



# **SIMPLIFY** **CANCER**

---

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

**BY JOE BAKHMOUTSKI**

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	13
How To Break the Chain of Non-Stop Thoughts about Cancer	16
Stop Cancer from Running Your Life	20
CHALLENGE #2: WHAT HAPPENS NOW?	25
When You Have The Right Environment for Treatment	26
Your First Specialist Visit	29
How To Make the Right Decision About Treatment	32
Prepared for Treatment	35
Pains and Aches During Treatment	37
How To Differentiate Between Cancer, Side Effects And Unrelated Pain	41
CHALLENGE #3: WHO IS GOING TO BE THERE FOR ME?	48
Flying in the Face of Danger	49
How To Get the Support You Want From People In Your Life	52
3 Reasons Why Some People Turn Away From You During Cancer	54
Looking Out for Your True Supporters	57
CHALLENGE #4: HOW DO I DEAL WITH WAITING AND UNCERTAINTY?	63
How To Divert Your Thoughts Away From Cancer	64
How To Combat The Paralysing Wait For Results	66

<b>Poise: 1<sup>st</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Placement: 2<sup>nd</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Purpose: 3<sup>rd</sup> Support Pillar To Restore Stability and Calm</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Any Day, This Can Be Taken Away</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>OUTRO</b>	<b>76</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 epic 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 – the shock of cancer diagnosis is holding.

It prevents you back from focusing on your 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 your diagnosis is unfolding in front of you, you also can't help but think that this is something that is already taken place, in the past.

It's in the past, and no matter how crazy your life has been ever since, it's in the past.

You have already lived through it and moved on.

You are not up there in the lights, you are in your seat, and in a way, what's unfolding out there on the stage has nothing to do with you...

Not anymore.

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 make out the voices out there on the stage, but like yesterday's weather, it has nothing to do with you anymore.

You are walking away from your diagnosis away from the shock and the injustice of it all, towards now.

You can't change what happened, but now you are in control of the situation.

Now, you can decide where you put your energy and you're going to take on treatment and the life beyond.

You are done fighting against the sentence that has been handed down to you by fate, and 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 the unknown...

Now, you can start dealing with your disease on your terms.

Getting cancer is never deserved, just or fair.

You cannot stop it from coming into your life, unasked – no one can change that, but we can accept it for what it is.

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 your cancer aside, put it in a place where it's no longer running your life.



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

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

So let's make a deal with cancer, a treaty 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 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 will reflect who you are.

Make your own version and 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.

Yes, cancer is here, but it’s not running your life.

Not anymore.

Now, you can direct your energy and your strength towards treatment and having the life you want despite cancer.

## This Is Not The End

In the beginning, the life you had before cancer runs parallel to your new reality of living with cancer.

The familiar life you own has a rhythm and it's filled with things that make you feel normal.

It's a rhythm you are comfortable with.

You wake up, have your breakfast, you talk to your partner, you go to work, check the news online, call a friend.

But then, you switch gears and you dive into the reality of having to deal with cancer!

This is when you go to your specialist, you make time for tests, you get treated at the hospital.

You want to keep them separate because you don't want your cancer life to take over...

These two lives could not be more different - they would never meet.

But the problem is, you still have your scan results on your mind, and how the treatment is going, and you can't stop thinking about this weird pain that you're having...

It's in your head and 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 want this cancer gone, to never even happen in the first place, and yet it's here, watching your every move.

You're pulled apart by the constant tension around the way your life is right now versus the way you want to be!

It's pulling you apart, taking away the energy you need for your treatment and your recovery.

It requires a great deal of mental effort and concentration to lead a double life!

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

The amount of stress 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 response and you can't afford wasting energy.

There is so much going on and you are bound to spread yourself thin when you do more than you can take on.

This is when you start overthinking everything and getting down on yourself...

For me, I began catching myself in the act of telling people what they want to hear and how pointless that was.

Who am I kidding?!

This is cancer, it's supposed to be hard!

So became more honest and direct about my life, about things that were hard to talk about, things that put me on edge.

When my wife asked me how my day was, I told her about my worries around returning to work after treatment.

I told her about the support I had from folks on the testicular cancer forum and how that made me a more prepared.

It helped me to open up about things that were bothering me and it made things easier for her to relate to my struggle.

