your chest without having to find the perfect way to tell the story to every person in your life.

Another way to contain worry is to set some time aside each day to worry about cancer.

You know that cancer gets in your head so when a worry thought pops up, you know where it came from, and you can put it off to the side.

It's what I say to myself – I'm going to worry about it later.

You can set aside 5 minutes of worry time before dinner, or 10 minutes when you go for a walk, just don't make it before you go to bed for the night.

Once you have set worry aside, you go on with your day, and when that time comes, you circle back to what you were worried about, and think it through carefully, give yourself the space and time to work through possibilities and assess them if they hold up, and work out a plan to deal with them, whether that involves your specialist or talking to your nurse.

Controlled panic that has a start and an end is how you set yourself up worry the right way.

You choose what works well for you, and when you put this worry removal process on repeat and with time, you become so good at it that cancer no longer controls you.

This will your channel your energy away from tension and into action, into flow where you are in control of your thoughts, plans and decisions.

## Stop Cancer from Running Your Life

Some say – I won't let cancer define me.

But, how can it not?

It affects what you do every single day, how you think about the future and the way you see yourself.

When you go through any major life change, whether it's changing your career, losing a friend or falling in love, you are constantly adapting to what is happening around you.

This is the process of personal evolution, it's what makes you who you are and it's the reason why you are not the same person you were ten years ago.

So for better or worse, cancer is going leave a mark, but you have the power to choose how cancer is going to define you!

It brings me back to a moment that has very nearly cost me my life, and the harsh lesson I learned that day, coming face to face with a powerful force of nature.

This story takes place before cancer, on a deserted ocean beach at the end of the world.

It's a perfect day on the ocean – endless horizon of water, careless and carefree.

I am basking in the afternoon glow, with soothing sounds of the ocean around me.

I'm swaying back and forth with the waves, obeying their gentle rhythm.

Suddenly, there is a change, a subtle shift I can't place, but somehow, it feels wrong.

I try to stand, but my feet can no longer find the ocean floor.

I catch a glimpse of the shoreline, and head towards it.

It's so close I should be out on the sand in no time at all, but my stroke is not getting me anywhere.

I'm stuck, rooted to the spot. I double the effort, but it's no use!

This unknown force is holding me back, an invisible barrier between me and shore.

The waves grow bigger all around me, and one hits me square in the face, I can taste the salty brine in my mouth, and that's when panic set in...

Arms flailing, I call out:

Help! Help!! Somebody help me!

Suddenly, a man appears amidst the waves and wordlessly helps me onto a surfboard, guiding us towards land.

The rip got you, he said.

It's a powerful underwater current that you can't fight, you don't want to swim against the rip because it will always pull you in!

Go with it sideways – this is your best way to safety.

And so it is with cancer – the constant worry and uncertainty, the injustice of it all, they are inevitable...

But what if you don't fight against it, what if you could channel your energy in a different direction?

When you go along with the current, when you take cancer on as a set of distinct problems that have solutions, you are going to approach things in an entirely different way.

You start asking questions and finding answers that puts you in control of the situation.

Ultimately, you decide:

Are you going to drown yourself in pity and misery, or look for ways to get around the inevitable worry and pain that come with cancer?

Are you going to take things as they come, or take charge of your own future and make informed decisions about treatment and the life beyond?

Will you suffer alone, or speak up about your struggle so you can get the support you want, on your terms?

Are you going to beat yourself up about the mistakes you made and roads not taken, or create a legacy that serves the people you truly care about right now?

Will you be chained to commitments and expectations you never asked for the first place, or focus solely on doing things you like with people you care about?

Are you going to dwell on the past, or live in the now, the only time you get to live, fully and without reserve?

Living in the now is the only time you ever get, it's raw, it's immediate, it's what gives you strength to go on because real power comes from acknowledging the inevitable worries about cancer and ushering those worries out of the way, as best as you can.

Nothing can stand between you and your way of life, not cancer, not the fear of death:

You walk on through with your head held high, with the dignity that befits you now, as a man evolved beyond the mundane, outdated clichés about masculinity, a man whose strength comes from connecting the intricate reality inside you to the world beyond your self.

When you carry your values and beliefs through the madness of cancer, when you open yourself up to your inner circle, your family and friends, and to your outer circle, your medical team and cancer survivors who are going to help guide you through it, you have earned the right to live the life you want despite cancer!

You have enormous energy inside you, the energy you constantly generate every moment of your being, it builds up inside, just waiting to burst and take over, and when you don't let loose, when you don't channel in the right direction, it becomes fuel for worry and fear...

Yes, cancer has gatecrashed your life, and yes, it's a reality of life you accept and plan around, and now you can move on with your life despite cancer.

You have so much energy and yet we spend so much of it worrying about cancer

You are in charge of your life during cancer when you are:

- Prepared for dealing with the inevitable worry and uncertainty
- Informed about treatment including side effects, symptoms, milestones
- Connected to your friends, family and your medical team

So much of your energy during cancer goes to accommodating uncertainty and the stress of dealing with the unknown, but you can channel your energy in a different direction, away from worry and into action when you start believe that you can get through cancer on your terms!

Take a long, hard look at each of the beliefs below and see if it syncs up with yours:

- I believe that cancer is never just or fair and it makes no sense at all
- I understand that none of this is my fault

- I accept that for the time being, cancer is part of my life and I will plan my life around it as best I can
- I am going to be informed about treatment options so that I can make the best decisions for me moving forward
- I am going to be prepared for treatment so that I know what to expect
- I will use every tool at my disposal to deal with stress and worry during cancer
- I will be connected people I care about by being direct and honest about how they can help get through this

You, my friend, did not choose cancer.

It exploded into the familiar, measured life you own, but it doesn't own you.

In fact, you don't owe cancer one damn thing.

Or anyone, for that matter!

And you have no need for sympathy or worse, pity.

You are here, at the pointy end of bad luck, but you are not alone!

You are one of us, one of many souls trying to stay afloat in the sea of uncertainty,

We are here, and we want to help!

Next, let's talk about some practical ways to deal with treatment.

## **Challenge #2: What happens now?**

## When You Have The Right Environment for Treatment

When you get hit with cancer, no one hands you a guide book on how to navigate your way around the insanely complicated maze of medical tests, specialist appointments and treatment choices.

This alien reality of tumor markers, survival rates and oncology wards changes what you do with your life, every single day...

And yet, you remain the person you have always been – the man who stands by his decisions and his core values.

This does not move, you stay true to who you are and you deal with what life throws at you in the best way you can.

But getting through treatment is never easy and that's why it's crucial to align your life and have the right environment that's working for you, not against you.

Being diagnosed is a real kick in the face – from now on, you expect things to go wrong.

Your experiences and expectations are now driven by worry and fear, and instead, you want to shift your expectations to reflect the way things are, away from emotions to logic.

Here are 7 reasons why you should have high hopes for making it through:

1. There is no better time in history to get you through cancer when it comes to treatment and we are getting better of finding new ways around cancer every single day
2. Your treatment is based on scientific evidence, not subjective opinions – your specialist is not making arbitrary decisions based on a hunch, it's been proven to work
3. Treatment guidelines for where you are at with cancer are based on best practice that is recommended by top experts in the field so unless you have a rare type of cancer, you can be sure your treatment has been thoroughly tested by experts who specialise in treating your disease
4. Gone are the days when you were simply told what to do Your medical team is there to support you and answer your every question

5. Always ask about the clinical trials available – this is your access to the latest treatment available that can lead you towards the cure
6. Recovery from cancer treatment has been elevated into an art form today where everything from movement and nutrition to social support and complimentary therapies have been tested and implemented to help you have a great life after cancer
7. It's good to know that in most situations, there is a different route to take when things don't go to plan, another alternative that can help you to deal with cancer

With or without cancer there are no guarantees in life, but when you have high hopes for treatment and expect the best from your medical team and the supporting system, you know what's coming your way and how to deal with it.

Some people want to see you a certain way during cancer –calm and collected, strong, taking it on the chin, fighting your way through cancer.

Or worse, this is how you think others want you to behave, and now you are trying to live up to grotesquely unrealistic expectations and make-belief...

It only serves to create more pressure and worry you can do without!

Now, let's talk about what I call inspektations – how do you see yourself?

You are not a hero for having to deal with cancer, none of us are – you are a real man who is going through a tough time, doing your best to get through this as best you can.

And chances are, you are expending a huge amount of strength and energy helping the people you care about the most – your partner, or your children, your friends, and that is a great way to be, yet things are different now, and you want to find the right balance to make sure you get through treatment in the best way possible...

Because treatment is tough, and now is the time you put yourself first, for your sake and for the sake of those who truly care about you.

When you do that, your priorities shift and in a subtle way, things in your life are now aligned to get you through treatment with the least amount of stress possible.

So, are you doing at least one thing that you truly love, every day?

Not things that you do out of habit, or out of necessity.

What do you look forward to?

What do you do when you lose track of time?

What is something you'd do so much more of, given the chance?

How would you indulge yourself, if you had money and time to spare?

A small thing that you never make the time for, like sitting down with a great cup of coffee and a book, when you're not in a rush, when you leave the phone away, you're not looking at the clock or thinking about the next thing that has to be done...

Just soaking in the moment because that is the only thing that exists, that is the only thing that matters, this time that's happening now because it will never come again!

