

FIVE ESSENTIALS for LIVING with CANCER

By Sharon Stathis RN

1. TAKE CONTROL

It's important that YOU are in charge of your cancer journey. When experiencing physical ill health, and perhaps feelings of inadequacy or hopelessness, it often seems easier to hand over the decision making to others.

However, this is YOUR very personal journey, and it is important that YOU make the BIG decisions. Make it clear to those around you that YOU are making choices that are important to you. It is the decisions you make today that will determine your future.

When making choices, it's important that you ask questions. Are your choices based on sound evidence? Do they reinforce your goals and the direction you wish to take on this journey? Make sure your decisions also reinforce your hope and positive attitude toward your illness.

2. BE AWARE

(a) Emotional awareness

Emotional well-being is an important part of achieving and maintaining physical health. It's normal to experience a range of emotions when dealing with cancer. Managing them well will make a positive difference to your cancer journey.

Shock, fear and grief are some of the initial emotions associated with cancer diagnosis. Other feelings can include anxiety, anger, rage, depression, despair, guilt, humiliation and panic.

All who are diagnosed with cancer will experience fear. Fear is a very powerful emotion. Fear can paralyse and lead to inaction. But fear can also be a great motivator to do the important things that need to be done, during this very challenging and confusing time. Use fear to make positive change.

(b) Mental awareness

Your conscious and sub-conscious thoughts and attitudes have a major influence on the way you live. Confusion, disbelief, disappointment, denial and worry are commonly experienced thoughts for those with cancer. They need to be acknowledged and managed well. Ask these questions: Are my thoughts and attitudes helpful? Are they taking me forward, or are they holding me back from experiencing a positive and productive cancer journey.

Cancer provides a wonderful opportunity to learn more about yourself. In particular, it helps you understand how you think. It's important to ask the BIG questions such as: Have I accepted this new reality? Do I want to be well? DO I DESERVE TO BE WELL?

It's easy to become a victim of cancer. It takes honesty, courage and determination to take responsibility (without self-blame) for having cancer. The reality is, you alone are in charge of your thoughts. With awareness, willingness and good counsel, many negative attitudes can be changed.

Developing healthy attitudes includes positive thinking. This is especially important with regard to treatment options, be it radiation, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, surgery or others. Directing enthusiasm and a positive approach towards treatment will assist your healing.

The cancer journey can be an amazing and enriching experience. It opens the door of opportunity for those with the courage to enter. Self-acceptance and self-confidence grow as goals are achieved. As life takes on a new perspective, every day becomes a precious gift that can be enthusiastically embraced with joy and gratitude.

(c) Physical awareness

Listen to your body. Let it talk to you. Your body wants to be healthy. Your immune system wants to find the cancer cells. So listen to the feed-back your body is constantly giving you. Your body has an amazing ability to self-regulate and self-heal if given the right tools (see #4, *Take Action*).

Create quiet time to consult your “Inner Doctor”/your Inner Wisdom. Give your intuitive intelligence the opportunity to help you make wise decisions regarding your cancer management and recovery. Dig deep, listen and learn to understand what you hear.

3. BE INFORMED

Know your cancer. Ask the right questions: Which cancer is it? Where is it? How did it develop? Is it likely to progress? Is treatment available? What are the treatment options? **Knowledge is power.** It enables you to make informed choices about your cancer management.

There is extensive and easily accessed information about cancer in the media. Some information will be helpful. Some will not. Sorting the wheat from the chaff is challenging. However, it is worth investing your precious energy in pursuit of accurate and helpful information. Find out the truth about your cancer!

4. TAKE ACTION

The health of your mind/body/spirit system is dependant upon a healthy lifestyle. Look honestly at your lifestyle – does it require change? Change involves setting believable, achievable and often challenging goals. Use positive affirmations to help you reach them. Set regular time aside for creative visualisation. It is a simple, convenient and effective way to help you achieve success.

Explore the following lifestyle essentials and ask if the type, quality and quantity are appropriate for your current needs: Nutrition, Exercise, Sunshine exposure, Sleep, Relaxation, Connecting with Nature, Earthing (connecting with the earth energy to help reduce inflammation).

Cancer care is now a specialisation of many health practitioners (e.g. doctor, psychologist, nutritionist, naturopath, acupuncturist, physiotherapist, reflexologist, massage therapist). Build a supportive network of informed health professionals around you that satisfies your unique needs.

Despite having cancer, everyday life goes on. Responsibilities remain. Time consuming and often challenging cancer treatments may be added to the ever expanding list of things to do. Cancer often causes fatigue. Rest is important. It is essential that you make time for yourself – time is imperative for healing. Ask for, and accept appropriate help. Take the time for self- nurturing that is rightly yours. You are not being selfish.

5. DISCOVER THE REAL YOU

Cancer is not a punishment. It is potentially a vehicle for self-discovery. Cancer provides amazing opportunities for self exploration at the deepest level. Be open. Expect the unexpected. **DISCOVER WHO YOU REALLY ARE.**

You are much more than the face that you present to the world. You are an incredibly unique, vulnerable and beautiful being. LOVE yourself. No matter what you look like and no matter how you feel, you are absolutely beautiful – all of the time. Once you have made this discovery – BELIEVE IT and CELEBRATE!

CANCER IS A MESSAGE OF LOVE.

O. Carl Simonton, M.D. (author of *Getting Well again*)

FIVE ESSENTIALS for *LIVING* with *CANCER* has been compiled by Sharon Stathis R.N., author of *To CANCER with LOVE* (Due for release 2017) www.ayurvedicreflexology.com