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.

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

That made things easier and I didn't have to worry about work during treatment.

When my friend asked me how my day was, I told him I'm freaking out about starting chemo and staying at the hospital.

He came to visit me at the hospital and brought me a new book that cheered me up and made it easier to pass the time.

When you make a cancer a part of your everyday life, you don't need to find the right thing to say, or being the hero.

Now, you are having a real conversation about things that matter, with genuine people who care!

This is the **Integrate** part of our **AIM** framework where you make cancer a part of your life that makes you more connected to your values and your people.



These two lives, before cancer and the now, they are one and the same.

The best way to fuse these two lives together is through open communication with your people.

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

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

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

We expect more from people when you are dealing with cancer because it's a trying a time for you.

You want them to know what you're up against 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 right now?

What's keeping you up at night?

What scares you the most right now, and why?

What do you need?

What would make your life easier?

If you have a partner, you can use the times you spend together on a regular basis to have a conversation.

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

Don't keep your family, friends and coworkers guessing on what is the right thing to say or do...

Tell them - be as explicit as you can be!

It's easy to send a group email – this way, you don't have to repeat yourself every time!

Get your people to come with you to your specialist appointment to keep you company.

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

Melting these two realities together 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 fairy tale 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 want to get rid of those worries when they come up.

You want to draw those worries out in the open, break them apart, examine each one and find the best way to deal with it.

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

Petty arguments can snowball into awkward, misshapen things that hang over you.

These are the difficult conversations that you've got to have...

There is no way around it – bring whatever is bothering into the open so that you can deal with it and get on with your life.

A powerful way to get these worries is to write them out of yourself, and here is why it's good for you...

First, you breathe easier when you get things off your chest.

It's for your eye so there is no need to filter anything out or find the right words to tell your worry the right way.

Second, some worries are bound to surprise you.

When you turn off your filters, there will be things you never even considered because they are hiding deep in your head.

You can find a solution that did not come to mind before because you never had the chance to examine it on its own.

Like a friend who can't figure out a way out of a work mess they are in...

They are so caught up in the situation that 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 more manageable.

Right now, these things that are bothering you, they build on top of one another, they blend together 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, there is no room to hide for them anymore...

It's out of your head, out in the open, you can see each worry for what it is and find a way around it.

Use 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 on, 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 does it bother me?
- What's behind it, is there another reason?
- 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.”

I never admitted this to myself in those terms before and I realised that I need to do something about it.

So I explained to my manager my treatment is going to play out in the next three months and when I am expecting to return.

He reassured me that life comes first and set things in motion to redistribute my workload for the next three months.

His support gave me the much needed peace of mind when it comes to money.

Another worry:

“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.

My oncologist reassured me about my chances and explained about what we can do if things don’t go to plan.

I reached out to people on the testicular cancer forum with questions and their encouragement and support has been immense.

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.

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



To save yourself the trouble of repeating the same things over and over again, you can choose a channel you like to share your experience with people you care about.

Talk about your wild ride through cancer through a blog, video or email.

You decide how to tell the story and who to include in on it.

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

When a worry thought pops into my head, I can say to myself – I’m going to worry about it later.

Once you have set worry aside (I recommend 10 minutes), you go on with your day, and when that time comes, you circle back to it.

Give yourself the space and time to think about each worry and whether there is anything you can do about it.

If there is, what would be the first step that you can take to solving it?

Set aside 5 minutes of worry time before dinner, or 10 minutes when you go for a walk.

You choose what works well for you, but don't use your worry time before you go to bed for the night.

When you have a process to deal with worry, you start doing it on autopilot!

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.

So it is with every major life change - whether you change careers, lose a friend or fall in love, you adapt to what is happening around you.

This personal evolution is what makes you who you are and it's the reason why you are not the same person you were before.

So, for better or worse, cancer changes you, but you have the power to choose how it will define you!

It brings me back to a moment that has 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.

But then, things start to change...

It's a subtle shift I can't place, but that I know is 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 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!

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

He helps me out onto the sand, and I'm gasping for air, shocked.

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 put yourself in control of the situation.

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 future and make informed decisions about treatment and recovery?

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

Will you beat yourself up about the mistakes you made and roads not taken, or create a legacy that serves the people you care about?