Because with or without cancer, there is never going to be a moment like now, like today, and even if this used to be a cliché, the diagnosis has turned that around, and now you and me have tangible proof that you cannot afford to wait for a good time to do something you love, something that means the world to you...

So is there anything that you have been putting off for some time, a project or an idea that you could never get off the ground because you didn't have the money or the time?

Or maybe it's something you love to do, something you can lose yourself in, but life just always got in the way?

Well, with cancer, you have definitive proof that you can't put anything off until later, so the best time to start is now!

Sure enough, there will always be things you can't avoid or people who drag you down, but what you can do to minimise the number of stressful situations you find yourself in?

If your work is stressing you out, is there anything you can do to make it easier – maybe you can talk to your boss about working from home on

regular basis, switch to part time (temporarily to test things out) or change what you do as part of role?

If there is tension with someone in your life who you simply can't avoid, can you think of a way to spend time with them in a way that is less painful?

Finding neutral ground is a great way to break away with old patterns or routines – maybe going out to a sports game, a live gig or a night out in a group could be more fun.

I now find myself at a place in my life where I have a hard time convincing myself to spend time with people I “should” make time for.

It's not even a choice – I just don't have the mental space for it anymore!

Screw the political correctness and the right things to do – you've earned the right to put yourself so you can

Of course, you still make room for things that need to be done, but there is no reason in the world to do things that

Now is your time to put yourself first so that you are in the best shape you can be when you are done with cancer so that you can focus on those people in your life that you can't be without.

When you put yourself first, you are focused on getting through treatment – and that includes knowing what's coming your way and how to deal with it.

When you are prepared, unknown becomes familiar.

Overwhelming turns manageable.

Uncertain is now expected.

Daunting becomes assured.

Let's be honest – you are not going to enjoy this whole cancer thing, but can be a manageable part of your day to day life, when you tackle it the right way.

## Your First Specialist Visit

Your first specialist visit hammers home the reality of cancer – yes, this IS actually happening, and it's happening to you, of all people!

This never ending waiting room when you are constantly on edge, not knowing what's coming your way next...

This is the time when having trust in the process is critical because that's what gives you the confidence to get through treatment.

So when you are heading for treatment, it is absolutely crucial to have a guide who you can trust, who is right there with you, a guide who knows the way...

Have trust in the knowledge that you will be heard, trust that you know exactly what's going on, every step of the way and there other roads to go on, in case things don't go to plan.

When you are making your way through the dark woods of cancer, it's easy to lose your way, and that is why you want to trust your guide completely, without reserve.

Your specialist is your guide through cancer and when you put your trust in someone, you can to that person about anything, any concern or worry you have.

And they get it, they understand that you are scared and that you have questions and worries so they expect you to speak up and ask.

That is the true role of your oncologist, your urologist, your surgeon, or your hematologist, this is your trusted advisor, someone you can open up to about anything that's bothering you right now!

And if you are not on the same wavelength for whatever reason, maybe it's a personality clash or any other reason, then it's a time for a change.

Don't wait – find the right person who is looking after you!

This is a critical time in your life and you can't afford to leave things to chance.

Go back to your referring doctor, your local cancer hotline or online community for your type of cancer to find another specialist to look after you.

They know what they are doing because not only does it take an incredible amount of time and energy to specialise in oncology, but it takes just as much effort to stay in the game – you are required to undergo regular training, attend seminars to keep up with the latest research and share what you learned with colleagues from around the world.

Many specialists are involved in clinical trials that investigate new treatments and translate those into real life by getting better outcomes for people like you and me.

They rely on best practice, not arbitrary opinions, so you can trust this person to be there for you, to look after you and to give you the advice and support that you need to get through treatment!

Your specialist is your champion and it makes things easier when you make a conscious decision to trust that person, completely and without reserve.

You can trust their advice, trust that there are solutions to most problems, and you can ask any questions you want and have the confidence you are going to get answers.

But while your specialist is there to guide you through the maze of treatment options and side effects, you still want to be prepared and ask about specific things that are bothering you right now – after all, no one knows you like you know yourself, and you don't miss anything that's important to you right now.

Spending just a little bit of time ahead of the appointment sorting through things you want to ask about can make a huge difference for your peace of mind down the track!

So give yourself 5 to 10 minutes to stop and think about what you need to find out...

What keeps you up at night?

What is bothering you right now, at this point and time?

What are you worried about when you think about the future?

Here are some of the questions you can ask:

- What are my treatment options?
- Which is the best way to go and why?
- Can you tell me what it's like?
- Will I still be able to do X?
- What can I do about the Y side effect if it comes up?
- What happens if I don't go through with this type of treatment?

- When will the treatment/operation take place and how can I prepare?

Honestly, you think you know what you are going to ask, but there's a lot going on and it's so easy to forget something or leave out some crucial detail that might be incredibly important to you later on...

Trust me, you won't regret bringing a list of questions that you have prepared earlier!

To save yourself some time, go ahead and grab my free one page [First Oncologist Visit Checklist](#) to take with you:

<http://simplifycancer.com/1st-oncologist-visit/>

It's a simple PDF with key questions to get you started – just print it out and take with you!

There is enough space next to each question for you to make notes as you go along.

These notes don't need to be detailed – they are trail markers to remind you about key moments you want to refer back to.

Whether use the checklist, your notebook, or the phone to make notes that you can refer to later to capture key points from the discussion with your specialist, nothing beats having an audio recording as a backup.

You can listen to it at any time to clear things up, and it's easy to do with your mobile phone – you don't need any extra tools or equipment to get it done.

Do a trial run beforehand to make sure you don't run out of space, you can make out what's been said there is no time limit and everything works as it should.

Most specialists will be more than happy for you to record the conversation, so at the start of the appointment, ask your specialist if it's ok with them:

“Is it ok if I record our conversation – I just want to make sure I won't miss anything?”

Taking notes is crucial in case you forget or miss any information that is critical to your treatment!

It takes time to get to the hospital or your specialist's room and sit in the waiting room – this may not seem like much, but time really stretches when

you're sitting there in the waiting room, and you can't stop thinking about what happens if things got worse, and how ...

You are about to find out something that could change your life in a big way, you're this close, and the waiting can drive you insane!

So it really helps to bring your partner, or a friend, or anyone who is going to keep you company and distract you from worry.

Not only do you have a chance to talk about something other than cancer, you will also have a second pair of eyes and ears during your appointment to make sure you don't miss anything.

When they don't need to be a part of the conversation with your specialist: "Could you just be there for me and just listen so we can compare notes later?"

Replay what your specialist just said so you know you're on the right track: "Ok, so if I understand you correctly, on Monday I'll show up at this clinic, and I will go straight to the day oncology for the first chemo session and then go up to the ward where I'm going to stay for the week?"

You run through it to see if it all makes sense, and ask any follow up questions to clear things up.

Now you know exactly what's going to happen and crucially, you eliminate misunderstanding and confusion before it even comes up.

Still, no matter how prepared you are, things are going to come up later on so when you have more questions, a good strategy is to set up a follow up appointment to clear up any issues.

Being prepared puts you on the path to staying sane through treatment and keeping it together, for your sake and for those who matter in your life.

## How To Make the Right Decision About Treatment

When it comes to making decisions about your cancer treatment, you kind of expect your specialist to have all the answers, to tell you exactly what you need to do, step by step, yet often, that's not how things turn out.

You might have different treatment options, each with its pros and cons, and all of a sudden, you have to make life and death decisions over things you don't really understand...

It's tough, but it's also an opportunity to take back control of your life during cancer.

Let's be honest, from the time you are diagnosed, you have random people telling you what to do:

Here, fill out another form.

Show up at this time because it's the only one available...

You are constantly told to do things that turn your life inside out, your whole life dance around someone else's schedule and that don't make sense what so ever!

You lose so much control over what's going on around you and making a hard decision about treatment is the perfect opportunity to get back in charge of your during cancer.

Yes, it's scary and you have no guarantees about the choice you are asked to make, and yet...

The balance has changed.

You are in charge now!

You are the one making decisions about things that define your future, and that's how you are wrestle your power back from cancer!

And to make informed decisions that are right for you and your life, it becomes necessary to Accept responsibility for being prepared, for knowing what's coming your way and how to deal with it:



But how do you go about ensuring that you are going to choose the direction that's right for you right now?

From the very start, you want to go beyond the superficial information you get in a standard overview, filled with meaningless bullet points and generic statements that only serve to confuse you more.

To make a decision that is going to right for you and your life from this point on, we need to dig deeper...

You want to know exactly these treatments work and how it's going to affect you.

So when you talk to your specialist, ask about the rationale behind each option, and why some are better than others so you can decide what's right for you and your life.

Is this type of treatment provide better chances of curing cancer?

What are the chances of complications?

What are the side effects that you need to worry about?

How long does it take to recover?

Does it affect my sex life?

Will I be able to have children?

How will it impact my ability to work?

How will it impact my day to day?

Let's start with a fact finding mission:

Spend 10 to 15 minutes to read at least 3 to 5 articles about your treatment on a reputable, evidence based website such as Cancer Council in Australia, National Cancer Institute in the United States or MacMillan Cancer Support in the United Kingdom.

Evidence based is following rigorous scientific method in research that is used by scientists worldwide – your safeguard against speculation and false hope when it comes to treatment.

Look for clues that apply to you directly – what are the realistic chances for your specific stage/type/situation?

How will you know the treatment is working and when?

What are the options if things don't go to plan?

