



7 Keys to Coping with Cancer

With More Clarity, Vitality & Inner Peace

Written by Debra W. Guttas



Introduction

So you've just received your cancer diagnosis, or that of a loved one. What was the first thing to run through your head?

First and foremost is probably the question "Am I going to die?"

"Will I have to have chemo? Or radiation?"

"Will the treatments make me feel sick all the time?"

If you have breast cancer, "Will I have to have a mastectomy?"

"How will this impact my career, and my family and friends?"

"Will I lose my hair?"

Who will you become as a result and what will your life be like as a result of all of it?

Along with that most likely you feel overwhelmed by the huge number of decisions you have to make. You feel out of control with what's going on in your body and of your life in general.

If you're reading this hopefully you also seek more answers than what Western medicine has to offer. Somewhere deep inside there's a part of you that feels like there's more you can do to support yourself through this process.

That's what this guide is for.

I've been there.

I was diagnosed with not just one but two Stage 3 aggressive cancers: First, Triple Negative breast cancer and then upon my PET scan a few weeks later, the second cancer in my pelvic region.

I experienced all of the above in the early stages of my diagnosis. I had to make many decisions that included whether or not to have a mastectomy and which cancer to deal with first (and hope that the other didn't get out of control in the process).

Trust me when I say I know where you are and what it's like to go through all of this.

I have no genetic history for cancer. Sure, I had an extra 10 pounds, but outside of that I eat well. I exercise and I meditate. It made no sense. My doctors were baffled.

As great as my Western medicine doctors are, I have felt extreme frustration with the fact that they have very little guidance for me on things I can do to support myself to actually feel well during this process of getting healed.

I had to figure it out on my own, at a time when I had the least amount of energy to do so.

Yes, I have had days that were pure hell. But because of the protocol I put in place (with the knowledge and approval of my doctors), those days have been outnumbered by the good days.

As of this writing my anal cancer has been cured and I am on my second round of chemo for my breast cancer. My breast tumor has shrunk down to practically nothing and when I am done with this round of chemo I am envisioning a minor lumpectomy and radiation.

All of my doctors tell me “I wish I had more patients like you! You do not look like someone who's been through 3 rounds of chemo and a round of radiation.”

My oncologist calls me a “Rock Star”.

I want that for you!

I am on a mission to support individuals who have been diagnosed with cancer to experience a different life while they're going through their healing process. It does not have to be a living hell. You can in fact experience more clarity, vitality and inner peace as you walk this path.

This guide outlines the keys that have been, and still are, a part of my protocol.



Key #1

Allow yourself to *feel*

Give yourself permission to really emotionally process what's happening to you, at a pace that's comfortable for you.

It's a lot to process. Things will happen fast and furious. There will be a lot of information to absorb. There will be many decisions to make and you'll probably feel the pressure to make them quickly as time is usually of the essence.

It can easily send you into a place of overwhelm.

It's important that you give yourself the space to really feel what you feel. If you feel like crying - then cry. The worst thing you can do at this point is shove down your emotions as that will be to your own detriment and limit your ability to cope.

Emotions are your body's way of processing the world around you. It is only when we ignore them that they do us harm. Be present to what you feel and the emotions lose their power. They will often move through as quickly as they appear.

One of the best ways to be present to, and process, your emotions is to create more space and time in your day to connect with your spirit. Meditate or allow time for quiet and stillness. Get moving to move the heaviness and emotion out of your body - walk, jog, and yoga. Anything that gets you moving will allow your body to process emotions in a more healthy way.

If there's ever a time for you to fully process your emotions, it is now. This is not a time to shove down what you're feeling and hope that it's going to go away.



Key #2

You are Defining a “New Normal”

Trying to cram this disease into your old life will only serve to create frustration.

In the beginning, that was my intention. I was going to go on with my coaching business and deal with this disease as an interruption in my life versus the life-changing event it was. Life got a lot easier when I, at the constant promptings of my friends and family, gave myself permission to truly just “be”. If that meant all I could muster was sitting in my backyard, staring out into space, then that's what I needed to do. My health had to be my number one priority, at least for this moment in time. My business and the rest of my life would be there later. This was only temporary.

The same is true for you. Your number one priority must be your health.

Letting go does NOT equal giving in or giving up! Quite the contrary. It is actually very empowering. You're taking back your power in the process of allowing yourself to be more present to your life as you know it, now.



Key #3

Create healthy boundaries

Be guarded very early on as to what you share and who you share it with.

I suggest you give yourself a period of time to process the initial shock before you tell the whole world what you're going through. Certainly, close friends and family can serve as your lifeline, but be careful about broadcasting it all over social media.

You are more emotionally vulnerable, especially in the early stage. What you need most right now are people who can see you as healthy and whole.