Are you going to be chained to the commitments you never asked for the first place, or do more of those things you love?

Are you going to dwell on the past, or live in the now, give yourself in to the moment, wholly and without reserve?

Now is the only time you ever get, it's raw and immediate,

It gives you strength to go on because real power comes from making peace with uncertainty.

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, a life you worked hard to earn.

You evolved far beyond the outdated clichés about masculinity, or dominating others.

Your strength comes from connecting the reality inside you to the world beyond your self.

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!

Yes, cancer has gate crashed your life, and yes, you've got to plan around it, it's the truth you accept now.

There is no way back now, only forward!

Let's 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

No one hands you a guide book on cancer.

It's a maze of medical tests, specialist appointments and treatment choices that you have to work around.

The alien reality of tumor markers, survival rates and oncology wards changes your way of life...

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 cancer in the best way you can.

And that's tough when you get cancer because from now on, you expect things to go wrong.

Your experience is now driven by strong emotions, by worry and fear.

We want to shift away from emotions towards logic so that you see things as they are.

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.

We are getting better of finding new ways around cancer every day

2. Your specialist is not making arbitrary decisions based on a hunch, proven to work.

It's driven by evidence based research, not subjective opinions.

3. Treatment guidelines for most situations rely on best practice from top experts worldwide.

In most cases, your specialist should be able to guide you through this as well to get a second opinion.

You can also reach by email out to experts who specialise in treating a specific type of cancer.

4. Gone are the days when a doctor talks down to you.

Today, you are a part of the conversation and you so that can make informed choices about treatment.

Your medical team is there to answer your questions so that you are in control of your life during cancer.

5. Clinical trial is often the best way to get access to the latest treatment available for your cancer.

Ask your specialist if there about the clinical trials that you can join – it gives you more options.

6. We have re-designed proven therapies to help you get back on track after treatment.

From exercise and nutrition, to mindfulness and yoga, there are many ways to help you heal faster.

7. In most cases, there are different treatment options when things don't go to plan.

When you expect the best from treatment and your medical team, you know what's coming your way and how to deal with it.

Now, let's talk about what I call inspections – how do you see yourself now that cancer is here?

No matter what the media, having cancer does not make you a hero...

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 put a lot energy into helping your partner, your family and friends.

And that is a great way to be, yet things are different now that you are going through cancer.

Now is the time you put yourself first, for your sake and for the sake of those you care about the most.

When you shift your priorities, your life becomes aligned to get you through treatment with the least amount of stress possible.

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

Something that you never make the time for, when you're not looking at the clock or thinking about what comes next...

This moment is the only thing that exists, the only thing that matters, because it will never come again!

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

Or is there something you love doing, something you lose yourself in, but life 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 work is stressing you out – can you work from home on regular basis, switch to part time or redistribute some of your workload?

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

Finding neutral ground when you go out somewhere or spending time in a group, is great for breaking old patterns and routines.

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 don't have the mental space for it myself anymore!

Of course, you still make room for things that need to be done, but there is no reason in the world to do things when your heart is not in it.

Now is your time to put yourself first so that you are in the best shape you can be for life beyond cancer!

And when you are done with treatment, you can devote yourself to those people in your life that you can't be without.

When you put yourself first, you can focus on 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 you can get back to living the life you want, when you tackle it the right way.

## Your First Specialist Visit

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

And now you're living your life in the waiting room when you never know comes next...

Now is the time when you want to have trust in the process, trust in the advice that you're getting and your medical team.

So when you are heading for treatment, it is crucial to have someone who is right there with you and who knows the way...

I have met with many people in the oncology space, both through treatment and the Simplify Cancer podcast, and these folks are incredible!

It takes a lot of guts and dedication to do what they do and they are on your side, helping you through treatment.

You can trust them to be there for you, trust their advice, and have the confidence that they will look after you!

Your specialist is more than a doctor of the disease - it's your champion and trusted advisor who is going to guide you through the dark woods of cancer!

That's why it's important to make a conscious decision to trust that person, completely and without reserve...

Be explicit about it:

"I trust my specialist and my medical team to do the right thing by me and I can talk them about any concern or worry I have."

And if you are not on the same wavelength for whatever 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 hospital to find another specialist to look after you.