What are the side effects can you plan for (fertility, for example) and which side effects do you need to watch out for to mitigate (lung function or fever spike, for example).

Now that you know enough to be dangerous, you are going to have questions about your treatment!

We all do – and while you have your specialist and your medical team are the best people to give you answers, you will give yourself the confidence you need to head into treatment by understanding the real life experience of folks who went down that road before you.

They have already gone through treatment and they have been at the crossroads where they had to make the same decision you need to make right now!

Most importantly, they want to share their experience because they know exactly what it's like to be worried and confused.

You can do that through an in person support group, but the easiest way is to do online.

When you find an online forum for your type of cancer (check out my free Online Community Guide with top 3 communities listed for your type of cancer on SimplifyCancer.com under the Tools section), you can post a question.

These communities are typically structured as discussion forums where each topic is just like an email – the title is your subject line that can tell the reader if this is something they can contribute to and body gives you the space you need to describe your brief history, what's bothering you and what do you want to find out.

More likely than not, people are going to respond to your question in a matter of hours, and that is insanely valuable because even though every person's experience is slightly different, you will be able to pick out enough to gauge how it applies to you and what you are looking for when it comes to treatment and the life beyond.

Now, you can take this back to your specialist to discuss the next steps.

Using this combined approach to combine the expertise of your specialist and medical best practice with real life experience of cancer survivors puts you in the next place possible to make a decision that's right for you!

And if you are still having trouble making up your mind over which road to take, then by all means ask your specialist to refer you to someone else so you can get a second opinion from another expert who might have a different take on things.

## Prepared for Treatment

Often in life, we rush into a new quest unprepared.

So it is with cancer – you plunge into it headfirst, forced to figure out new rules, roles and vocabulary.

It's kind of like school where you learning new things is not the responsibility of the teacher...

They are doing their best to convey the information in an engaging way, and the rest is up to you.

You know what you want and that is what drives you onwards.

After all, no one cares about you more than you do!

So you never want to leave the responsibility to someone else, even for the fact that you are relying on their level of attention and ability at any given time.

You can't rely on another person's credo because "doing your job" is often a euphemism for doing the bare minimum.

This is why it's up to you as a patient to get the getting the best outcomes possible within the parameters of the medical system and your team.

Do your own research on the most reputable sites online, get the books you need, go to online forums for your type of cancer and immerse yourself in knowledge (grab my Cancer Resource Guide to help you with all of the above).

Being clued up about treatment will not make you more paranoid...

The opposite is true – when you know how things can turn out and what you can do about it, you have effectively disarmed cancer’s most potent weapon, uncertainty.

And it’s simple – you can do get it all sorted out in a day, if you want to.

You often have time before treatment begins, whether you have 3 days or 2 weeks, that can set your body up to prevent or minimise damage done during treatment.

Your specialist can set you on your way with a targeted, specialised program that has the right exercise and nutrition that is designed just for you.

This is what pre-hab is all about – preparing your body for recovery before treatment even begins!

You don’t want to go down blind alleys and rabbit holes of searching online, and the best way to bypass all the nonsense is to set the context around the information you are looking for.

You get the facts straight from the source – read through at least 3 to 5 articles on a reputable, evidence based website.

Most countries have a large non-profit organizations that provide cancer support services and help regular people navigate their way through cancer and they strive to make the website readable and easy to navigate.

Here are 3 great examples:

- Cancer Council (Australia)
- National Cancer Institute (United States)
- Macmillan Cancer Support (United Kingdom)

We are not talking about subjective opinions, this is evidence based information that has been proven to work using scientific methods.

When you go onto the website, search for your type of treatment and spend at least 15 to 20 minutes to read up on your type of treatment.

Start with one online community, just choose one from the guide and sign up.

Here is the link to my free Online Community Guide:

<http://simplifycancer.com/community/>

It helps to get into habit of checking in every day so you are familiar with the landscape – spend 5 to 10 minutes a day is all it take to get a feel for the type of questions that come up, who are the most active folks out there and how quickly do people respond.

When you are posting a question, you want to make it very clear to the person reading it that it's something they are familiar with and can contribute in a meaningful way.

Look at your topic title as the headline – it's very clear who it's for.

Being prepared enables you to:

- Make informed decisions about treatment
- Know how to deal with side effects when they come up
- Get the support you want from people in your life, when you need it
- When to raise a red flag with your specialist or nurse
- How to manage your energy so that you are not wearing yourself down
- What to do when things don't go to plan
- Focus on having the life you want beyond cancer

You become an expert on your own illness and you know exactly what to expect from treatment, every step of the way.

The boundaries of unknown melt away and you can deal with whatever is thrown at you.

## Managing Symptoms During Treatment

Every time I have left things to chance, life hit me square in the face.

For not standing up to the schoolyards bullies, only for the abuse to get more intricate and insufferable.

For not speaking out when my friend was in trouble, only to become entangled in more lies, manipulation and emotional blackmail.

For not leaving my ex when I knew the worst was yet to come...

Yes, drawing the cancer card from the deck of life is random, but our actions beyond the diagnosis need to deliberate and precise.

When you take charge of the treatment process, when you are prepared for what's coming your way, when you combine the expertise of your medical team and the experience of cancer survivors, you have the best tools at hand to sweep aside fear and uncertainty, to stop worry from running your life!

And it starts with keeping track of your symptoms...

Before every checkpoint with your specialist, is there anything in particular that you are worried about?

Anything in the weeks leading up to the appointment that you want to mention?

Anything odd or different, even if seemingly unrelated?

The more uncomfortable you are about the thing that's bothering, the greater the need to get answers, or it will keep eating away at you.

Take a minute to think it through and write it down for reference in your phone or on paper that you can open up during the appointment to double check.

There are mobile apps that can help you keep track of your symptoms – check out my Cancer Resource Guide for details.

When you carefully manage your symptoms the right way, you keep your physical and mental health in the balance to stay on track through treatment.

It becomes an integral part of your process, a natural extension of the treatment process when you Integrate your symptom into the treatment process:



You can't be over prepared – the more you know, the less you worry.

When you have a process for dealing with worries, you are in control of the situation.

You know what to do next, where to get answers, it becomes an integral part of your life during treatment.

There is a start and an end point, and it can be hard to imagine that there is a different life at the end of it, but there is and you're going to get there!

You are going to get through it, and look back on it, and it will become a memory.

For now, being prepared is going to help you get through with it and keep going.

You're going to need to use your mental strength to get through cancer treatment and in those tough moments, you want to have a way to take your mind away from pain or stress.

Like a torch to make your way through the darkness, you want to have a singular reason that you can visualize clearly and bring it to the in a difficult moment to carry you through.

Here is how it works for me...

When I walk into the day oncology unit for my chemo infusion, I'm instantly dreading the moment when I get the cannula in my arm.

My veins are tricky, so it's painful because it usually takes a few takes to get it right, and one trick I stumbled upon was to take my mind as far away from the present situation as possible.

As I'm sitting in that chair, with my arm out, I imagine myself back at home, having a pillow fight with my son.

He's jumping on the bed, laughing, throwing the pillow at me, I can hear his infectious laughter, and I can make out the sunlight streaming in through the bedroom window...

By then, the drip is already in my vein.

Who is there, waiting for you on the other side of cancer?

When you have a reason that is deeply personal, that resonates with you on a deep level, a reason speaks to you in a powerful way, to you, and you alone, this reason changes your physiology in a way you never thought possible, it bypasses your pain sensors, and lights you up when things are dark!

To anchor it in your mind, you want to find the right moment, and sometimes you need to clarify what that looks like exactly...

Who makes you happy and what does happiness look like to you?

Finishing school, or getting a job, becoming free of debt, or finding the person you love?

How would you know that's happened?

What can you see in front of you?

What can you hear?

What does it feel like to touch?

This moving image may only be a few seconds long, but , rich with emotion and detail, hold it in your mind, see what it feels like, and if it feels right, if it rings true for you, then you know that it's authentic and real,

What is the one word that is going to remind you about it?

Now, you can mentally hit the save button and store it.

I want that, I want this to be in my future, and helps you to save it.

helps you bring it up in an instant.

And this image that you can hold on to does not have to exist in the real world just yet.

It can be a part of your imagined future that you want to make true.

This is not daydreaming, but laying down the foundation for.

For if you can't imagine it, how can it come true for you?

Maybe there is a cause that hits home for you.

Any cause is always about helping out folks you care about, something you been through, or something that touched you in some way.

You can take this cause and break it down to a moment in time.

Maybe you are speaking up against rape, you're up on stage speaking about the horror of not knowing what to do and how you found a way of talking about it with your teacher.

And there's a kid who's sitting in the very last row who's been hiding in misery and shame for years. He's soaking in your every word, and it's a

revelation – he’s not alone anymore, he can speak up and tell his story and face the abuse he suffered for years.

What is on the other side of cancer? Who matters most to you? Who can’t you live without?

Finding internal reasons is very powerful. Like quitting smoking- I quit in a day because I wanted to. I did not want to be addicted because I saw what addiction did to my friends- and I stopped in a day. It’s not a mysterious superpower of the will - it’s a deep rooted reason to make it through. You just have to uncover your key reason for cancer.

This reason, this powerful, singular vision can be the current that carries you through the treacherous waters of dark thoughts, confusion and overwhelm.

## How To Differentiate Between Cancer, Side Effects And Unrelated Pain

You may be going about your day when you start to feel odd.

