Article Series Mental Health

How journaling can help you during cancer treatment

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Journaling can be a powerful tool for people living with cancer, offering both emotional and physical benefits.

How can writing in a journal help?

Writing in a journal also provides a healthy outlet for processing emotions and regaining a sense of control during difficult times. Additionally, reflecting on your

thoughts through journaling can improve relationships by offering new perspectives and encouraging forgiveness.

One study of patients with advanced cancer in Malaysia found that keeping a gratitude journal for seven days helped people with cancer lower their stress. Participants also experienced a better sense of spiritual well-being, as well as improvements on the hospital anxiety and depression scale, compared to those who didn't keep a journal.

A key benefit of journaling is practical. Journaling may help you organize your thoughts and make it easier to communicate your needs and feelings to loved ones and healthcare providers. Keeping a record of treatments, side effects, and symptoms may empower you to take a more active role in your care. And if you're having memory issues during cancer treatment, journaling can help you track important details like appointments and conversations.

If you're not sure how to get started, consider trying one of these journaling prompts. A prompt can help you to process your emotions, express gratitude, acknowledge challenges, celebrate resilience or reframe your cancer as part of a larger life story.

1. *How am I feeling today, physically and emotionally?*
2. *What has brought me comfort or joy recently?*
3. *What are my biggest fears or worries about my cancer journey, and how can I address them?*
4. *What are three things I'm grateful for today, no matter how small?*
5. *What gives me hope or inspires me?*
6. *What has been the hardest part of today, and how did I get through it?*
7. *What is one small goal I can set for myself today or this week?*
8. *How do I want to remember this chapter of my life when I look back?*

To help you make journaling become a daily habit, consider these Microsteps. And as always, consult with your care team for the guidance and recommendations that are best for you.

Buying yourself a journal you'll look forward to writing in.

Whether it’s sleek and minimalist or colorful and artistic, get yourself a notebook that speaks to you and consider it a gift to yourself. Investing in a notebook you love can make the act of journaling feel personal and rewarding.

Putting your journal on your nightstand.

Having your notebook in your bedroom can help you make journaling part of your morning routine or a regular evening reflection.

Committing to writing for a set time or number of items.

You can commit to writing three things you are grateful for or just one goal you have for tomorrow. Or you can commit to writing just 5 minutes every night before bed.

Journaling after you brush your teeth.

Tying journaling to an existing daily habit, such as brushing your teeth, can help you do it consistently.

Finding inspiration from books, podcasts, or quotes to fuel your journaling.

Keep a running list of your favorite quotes, lyrics, or passages that resonate with you. When you feel stuck, use one as a prompt to guide your writing, such as how a character’s experience mirrors your own, or how a quote inspires you.

Sharing a journal entry with family or friends

Sharing your thoughts and feelings may help your family and friends understand what you’re going through on a deeper level. It can foster intimacy and trust, and create a sense of closeness during a challenging time.

And remember, there’s no right or wrong way to keep a journal. Being honest and writing without judgment can help put you on a path of self-discovery.

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