And while your specialist is there to guide you, you still want to be prepared so you don't miss anything specific that is bothering you right now.

Sorting through things you want to ask 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.

Taking notes is crucial in case you forget or miss anything that relates to your treatment!

Writing things down is great, but it also helps to have an audio recording as backup too.

You can listen to it at any time to clear up, and you don't need any extra tools or equipment, just your phone.

Do a trial run beforehand to make sure you don't run out of space, and that the microphone works as it should.

Most specialists will be more than happy for you to record the conversation, but do ask them at the start:

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

Time stretches out to infinity when you're in the waiting room...

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

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

They can help you take your mind off things and talk about something other than cancer.

Plus, you are also getting a second pair of eyes and ears to make sure you don't miss anything.

You can set the expectations from the start:

"I'd love for you to be there with me and just listen so we can compare notes later?"

And when you are talking to your specialist, it's a good idea to replay what they said to make sure 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?"

Now you know exactly what's going to happen and you eliminate misunderstanding and confusion before they get a chance to surface.

Chances are, you are going to have questions after the appointment so it helps to set up a follow up appointment to clear things up.

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 cancer treatment, you expect your specialist to tell you what to do, but often, that's not how things turn out.

You might have different treatment options, each with its pros and cons, and how do you make the right choice?

It's tough because you are now facing life and death decisions over things you don't even understand...

But it's also an opportunity to take back control of your life during cancer!

Let's be honest, when you find out you have cancer, you lose some of your swagger.

Random people are telling you what to do:

Here, fill out another form.

Show up at the most inconvenient time because it's the one available...

Your whole life is now dancing around someone else's schedule and you lose so much control over what's going on around you...

This when making a decision about treatment is the perfect opportunity to get back in charge of your life during cancer!

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

The balance has changed.

You are in charge now!

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

And to make informed decisions about what's right for you and your life, you Accept that you are going to be prepared for 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 handout.

Filled with meaningless bullet points and generic statements, it only serves 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.

Ask your specialist 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.

These include large not-for-profits such as Cancer Council in Australia, National Cancer Institute in the United States or MacMillan Cancer Support in the United Kingdom.

Evidence based research relies on scientific method – it's your safeguard against speculation and false hope.

Look for clues that apply to you – 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 in advance (fertility, for example) and which ones to watch out for (such as lung function or fever spike).

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

We all do – and while your specialist is there to guide you, there is nothing like hearing about it from people who went down that road before.

They've already been at the crossroads where they had to make the same decision that you need to make right now!

They get it, they know what it's like to be scared, lost and confused...

And - they want to help you because they know exactly what it's like.

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 (), you can post a question.

These communities are discussion forums where each topic is like an email trail.

The title is your subject line that can tell the reader if this is a conversation where they can contribute.

Like a headline, it's going to stick out to the person who needs to read it!

The body of the topic is where describe where you're at, what's bothering you and what do you want to find out.

Check out my free Online Community Guide with top 3 communities listed for your type of cancer on SimplifyCancer.com under the Tools section.

More likely than not, people are going to respond to your question in a matter of hours which gives you almost instant feedback!

And even though every person's experience is somewhat different, you will be able to pick out enough to gauge how it applies to you.

## 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!

You know what's right for you and your life, and you don't want to delegate this responsibility to anybody else.

You work within the parameters of the medical system and your team to get the best outcomes possible.

When you understand your disease, you disarm cancer's most potent weapon - uncertainty.

You get your power back when you know how things can turn out and what you can do about it.

Do your own research through reputable websites, books, online forums for your type of cancer, anyway you can to be in control of the situation.

You get the facts straight from the source by reading through 3 to 5 articles on a reputable, evidence based website.

Most countries have a large not-for-profit organizations that provide cancer support services.

They help people make their way around cancer, and they strive to make their website readable and easy to navigate.

These include:

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

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.

Once you have an understanding of different treatments and their pros and cons,

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

Here is the link to my free Online Community Guide:

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

5 to 10 minutes a day is all it takes 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 posting a question, make it easy for the reader to understand whether can contribute in a meaningful way.

Look at your topic title as a headline – it's direct and it speaks to the person's experience.

Being prepared means that you:

- 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.

## Pains and Aches 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 worse.

For not speaking up against a racist comment, for the man to get away with it...