Maybe it’s an ache of one kind or another.

In a different time, you might have paid it no mind.

In fact, you might not have given another thought...

But right now, you can’t stop thinking about it – it must be cancer, and it’s getting worse...

Or is that a side effect from treatment?

And if so, what can I do?

Or maybe, it’s something else altogether?

What if it gets worse, or affect my treatment, screw up my entire life?!

And what happens when I’m gone, gone for good?

My friends – would they, truly, miss me?

Or hell, even remember me...

Would my wife find another man, a replacement?

It sneaks up on you, out of nowhere, and takes over everything you know and trust.

These worry thoughts get out of control, becoming more troublesome and irrational at every turn.

What you want to do is take out the raw emotion out and replace it with logic so that you can look at the situation objectively and decide what to do next.

Here are your 4 Gates of Stability, a simple 4 step process to work through the situation deliberately and methodically where the first step is our Sanity check whose purpose is to stop your mind from wandering off in a million directions, at a million miles an hour, analyse the situation and work out a plan of action.



No assumptions before evidence – we want to examine what you are dealing with in measured, rational way.

In order to get those worries out of your head, we are going to use a simply tool that I call an Outcome Map because it enables you visualise all the possibilities so you can decide what to do next.

You will only need your pen, paper and 5 minutes of your time.

In the middle of the blank page, write down the specific pain, ache or other worry that's troubling you right now.

Now, write down each probable outcome – what could it be?

Could it a side effect you read about?

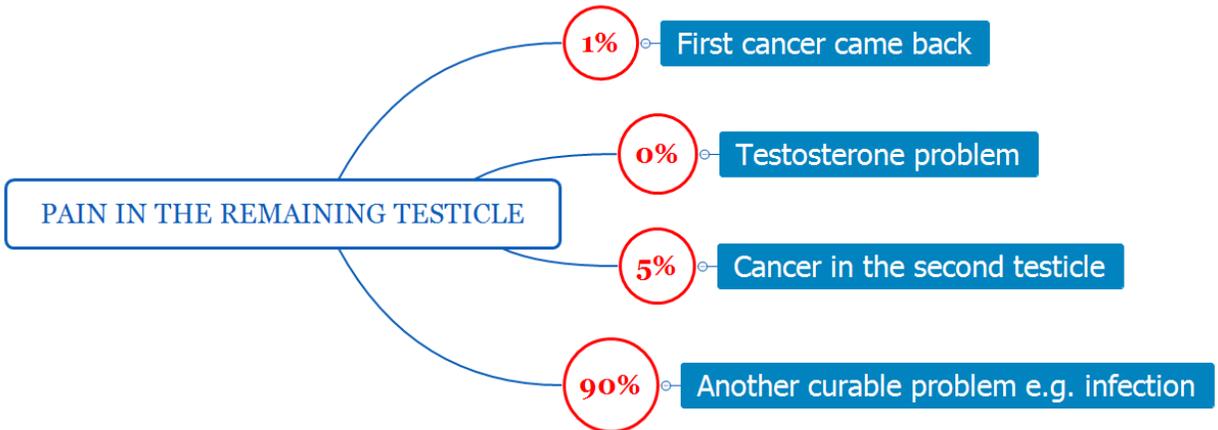
A complication from treatment?

Muscle problem, or something else altogether?

When you have all the possibilities in front of you, spend 30 seconds on each one to think through how likely each outcome actually is.

It doesn't have to be perfect – we simply want to have all the possibilities clearly laid out in front of you.

Here is an example for a specific pain



Now it's all laid in front of you, it's time to decide what the next best course of action is.

What is the one thing you can do about it today?

Now, you can see it for what it is and then decide what is going to be the one thing you are going to do about it, today.

Is it serious enough to go to the hospital?

Will you call up your specialist?

Or see your family doctor?

For more examples and video walkthrough of outcome map, go here:

<http://canceroutcomemap.com>

While your experience with cancer is unique, chances are there are people out there who have gone through your treatment, who had the same worries to deal with before.

So wouldn't it be great to talk to those people about it?

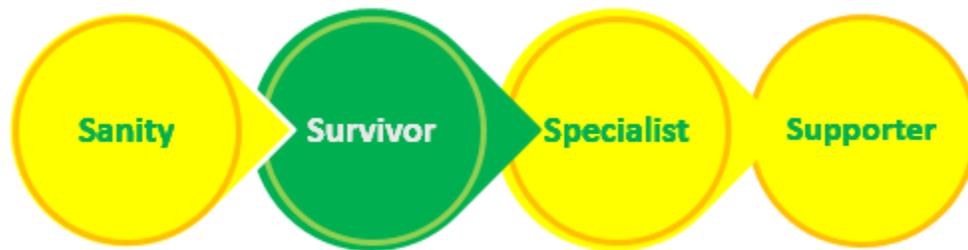
They have already survived cancer, or maybe they are only one step ahead of you – in any case, they know exactly what it's like to be staring into danger and not have the faintest clue what to do about it!

It can get lonely when you have no one to share your worries with...

And that is precisely why we huddle together in groups to share our experience and support each other through the tough times.

There are communities online that are centered on a particular type of cancer so you can get answers about things that are bothering you right now.

This is part Second step in our process, the Survivor check.



This is your direct line for getting the answers you need and the support you want, all in a matter of hours...

You can be safe in knowledge that you will be listened to and taken seriously because every person here knows exactly what it's like to scared, lost and have no idea what to do next, so they want to help, they are here to share their knowledge and experience!

These online communities are completely anonymous so all you have to do when you find one is create a username and password for yourself.

To save you the time and hassle of finding the right one, grab my free Online Community Guide that has top 3 online communities for most cancers:

<http://simplifycancer.com/community/>

When you are posting your question online, you want to make it easy for the person who is scanning the forum to decide if this is something they can help with.

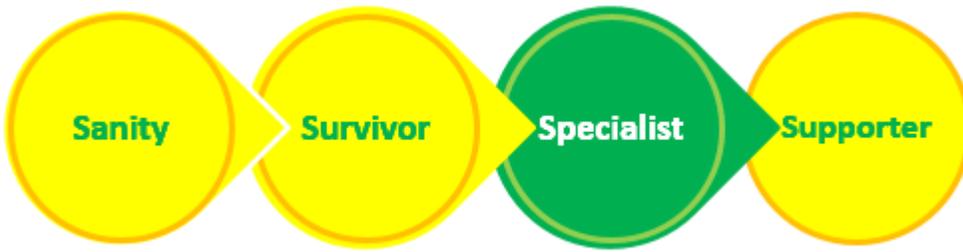
Think of your topic title like you a subject line for an email whose sole purpose is to help you decide whether you want to read the rest of the message, or not.

Make the subject clear and descriptive so it's easy for anyone to instantly tell if they can contribute: "Weird back pain 2 weeks after procedure X" or "Round 1 of BEP chemo – what to do with nausea?"

This is clear and specific enough for someone to say to themselves: “Yes, I know what that’s like, let me get in there and help!”

Within hours, you will have some input know whether it’s something you need to worry about and what you can do to right now.

Third, your Specialist check where our goal is to get timely advice from a medical expert.



Your specialist needs to know how you are travelling – or should, if they are any good!

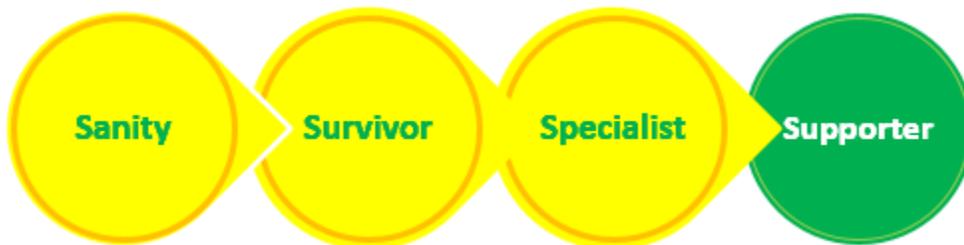
So don’t wait until the next appointment, call the hospital or your specialist’s rooms: “Hi, I am a patient of such and such, and I have an urgent issue I need to speak to him/her about. Can I book in a time to see him/her as soon as possible?”

If the appointment time is too far away, ask for a callback.

If you haven’t heard back that day, how can you reach out to an oncology nurse?

Next in line is your family doctor whose primary role is triage so if he or she can’t answer your specific question, it’s their job to find someone who can.

Fourth, and most important step, is your Supporter check.



It’s great to handle things on your own, things are manageable and not life threatening.

Cancer is not one of them.

Now is the time to bring your people around and get them to support in a way that puts you in control of the situation.

Let's face it, if you are not going to get their moral support now, then you never will!

No one knows you like your partner or that friend you grew up with and they give a crap and they can be honest and direct with you, if you let them know what you expect.

You might even say it's selfish to keep your worries to yourself because people who care about you, they want to help you, they want to help in some small way, so tell them what you want them to do!

At any stage, talk to someone you trust – your partner, relative, a friend.

Or if you don't have anyone that you want to share your worries with, find a professional.

There are fantastic counsellors and psychologists out there who work with people like you and me, people who have been through cancer.

They won't judge you, they know how to listen and they want to help.

Is there a help line you can ring and talk to a nurse?

Following these 4 steps will help you to take out the emotion out of worries that come up during treatment and replace it with logic and vision.