Not everyone you know is going to be able to give you the kind of support you really need at this moment in time. Everyone has their own fear and emotional response to a cancer diagnosis. For many people cancer means death and as we know, many cancers are highly curable.

This is a time for you to dig deep and remove yourself from other people's emotions around what you're going through, at least initially.





Key #4

Allow yourself to grieve



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This journey is very much like a roller coaster.

As you traverse this unknown landscape, you are going to experience many emotions, some of which you may not be used to experiencing on a regular basis. It is very much like a roller coaster and you may not recognize who you are in the middle of it all.

I certainly experienced many emotions and voices in my head in the early stage that were unfamiliar to me.

According to Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, there are 5 stages to grief. They are:

- Denial - This is often the first reaction. "There must be some mistake".
- Anger - The "Why me?" stage.
- Bargaining - This is where you'd do most anything to change the outcome or roll back the hands of time.
- Depression - It's hard to see the "light". Everything seems dark and hopeless.
- Acceptance - Or as I like to call it - Embracing. This is where resistance is removed and the real healing takes place.

We all go through grief when experiencing any sort of loss, but not necessarily in that order.

Dr. Roberta Temes, author of the book, *Living with an Empty Chair* - a guide through grief, describes it as three behaviors I think you'll recognize:

- Numbness (mechanical functioning and social insulation)
- Disorganization (intensely painful feelings of loss)
- Reorganization (re-entry into a more 'normal' social life.)

By giving yourself permission to grieve, you can move into a place of acceptance, which then gives you back a sense of control in the process.

You can more readily ride the waves of emotion instead of getting sucked under them.



Key #5

**Consciously create your
support system**

Create a support system & a team

In order to get through this in the most healthy way, emotionally and physically, you are going to need a support system - a team of people who will act on your behalf.

First and foremost are your loved ones and Friends. You need to surround yourself with individuals who have the ability to envision you as happy, healthy and whole. Limit your exposure to the individuals (and we all have them in our lives), who will make your illness their own and project onto you their own fears.

Second, be intentional about who you set up as your team of doctors. Be very clear about the kind of support and mindset that you want directing your health protocol and seek out physicians who align with that. Interview more than one doctor as your potential oncologist and surgeon. Your team of doctors is going to be with you for quite some time and their ideology about your health needs to be in alignment with your own.

Finally, choose doctors who hold the belief that your mind is a powerful force in your overall healing.



Key #6

Craft a health protocol

Be proactive in supporting your overall health and well-being.

There are many things you can do to support yourself in your overall health and well-being throughout this healing process.

Integrating things such as meditation, exercise, yoga, acupuncture, creative visualization, journaling, Reiki and Healing Touch can be very instrumental in supporting your emotional well-being and will arm you with a perspective on your health journey that is critical to your body's ability to heal and function at its full capacity.

There are also additional things that can support you during this time such as Chinese Herbs, but they should only be done with the consent and knowledge of your physician as many actually work against the treatment protocol they are giving you.





*Your attitude and perspective is **CRITICAL** in your healing process, but it's hard to have a good attitude when you don't feel well!*



Key #7

**Begin to envision your
life post-cancer**

It's important to begin to envision your life post-cancer.

Once you get past the initial shock, have begun to process your grief and are beginning to gain a sense of control and empowerment using the above steps, it's important to begin to envision your life post-cancer.

The doctor visits, medication, trips to the hospital and treatments can very quickly consume your life and your consciousness. That is natural, but it keeps the focus on your disease.

Once you begin to find some sense of balance, and you feel ready to contemplate what's next, it's important to begin to imagine and envision your life after cancer when you are healthy and whole.

That can be pretty hard to do in the beginning. Simply asking the questions below can spark your consciousness and help to empower you:

“What is possible here? What am I to learn? What can I make of this? How can I evolve more emotionally, mentally and spiritually as a result of this experience?”

This contemplation breeds enthusiasm and will shift you into a place of possibilities and creativity which then in turn feeds and nurtures your spirit.



About the Author

Debra Wilson Guttas has over 20 years supporting women in mid-life transition craft lives with more purpose and passion in her role as a Business and Career Coach, Reiki Master / Healing Touch Practitioner, author and speaker.

Her clients have coined her the Mid-Life Transition Doula (TM). Her signature approach combines her intuitive healing energy work with practical, real-life application to assist individuals navigating life transitions to “birth” new lives for themselves of more joy and fulfillment.

To her credit, she is also past Vice President of the Sacramento chapter of the National Speakers Association and she has presented keynotes and workshops for corporations and associations such as Hewlett-Packard, American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), Soroptomist, Society for Technical Communication and The Association of Professional Directors, just to name a few.

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