For not leaving my ex when I knew she cheated on me...

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 combine the expertise of your medical team and the experience of cancer survivors, you start dealing with cancer on your own terms...

You know what's going on, you are in charge of the treatment process, and you 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 it seems unrelated?

The more uncomfortable you are about the thing that's bothering you, the more you need to get answers!

Or it will keep eating away at you, and that won't change until you know exactly what's going on and what you can do about it.

So take two minutes to think through your worries and write them down before your appointment.

Use a notepad or a mobile apps that keeps track of your symptoms – check out my Cancer Resource Guide for details.

Keeping track of your pains and aches becomes an integral part of your 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.

Sometimes it's hard to imagine a different life waiting for you at the end of it, but it's there and you're going to get there!

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

But for now, you're going to make your way through cancer treatment and take your mind away from pain or stress.

Like a torch to light your way through the darkness, you want to have a singular reason that carry you through.

Here is how it works for me:

As I make my way into the day oncology unit for my chemo infusion, I'm dreading the moment when I get the cannula in my arm.

My veins are tricky and it takes a few takes to get it right, and I want to take my mind as far away 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, he throws the pillow at me.

I can hear his infectious laughter, and make out the sunlight streaming through the 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 touches you on a deep level, a reason speaks to you in a powerful way, to you, and you alone, this reason changes your physiology.

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 filled with emotion and detail, it bring it to life in an instant.

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.

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 the future that you want to make true.

This is not daydreaming, but building the foundation for it.

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

Is there is a bigger cause that hits home for you?

Because every cause is always about helping people you care about...

It's 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.

Imagine 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.

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 ache or pain set you off.

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 – what if it's cancer, or a side effect from treatment?

Or 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?

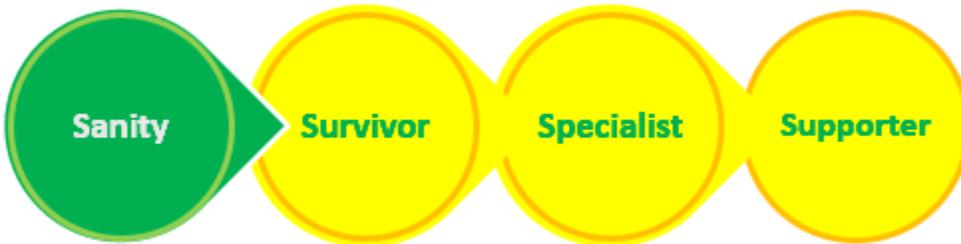
These worry thoughts sneak up on you, and take over everything you know and trust.

They get out of control, becoming more troublesome and irrational at every turn.

We want to take the raw emotion out of the situation and replace it with logic so that you weigh things up and decide what to do next.

Here are your 4 Gates of Stability, a simple 4 step process to work through the situation in a deliberate and methodical manner.

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, so you can 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 simple tool that I call an Outcome Map because it enables you to 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 be a side effect you read about?

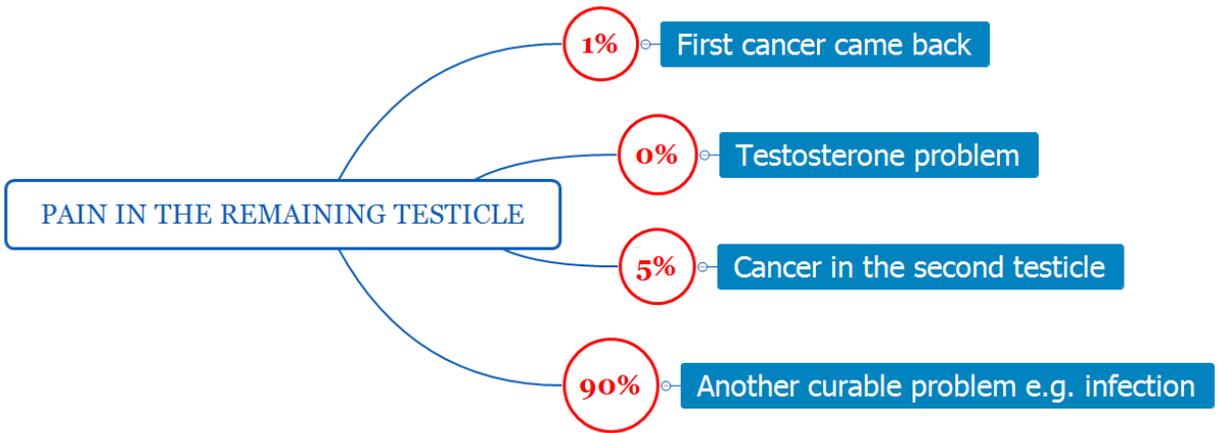
A complication from treatment?