This puts you in control of the situation because you assess your symptoms in a calm, rational way.

This is Move On, the 3<sup>rd</sup> step of our AIM conversation when it comes to treatment, because now that you are in control of your treatment, you can move on with your life having regained a good portion of the much needed peace of mind.



Use the checklist below to decide what actions you are going to take for restoring calm and control during your cancer treatment:

- To help me make decisions about treatment, I will set up immediate follow up appointment with my specialist
- To help me make decisions about treatment, I will get a second opinion with another specialist by asking my doctor for the referral
- I will ask my oncologist / nurse / specialist / \_\_\_\_\_ for their email / phone /
- I like the idea of having worry time and I have scheduled mine to happen at \_\_\_\_\_
- I will break my worries apart by writing them down every \_\_\_\_\_
- I will use Outcome Map for specific worries
- I will get rid of worry through movement by \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_

When you are prepared and you are taking meaningful action, you know what's coming your way and how to deal with it.

My hope is that some of these actions make sense to where you are right now and you are ready to make it happen in your life to get through treatment and have the life you want despite cancer.

**Challenge #3: Who is going to be there for me?**

## Flying in the Face of Danger

It's a tough, upward climb through cancer so where do you find the strength to deal with all the craziness and the stress that you're confronted with?

You don't have an infinite supply of it, so this strength has to come from somewhere, and I believe that it has to come from people in your life.

People who won't get in the way, who are not showy or superficial, who want to be there for you.

One way or another, most of us are lucky to have those people by our side, and yet, we often leave them out, at the time when you need each other the most.

Worse, we don't even give them a chance to step up and be there for you in a real, meaningful way!

Let me explain...

Imagine you're on a plane, it's a regular flight you've a million times before.

You are in your seat, flicking through a magazine to pass the time...

When all of a sudden, the plane starts to shake, emergency lights flicker, someone is screaming out from their seat, and you are frantically trying to put your life mask on.

The plane takes a nosedive, and panic sets in, everyone is freaking out and you are trying to put on your lifejacket...

It all turns into a blur when you somehow scramble out of the wreckage, and now you're floating in the water, trying to catch your breath...

At this moment, would it be ok to ask for help?

Yes, of course, your life is on the line, you need all the help and support you can get...

It's obvious, right?

Yet, so that's not what we do sometimes when we crash into cancer.

Cancer does not have the immediacy of a plane crash, but it's a life threatening situation all the same – you are doing your best to stay afloat when things get out of control.

Obviously, you don't want your family and friends to freak out or worse, pity you in some way, but it's crucial to have them for you, on your side.

After all, this is cancer and it is going to be tough, but it doesn't have to be any harder than it should be when you share what you are going through with people that care about you!

Your support is not something you either have or you don't – it's a resource and this energy, this charge that comes from people around you.

This is what drives you onwards as you go through treatment, this is what pulls you through when you're in a pain, and this is what lifts you up when you're stuck in limbo, waiting for your next scan result!

It's the energy and the backing you get from your partner, your family, your friends, from your medical team, it's everyone you come across in your life who wants you to get through treatment in the best way possible and have the life you want beyond cancer.

But in order for them to be there for you, you've got to let them in and be honest and direct about what is bothering you right now.

Your true supporters want the real story, so it only natural to accept that you should never deal with cancer on your own!

This is the first step towards getting your supporters to be there for you in a real, meaningful way:



And when you talk about your worries, there is no need for drama, no need for epic revelations or teary eyed confessions...

All you want is to have an authentic conversation, every time you talk to someone you care about.

This is not a cover up, you are being honest and direct about what's going on in your life, things that you're happy about and things that are bothering you right now.

It's a relief to not have to overthink your conversations, something that I recognized when I stopped saying I'm fine when people were asking me how I'm going.

It has been so much easier to blurt out something that's been eating away at me for days:

"I've got this test coming up next week, that's when I'm going to find out if the treatment has worked or not, and I'm freaking out, because it can change my life in a big way."

When you lay it all out, there was no awkward moments, your people don't have to guess what's on your mind, and you are now having a totally different conversation, a conversation that is authentic and real.

Because you have nothing to hide, or protect those you care about from worry – they can take on a lot more than you think, as long as they know what they are dealing with.

It doesn't have to be epic or sophisticated, you're just being honest and genuine about something that is bothering you right now.

Of course, it doesn't mean you're going to talk about cancer all the time, it would drive you crazy!

Most of the time, you just want to have a conversation about stuff that has nothing to do with it, but just bringing it out in the open when it's troubling you on the inside.

Support seems like a heavy load – it smacks of grand gestures, of being superficial and fake, when it's the little things that can lift you up:

- Hearing a friendly voice when you are you are feeling like junk during treatment.
- Sharing a joke to break up the agonizing wait for your test results.
- Dropping by with a meal when you can't be bothered cooking.
- Driving you to the hospital so you can talk about anything other than cancer...

True support, like friendship, is never planned, it springs up on its own, often when you least expect it.

True support is mutual, you are there for each when the times get tough.

Don't turn your people away – let them know how they can be there for you!

## How To Get the Support You Want From People In Your Life

It's so easy to get caught out when something throws you off, unexpectedly...

Let's say you are walking down the street.

It's a nice day, you are enjoying the time alone with your thoughts, when suddenly, car swirls past at great speed, and with an agonising screech, slams into a tree...

Wow, that just came out of nowhere...

So, what do you do now?

Do you call the ambulance, or the police?

Or do you jump in and help to get the driver out of the wreckage?

Is that even safe – could your help, inadvertently, do more damage?

Maybe it's better to leave it to the authorities and stay out of the way...

And there are other people around – surely, someone has already called for help...

It's easy to lose yourself in a moment when you are face to face with an unexpected turn of events...

This is the reality many of your friends and family find themselves in when they find out you have cancer.

They want to help, they want to be there for you, but they don't know how.

They don't want to say the wrong thing, or do the wrong thing because they don't want to look insensitive or make you feel worse...

Often, they end up doing the thing that's easier – nothing.

This is the time for you to guide them to do the right thing by you.

Give them a chance to step up and prove themselves to be your true supporters!

The best way to do that is to explicitly tell them about the help you are looking for.

Make a list of things you want your people to do for you to eliminate guesswork and misunderstanding – you are setting expectations right from the get go.

You don't need to do it face to face – email works fine.

Unlike social media, email ensures you speak directly to the folks you want to share your news with and only them.

Put together an email that spells out exactly what you want, without being dramatic or needy.

Here is the email that I would write, given the chance:

Hi all,

As you may or may not know, I was recently diagnosed with \_\_\_\_\_ cancer.

If you want to know how the treatment works, here is a quick overview:

From/on dd/mm/yyyy, I will be starting/having \_\_\_\_\_ (chemo, procedure, radiation).

I have no idea how things will turn out, but ask me anything and you can visit me in the hospital – I will be staying at \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

The whole thing really sucks and we're in for a rough ride so I'd really appreciate your help with any of this:

1. Getting to and from the hospital
2. Doing groceries (once a week)
3. Babysitting

If there's something you'd like to volunteer for, just hit Reply and let me know.

Thanks,

Joe

I saved 3 more email templates for you here:

<http://simplifycancer.com/kit>

No guesswork, no misunderstanding, no excuses.

That's what Integrate is all about – making your cancer worries a part of the conversation:



When you get your people to help in a way that's meaningful for you, your true supporters will be grateful to you because you made it easy for them to be there for you, without getting needy or weird.

They don't need to pretend like they care – they will prove it to you, beyond any doubt by listening to you and supporting you in the way that you want to be supported and give you the strength you need to deal with cancer.

Now, you take charge of the situation in a way that is going t

### 3 Reasons Why Some People Turn Away From You During Cancer

With chemo, the unreality of the situation got me cornered.

This cancer, this treatment, none of it seems right, it was never supposed to happen...

Not to me, anyhow –you always think that cancer is something that only happens to other people.

And that's what's scary now, when all bets are off, you have no idea how this treatment is going to work out.

If only this treatment came with a guarantee, a promise that it's definitely going to work...

The oncologist should be the one to sign it, in the presence of the oncology nurse, and then you could frame it up on the wall as the reminder that everything will turn out just fine!

Hoping against hope – how can I fill in this gaping void where predictability and conviction have disappeared into?

I need some strength to get through this, some reminder that I didn't dream it all up, this drip in my hand...

It's my people, they will lend me their strength to get through this treatment and beyond.

With technology that bands us together, reaching out to me has never been easier, and yet...

There are no phone calls, no messages, no emails.

What is happening?

This cannot be right, these are my closest friends, there's got to be a problem somewhere, some technical glitch with the network, or maybe they are jamming the reception here at the hospital...

Yes, this must be it!

With all the equipment, it all makes sense now.

To confirm my theory, I stumble out to the ward to find a landline.

There it is, in the corner – I dial my mobile expecting the familiar voicemail greeting when my phone eagerly lights up, playing my silly jingle once again.

For several long seconds, I stare at it, transfixed, stubbornly refusing to accept my new reality.

And then it hits me...

Nobody is coming.

The people I trusted, the people I thought I knew, they choose to abandon me at the time when I need them most.

And it is a choice, conscious or otherwise.

In a matter of weeks, my old, well put together social persona has unraveled in the most spectacular fashion.

It hurts, worse than the pain – at least with cancer, it's nothing personal.