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?

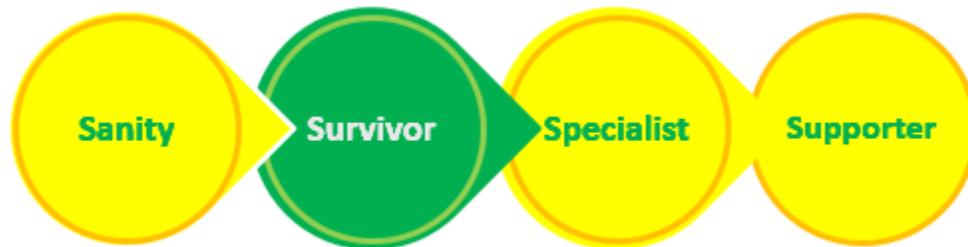
They have already survived cancer, or maybe they are only one step ahead of you – in any case, they know exactly what it's like to be staring into danger and not have the faintest clue what to do about it!

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!

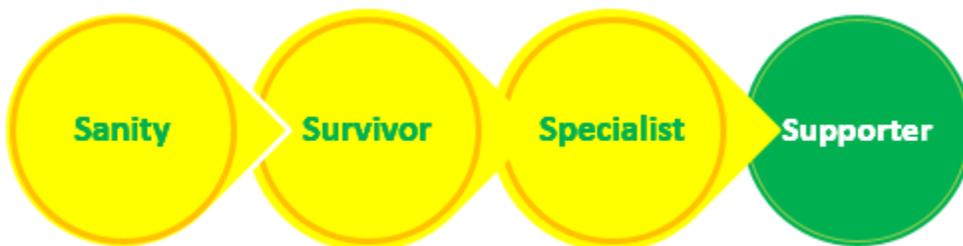
So don't wait until the next appointment, call the hospital or your specialist's rooms: "Hi, I am a patient of such and such, and I have an urgent issue I need to speak to him/her about. Can I book in a time to see him/her as soon as possible?"

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, a 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 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 keep asking yourself – is it going to work?

Are those side effects going to screw me up?

With my chemo, we knew that it can mess up my lungs, and so it's crucial to pick it up early on and change treatment if needed.

Basic walking would cause chest pain so to keep on top of it, I fall out of the house for a sprawl.

I stumble along the railway tracks like a zombie, ears ringing, the mind wading about 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, constantly waiting to be told about what happens 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.

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...

This is 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 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 beyond my control.

Everything else I can influence or control.

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

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

When you understand how your treatment works and what it's all about, you are asking the right questions and making decisions over things that you understand.

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

You never asked for this experience, 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/>

You can control the type of support that you receive from people around you because most people want to be there for you, but they don't know how, so be explicit about what's going on for you

You can do it with no drama, you're just being honest and direct about what's happening when they ask you about how you're going, or when something is bothering you.

Because they don't know what you're thinking, they can't tell what on earth 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 giving yourself the headspace you need to concentrate on getting through 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 you've never been a part of before.

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

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.

It's 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 influence or control, 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?