Many months later, I will find out that this happens to most of us, that there is at least one person who is not anywhere near where you want them to be...

After working through this and cross checking with fellow cancer travelers, I believe it comes down to these 3 reasons:

1. They are awkward about death and dying and you having cancer gets in the way of supporting you
2. They are afraid of looking stupid and insensitive by saying the wrong thing. You don't want to feel judged and you don't want to lose face, if you can help it.

Often, this is the person who genuinely wants to be there for you, but doesn't know how. They need your guidance to be support you on your terms, so let them know, give them a chance to step up and be there for you!

3. Sometimes, you grow distant with people.

Because it happens over time, you don't notice it, not at first.

And it can take something like cancer to bring it to light, make you see things in a different way.

It hurts, there is no running away from that.

Hurts when they have no room for you in their life, but there is nothing you can do to change it.

Except doing the right thing for yourself – putting your energy towards those people who stand by your side as you go through cancer, who support you on your terms.

With cancer, the true nature of things is revealed.

It may not be what you want or expect, but what is real.

Finally, you can Move On with your life towards people that are there for you, that listen and pay attention, people who truly care about you and put you ahead of their own issues:



Cancer helped me to start judging people in my life by what they do, not what they say.

Those who are there for you, they aren't doing it to tick the box, or make a show of it...

They just show up.

So when an old friend came to visit me at the hospital, she's come to be by my side and listen, and it was such a relief to be heard, because it's important, and nothing else mattered.

There was no need to put on a brave face because I wasn't judged on my performance, I could speak my mind freely.

And it felt right, to be myself, to be honest and direct, without any drama, or show, to bask in full and undivided attention, to march your worries out of the inside, away, away, any which way you can.

When you find those who truly listen, especially if you like to keep to yourself because it all builds up inside of you and ultimately, you want a way to let it out and let it go so that you can move on with your life during treatment.

Yes, some people are going to fall short of where you want them to be, but there will be plenty who come out in are those who will surprise you beyond your expectations, who will stand by you through cancer on your terms.

Being open and transparent about what you want and what you need is the best way to weed out the pretenders so that you can focus solely on those who truly care about you.

Embrace your true supporters, and give the others a chance to get out of your way.

## Looking Out for Your True Supporters

You know, I remember that just before starting chemo, I took my 3 year old son to our favorite park.

It's got a little pond, and a playground.

And it's very quiet, especially on a weekday.

I couldn't stop laughing as my son chased after the seagulls, and we had sandwiches and sultanas under a palm tree.

It was a perfect day, the day I wanted to last forever...

So when the treatment began, I didn't want him to worry, or talk about what's happening - daddy is sick, and it'll be over before you knows it.

But when I looked into Michael's eyes when he was sitting on my hospital bed, I saw the pain, the tension of not being privy to some things, some hidden knowledge that you can't explain.

That's when I realised that by wanting to shield my boy from my cancer, I excluded him.

This is what creates suffering for you, and those who truly care about you, at the time when you're using up all your strength and resilience to deal with treatment and life beyond it.

And those words, those unsaid words about the pain we carry, these are instruments of torture for those you love.

When it comes to your cancer, it's your loved ones who are hit the hardest.

Your mother, your partner, your closest friend.

Their entire worlds are turned upside down.

Their plans laid bare, their future is on the line.

It's cruel and terrifying to watch you suffer, to agonize over the day to day problems that still need to be taken care of, for what you have together, the future that is plunged into the unknown.

It's terrifying to be powerless, when there is nothing you can do to change things, to make you feel better...

But you can change that!

You can tell them straight up about what you are going through, and how they can help.

Do you want to be around people?

Is there something you want to do more of?

Do you need more alone time?

You know what's good for you, but your partner, your kids, your closest allies, they can't read your mind – you've got to be explicit about how they can support you!

Your closest allies, your conditionals, they need to know what you are going through.

They can take it.

So to make it easier for you both, the best thing is tell her what you want.

It doesn't need to be a huge moment, just tell her exactly what you want, when there is a decision that needs to be made.

Say you are making plans for the weekend, tell her exactly what you're your mind – maybe you don't really feel like seeing anyone and want to drop off the kids and go to the movies?

Whatever that is for you, don't lock yourself away and keep her guessing!

No need to “take it like a man”, to march on as if everything is just fine...

This is cancer, you don't need to put on a brave face!

The manly thing is to put your closest allies first and give them the comfort of being there for you, on your terms.

Tell them exactly what you need – and if that means them giving you the head space you need, so be it.

Whatever it is you do to clear your head – fishing, playing guitar, include your closest allies, your partner, kids, parents, friends, they need to be a part of what you are going through.

We expect others to get you, to intuitively understand what you want, and it seems so obvious because you know exactly where you are at, but to those who don't have the direct experience, the reality isn't so clear and the response is elusive.

People in your life can never be sure what goes through your head and they are afraid of saying the wrong thing or doing the wrong thing so we need to guide them and explain what we want from them.

Nothing is worse than silence.

It has the power of breaking the strongest bonds.

Our ability to read others gets a knock under duress so speaking out is even more vital than ever.

The worst thing you can do is to try and suffocate your fear by keeping it to yourself.

It will only build up, slowly, until it breaks out to put you in a panic and take it out on people you care about.

Maybe it's your lover, your mother, or a friend.

It's never simple to put this in practice when you are on the edge – but can you find a way to include others without confrontation or old patterns getting in the way?

Is there something you can do together that you would all enjoy, or least get along?

Maybe going to a see a sports game, or out for a coffee, or home for dinner.

Talk about it to as many people as possible – your partner, family, work mates.

Yes, it's awkward and wrong way up, but none of this is your fault.

If they ask you how you're going, tell them exactly what you are going through right now – there is not one reason to keep it to yourself!

There is no need for drama – just blurt out whatever on your mind when they ask.

People respond in a powerful way when you are honest and direct with them because they know what you are going through!

Taking a moment to say thanks goes a long way to show it means a lot to you and that you don't take it for granted.

Support from people you care about is going to pull you up instead dragged down by worry and uncertainty.

Accept that you can't and shouldn't do it on your own and that the best thing you can do for yourself is to guide your people to how they can be there for you.

Integrate their support into your everyday life by making it a part of the conversation.

Appreciating those who are there for you and giving the chance for those folks who are not willing to step up giving them a chance to step back so you can Move On with your life.

When you can honestly look at things through their eyes and ask – what’s this it like for this person who clearly cares so much for me?

Do they truly know how I feel?

Am I being self-centered, dismissive or harsh?

Use these statements as your action steps for your true supporters:

- I will talk about cancer to my family including \_\_\_\_\_
- I am going to tell my family how they help me, and not get in the way
- Every day, I am going to share with my partner what bothers me today
- I am going to tell my people how they can help via an email
- I am going to tell my people how they can help in person
- I will explain my situation to people I work with and keep them informed
- I will provide advice and workaround for people I work with while I’m dealing with cancer
- I will ring my cancer non-profit to ask about legal, financial, medical and other services they have that can help me right now
- I will keep my people informed about my cancer through \_\_\_\_\_
- I will rant about cancer to other people in my life that include \_\_\_\_\_
- I will talk to a person outside of my social circle who doesn’t know me and has no agenda \_\_\_\_\_

This is what you do when your world is under attack – you bring your supporters onside by make them a part of it.

The easiest way to make sure they support you in a meaningful way is to send out an email that has a list of things you need help with and asking your people to volunteer for things they want to help with.

People who care will thank you for being frank and honest, so don't leave them guessing where your head is at and how they can be there for you.

This is the real man's true superpower – put those close to you first, and your ego off to the side.

And you know what?

In the midst of all the craziness, it's easy to forget the little things.

A thank you, a kind word, a smile.

These tokens of gratitude create enormous goodwill and positivity to help you through treatment.

It seems obvious, but we simply don't do it enough!

Pain and worries, they get to you, and it's so easy to let those simple things slip, to take things for granted...

With cancer, empty words mean nothing and good intentions go to die.

Authentic is separated from the false, once and forever more.

Embrace those whose words of support are backed up by their actions – you have no time or energy to spare for the rest.

## **Challenge #4: How do I deal with waiting and uncertainty?**

## How To Divert Your Thoughts Away From Cancer

During treatment, you are constantly asking yourself – is it going to work?

Are those side effects going to screw me up?

With my chemo, we knew that one drug in particular can mess up my lungs, and if it's starting to go that way, then we need to find out early and change to another chemo.

My oncologist says the only way to find out is through movement.

There will be pain in the lungs if it start to become a problem, s

So every night, I fall out of the house for a sprawl.

And it makes me better.

When I stumbling along the railway tracks like a zombie,

My ears are ringing, mind is shrouded in a fog.

Slow and deliberate, I force the next move.

Forward!

Away from the pain that takes over the body, and the worry that takes over the mind.

No more!

Enough, I'm done with having my entire life on pause, waiting to be told about what comes next...

Cancer is a part of my life for now, and I can't run away anymore.

I can't have my life here, on this side, and have cancer over on the other side.

They can't run in parallel – it's thinking about two different things at the same time.

Two roads that merge into one.

One life, one direction, and the road is clear.

And in that instant, the world finds new colors.

Bright, sprawling textures, pierced by the fading sunlight.

Suddenly, everything has a purpose – the railway track in the ravine, the abandoned backyards, the chemicals in my blood, they come together to create what I crave most of all...

Freedom.

Freedom from living in the shadow of this disease.

Freedom to be with people I can't live without, to be myself, to live the life that made me happy.

That's when I truly came to terms with the reality of cancer.

Yes, I can't change if this treatment is going to work or not, but that is the only thing that is beyond my control.

Everything else I can directly influence or control in some way.

First, how much you know about what's going on during treatment – when you put your trust in your medical team, you have complete confidence that all of your questions will be answered, and that you know how to find your specialist or nurse when you need to.

You can always book a follow up appointment to clear things up, or have a phone number to ring to get your urgent questions answered.

When you know how treatment works and what it's all about, you are not a bystander anymore, you are in charge of the proceedings because you know exactly what's going on!

The second thing you can control is how to deal with things that come up during and after treatment.

It's an experience you never asked for, but now that you are here, it helps to talk to people who have been through this before, they can give you advice on tackling a specific problem, be it a side effect from treatment, after effects or pain, and share what they would have done differently, given the chance.

You can find cancer survivors using my free Online Community Guide:

<http://simplifycancer.com/community/>

The third part of your life during cancer that you have clear and direct influence over is the support you receive.

It's true that most people want to be there for you, but they don't know how, so be explicit about what's going on for you when they ask, or when something is bothering you.

You can do it without any drama, you're just being honest and direct about what's happening.

Because they don't know what you're thinking, even the people who know you the most!

Your partner does not know what is going through your head, and when you talk to them about your worries, or pain, they are going to be grateful because they don't have to second guess themselves about what's going on with you.

Life doesn't stop when you get cancer, and you can put things in motion to make it easier along the way.

When you talk to people you work with about your cancer and how they can support you, you're making way to get the support you need through it so you can take the time off you need for treatment, work part time through recovery, or leave early to get to your specialist appointment.

Most of us don't ask for advice, but then again, most of us are not dealing with a life threatening situation that you've never been a part of before.

This is why talking to your hospital and your cancer non-profit about legal and finance help is so crucial – they will tell you about things you have never considered because you never knew they existed.

Timely advice can make a huge difference to the way you are dealing with cancer.

This is true not only for when you're talking to your specialist or your nurse, but also getting the perspective of people who understand the world of the cancer patient, those folks who provide support.

This includes an exercise physiologist who can set up a personalized exercise routine to speed up your recovery after treatment, a licensed dietician who can help you find the right foods to get you through treatment, and a qualified counsellor or psychologist who can give you advice on dealing with stress and tension throughout cancer.

This is the freedom from worrying about what else can go wrong, when there is a so much to make right!

After all, hope is the only thing stronger than fear.

When you shift your thoughts away from uncertainty, towards things you can directly control or influence, you give yourself the freedom to deal with cancer on your terms.

## How To Combat The Paralysing Wait For Results

With cancer, you're constantly waiting for something to happen – the next appointment, the next treatment session, the next test result...

It's hard when you when you're caught up in this new state of constant in between, when everything hinges on the result...

Thoughts are slippery, the mind longing for any certainty, something to cling to for a while.

And I hate myself for it – for not being able to think straight, for not pulling myself together when I want to, for spiraling down the spiral of doom and paranoia from just one tiny thought...

It may only be a half formed suggestion, a tiny whisper of doubt, but this worry, it takes root in your mind, and starts growing, and then you lose the thread of what started it, and now you are just freaking out...

How do you keep your balance when everything is fluid and uncertain?

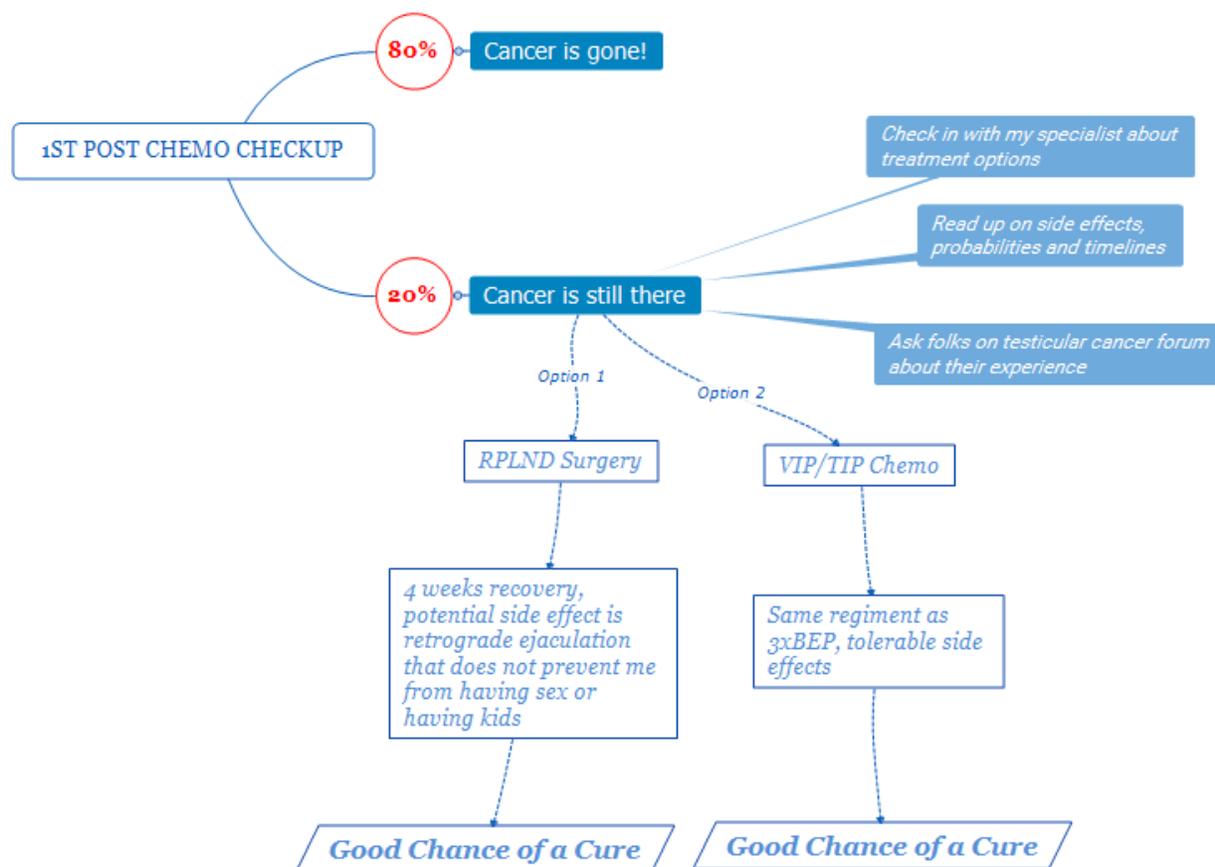
To drive it back and prevent your worries from taking over, you need an anchor to tie you back to the reality of what is happening so that you can rationally think about where you are right now.

We can apply our Outcome Map to stay on top of worries and uncertainty, to ground you in the facts of you are dealing with right now and stops your imagination from going out of control.

Take out a piece of paper and write down what the next milestone (your first post treatment checkup, for example).

Then, write out each possible outcome (cancer has gone, tumor has shrunk, it's grown, no change), the likelihood of each outcome as a percentage, and what you will need to do in each case.

Take this map with you, on paper, take a photo of it on your phone and keep it with you so that when you start to worry, you can pull it up and re-orientate yourself around what is going on and stops irrational thoughts and uncertainty from pulling you aside.



Now, you are safe in knowledge you did everything in your power to be ready for it and the rest is out of your hands.

And when it gets to you, you can honestly say to yourself – I’ll worry about it later.

When you set aside some time for worrying if the cancer is spreading or if the treatment has worked, time yourself with a stopwatch in your phone.

Take the worry that’s spinning around in your mind, put it in the spotlight and turn it this way and that, in your mind.

Is it real?

What the chances it’s going to come true?

Can you do anything about it?

Maybe ask your specialist, talk to your doctor or check in with your cancer community online?

Maybe talk it through with your partner or a friend to see if you are overreacting, or just vent.

Poise: 1<sup>st</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm

On the first day of chemo, as the liquid from the black bag was slowly descending into my vein, I thought of my son – how would he remember me?

Or rather, how do I want him to remember me?

Being strong,

Looking at the bright side of life?

Or making decisions and being in charge?

None of it rang true, until I stumbled on one word – fun.

Now, what does that look like in real life?

Well, I want him to remember the fun times together, pillow fights, new adventures every weekend, lazing about on the couch, chasing each other around in the backyard...

I struck gold, and fun became my motto.

Whenever we were home, a light would go off in my head – fun, that's what we want now!

And I'd tickle him, chase him around the house, or make up some silly song about the dolphin and the dragon being friends...

Within a week, I saw a profound change in him – yes, he expects his silly daddy to goof around, but on a deeper level, what is going to stand out for him in years to come are the carefree times of the childhood days.

On a deeper level, I began to feel more comfortable with myself and our way of life.

I no longer feel guilty about giving him ice cream before dinner, I don't beat myself up over not teaching him to read ahead of time, or .

I then started to apply this blueprint to how I was with my wife, my mum by choosing one overarching quality that I wanted to get across and over time they, too, responded in a powerful way.

In some counterintuitive way, it gave me a certain poise because I became fine with me as I was as opposed to myself as I should be.

It made me more present because when you're focused, you're just in it, you're not worried about cancer or what might happen.