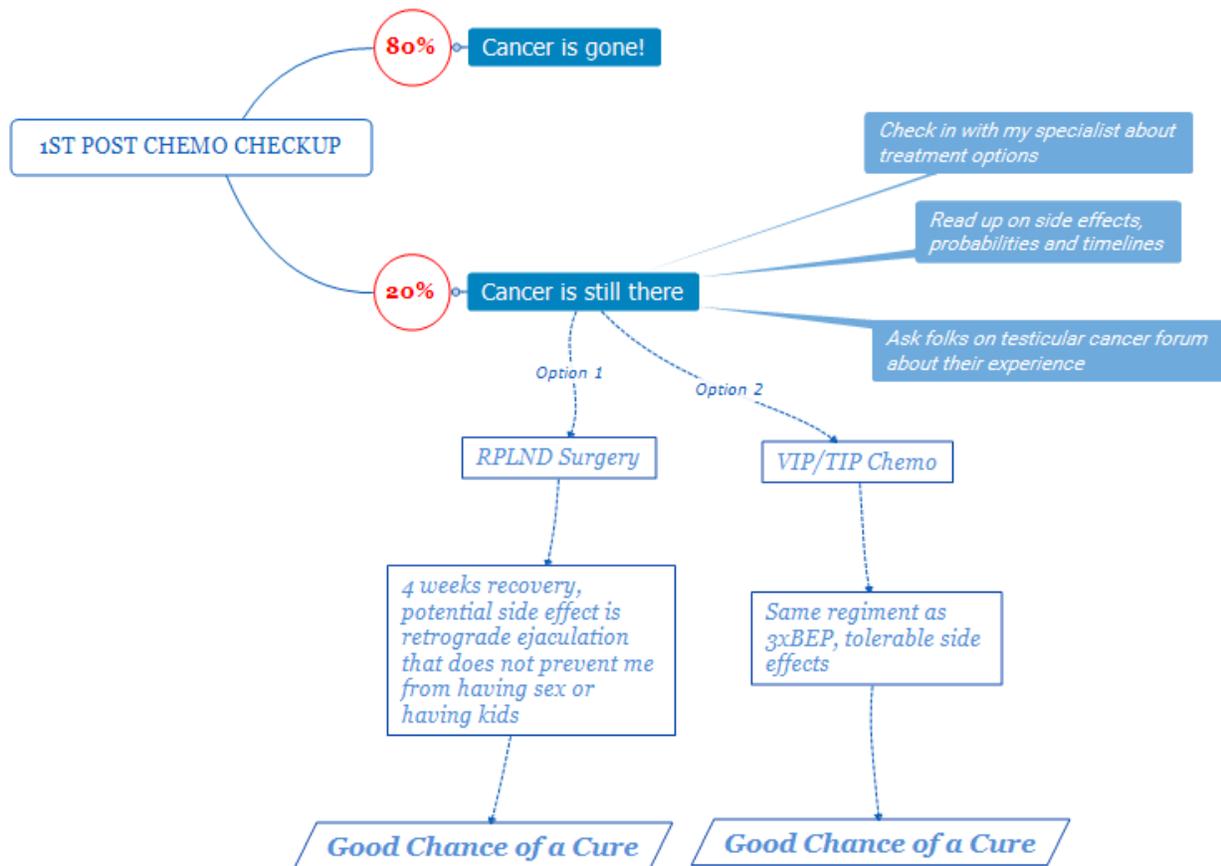
To drive it back and prevent your worries from taking over, you need an anchor to tie you back to the reality of what is happening so that you can rationally think about where you are right now.

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, courageous?

Always looking at the bright side of life?

Or maybe, as someone who makes decisions, always in control of the situation?

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, I knew I had to be with my wife and my son, to soak in every moment, and to show my love in the simplest and most brutal way that I know – just being there, fully, in the moment, without any distractions.

I want to leave a legacy of making a difference, helping someone who needs it, now and into the future, and that means working on my book.

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.

Instead, you create more time to do things that you care about.

It will allow you to reclaim the peace of mind that you need right now because you are bringing purpose to everything that you do!

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

Is there something you never got around to doing because you never had the time?

What are you proud of on a deep, personal level that you can share with others to better their lives?

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

Could it be that you are not giving yourself the credit for something that you are already doing right now?

It's about being part of something that's bigger than you, that is going to be your legacy in the world.

It has the power to make you happy and fulfilled because it's connected to your core values.

It's your personal mission to right the wrongs you see in the world and do something that feels right on the inside.

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

With clear and direct purpose in my life, every scan is a checkpoint when I ask myself – have I been living my best life?

And if the answer is yes, then I know that no matter what happens, I have not a single regret to live with.

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.

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 will be taken for granted, or forgotten about, or passed by because any day, it can be taken away.

With or without cancer, any day, it can be taken away.

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

Experiencing the world the way a child does...

The future is distant and immense and distant, the past – insignificant and easily forgotten, with only the present to live for.

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)