The way things are meant to be – a natural of your relationship, with no conscious effort involved on your part.

This process that I call **Selective Memory** has changed my relationships for the better, and it can do the same for you and your life!

When you pick out your top 3 people you care about the most, how do you see want them to see you?

Write down the person's name and how you would sum up that quality, in one word.

This keyword then becomes a trigger for you to show the side of yourself that you want to shine the most.

It's the living, breathing legacy that is created in every living moment, every time you are around your child, your partner, your best friend, so that when they think of you, they get the best version of you, the one you dedicate to them!

At first, you remind yourself every time you are around them with your keyword, but within days, it becomes second nature...

The way it's meant to be – a logical extension of your relationship without any conscious effort involved on your part.

This feeling takes center stage to forge an ever stronger bond between you.

You are completely immersed in the moment and that's when you create the ultimate poise that brings more balance into your life.

Placement: 2<sup>nd</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm

While you can't stop worrying about pain or the next checkup, you can get on top of the tension and stress that builds up in your body.

But how do you do that?

It's been on my mind for the longest time ever until I decided to try out every de-stressing approach I could think of, from mindfulness, meditation and yoga...

In a weird way, I felt completely relaxed as I was doing it, but it did not take away the underlying tension and worry.

So what I discovered is that relief from stress and tension comes through intense focus, not relaxation.

You release this energy through movement when you consistently pushing yourself forward.

In the past, we were told that rest is the remedy for every, yet we now know that it's simply not the case.

Research tells us that exercise is not only a powerful tool for circumventing stress, but it also helps with treatment related fatigue, "chemo brain" and other side effects that come with cancer.

I love running and resistance training because I can do it on my own because it makes it easy to plan around my everyday life, but many folks who went through cancer talk about different sports like cycling, football or surfing, but ultimately, choose what's right for you – something that you can keep doing without forcing yourself through it.

Exercise physiologist can help you by creating a tailored exercise program that is right for you so that you're consistently pushing yourself just enough to get results (have more energy, clear your head, lose weight), but not to the point where you are pushing yourself too far.

For mental focus, the best is chess because you have to constantly have to assess the situation and take control of the situation, you've got to put yourself in the shoes of your opponent and you have to have a plan to win

You can't escape worry during cancer – but you can release all that built up energy when you channel into focus on physical and mental sports

Worries during cancer grow like weeds – if you don't cut it regularly, it's going to grow and take over the place.

## Purpose: 3<sup>rd</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm

With cancer, it's so hard to make sense of it all.

I often find myself staring into space, thoughts jumbled together, like spaghetti, there is no energy, no spark...

It can be hard to pick yourself and get on with things.

So one time, I thought to myself – if this my last day, what would I do right now?

If there was no more time left, what can I do, today?

Immediately, my family came to mind.

I need to be with them, with people I care about the most, I want to be with them, to show my love in the simplest and most brutal way that I know of showing up and being there, fully, without any distractions.

I want to leave a legacy of being the person I always wanted to be, someone capable of making a real difference, to help someone right now, when they need it.

I am going to have to wait for my test results, and that is out of my control, but that's the only thing that I'm willing to wait around for.

So how can I wait, wait for anything anymore?

Things that seemed important faded away, in an instant because this questions because whenever I ask myself about what would I do if this was my last day alive, it clears my head, in an instant.

When I'm driving to work – I can't do anything about the traffic and ultimately, who cares? I can get lost in the music I love or get into a new podcast.

Incredible weight lifted off my shoulders:

When I'm in a traffic jam, and there are cars cutting in front of me, and I'm running late to pick up my kid from childcare, and I'm powerless to do anything about it, I ask myself – what if this was my last day in this life, what would I do?

Would I get angry, would I wound myself up about it all?

No, this is what I'm working with, I just need to do my best, and so I put on the music that I love, and I think of the quiet night at home when I'll be able to relax, and that instantly puts me in a good place.

With this clarifying question, I no longer worry about the long list of things that need to be done at work, I concentrate on the things that need to be done first and I don't do any overtime, I stay out of politics and drama, I avoid egos and conflicts as best I can.

I stopped going things out of habit when your heart is not in it, I stopped following other people's agendas and cleared away commitments and expectations that I refused to subscribe to.

My purpose is clear – and that has created the headspace that I need to focus on things that really matter to me because everything else is a distraction.

The best thing is, the plans make themselves now – it's a matter of natural selection.

I initially began prompting myself throughout the day, and it has gradually become a new, simpler way of life.

Now that you have more room in your life, you can focus on your top 3 priorities – your people, your passions and your projects

It's an incredible weight lifted off your shoulders as it clears away those needless commitments you sign up to, or other people's agendas, going through the motions when your heart is not in it, or doing things out of habit alone.

When you tune out all distractions, your worries fade into the background, and you start reclaim the peace of mind you so desperately need right now because you are bringing purpose to everything that you do in your life!

And you already know your purpose – you may not have spoken it out loud just yet.

It's what drives you in life and what legacy you want leave in life. Mission is how you bring it to life, a way to help people you care about – your own mission, the one you create and shape or becoming a part of an existing cause through volunteering or social enterprise.

Embarking on a personal mission is about finding the cause that's bigger than you – your family, your friends, people you genuinely care about.

It's what we all need on some level, to be a part of something bigger than us, this is what made us strive towards a bigger, brighter future.

This is what makes us happy, this is what makes us fulfilled, more than money, more than goals, more than ambition because it's intrinsically connected to our values of finding our own place in the world and make a difference, however .

If you are struggling to put it into words, start with the end in mind.

What have you been putting off for later, when you have more time?

What are you proud of on a deep, personal level?

Did you struggle in your life in one way or another, and then found a way out?

It may be something you are doing now, but maybe you're not seeing it that way at all.

Tell you what, there are amazing people on the testicular cancer forum who put in their time and effort to help others that may not seem like a big deal to them, but it's a huge help for a person who's struggling with it. You don't need to be a saint, but it helps you to be doing something that you believe in, something that feels right inside.

You choose who you want to help, when and how.

Every checkup or test is a checkpoint when I ask yourself – have I been living my best life?

Have I been living the life of tiny adventures every single day, with my family, have I been helping other

And if the answer is an emphatic yes (I give absolutely everything to make that true), then I know that no matter what happens at the crossroads, I have not a single regret.

Any Day, This Can Be Taken Away

The warmth of her naked body pressed against mine.

I don't want to wake her. The warmth of her skin is a delicate drug. Its intensity is both overwhelming and soothing. How can every tiny crinkle add up to perfection?

One thought lingers the back door: "Any day this can be taken away".

I smile, every second a privilege.

Secluded in my garden shade, like a vampire on the run from the sun.

The intoxicating smell of summer, untampered by chemo.

Time seems to stretch to infinity, but I know it's just a trick of the mind.

One thought enters through the back door: "Any day this can be taken away".

This is my life.

Mine, and I don't ever want it to stop and I will never give it away.

I promise that no moment is to be taken lightly, or forgotten about, or passed by.

Any day, it can be taken away.

This is my mantra, an instant hit of right now, the only force that matters.

One day at a time is the way a child experiences the world – when did we forget how to do that?

Future was immense and distant, past – insignificant and easily forgotten, with only the present to inhabit.

It's the beat running through your veins – once you find it, you never let it go.

Can you feel it?

# Outro

One word, one name, one gesture, is all it takes to give the story away.

You can't forget it, and it's not because I heard them many times – they are alive with people.

Real people, not the distant shadows of Holocaust, hidden away in a nameless monument.

In their naked, heart-warming simplicity of shtetl life, they are alive.

Each one a precious life, caught mid-flight.

My grandfather never spoke of the Holocaust. Not of the murders of his parents and two of his brothers, and every friend, foe and familiar he has ever known. Or the war and how he got his limp.

But it could not break him.

He built his life along those memories and values most sacred, not the atrocities and horrors that haunted him.

Not ignore it, but live in spite of events that are beyond our control.

He learned how to heal.

How to fall in love, make a family and save lives.

He chose to define himself by the memories he wanted for to keep and to share and to grow the future he wanted to be a part of, no matter how scary the present.

How is cancer is going define you, now that it's here?

Now that is the choice you can make.

You choose between the inevitable pain of treatment and the avoidable suffering that comes with keeping it all to yourself.

You choose a misery alone or sharing your pain with your true supporters who want you to win.

You choose between worrying yourself sick or seeking out answers from the folks who went on this path before, who know what it's like and want to help you.

You have a choice to curse your rotten luck, fate and the mighty circumstance...

Or admit to what you always knew, but were not forced to confront – that life is unpredictable, precious and worth its weight in gold.

That the only people who matter are the ones you can't be without.

That the only ambition worth pursuing is the one you want to be remembered for.

That the only lasting difference you make is for the people you care about.

That the only thing worth planning for is today because, cancer or not, you will never get it back.

So, my friend...

What's next for you?

**M**y name is Joe and for me, cancer was always something that happens to somebody else - until it lands on you.

That's why it's such a shock - everything is up in the air and it's a big mental effort to pull yourself together and get on with life despite cancer.

Losing my testicle, chemo and procedure hammers home what I always knew, but was never forced to confront in a real, tangible way - how fragile and short life is and how I need to make the most of it, on my terms.



## **Joe Bakhmoutski**

Founder of Simplify Cancer

[www.simplifycancer.com](http://www.simplifycancer.com)