



## Covenant Cancer Wellness Guide

# Boost your mind and spirit while fighting cancer

Cancer is not only a physical battle, but an emotional one too. While the end goal is to get stronger and kick the disease to the curb, the treatment process can change the way you look and feel. You might hurt physically and ache mentally, but working to keep a positive mindset could be one of the best things you do for yourself during treatment.

Coping with the stress of cancer can take on many forms. Whether you enjoy time alone or time spent with loved ones, there are hundreds of tips and tricks to help you boost your mental wellbeing. Maybe you enjoy relaxation exercises. Perhaps you find comfort in drawing, reading or talking to others. Finding the right technique and practicing it regularly could help you achieve peace and balance throughout treatment.

Read on to learn simple techniques to boost your mind and spirit while fighting cancer.

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# Write about it

There's power in the pen. And for many cancer patients, journaling has the power to boost the mind and the spirit. Because there are no rules or regulations in journaling, the art form is truly about expressing yourself in whatever way is most beneficial for you.

Whether you choose to write creative stories, keep a journal of funny quotes and sayings, or simply express your daily struggles, writing during your cancer journey can be a healing experience. [MD Anderson Cancer Center](#) offers these tips and tricks to journal your way through cancer:

**Journal for yourself** – there's no right or wrong as long as it's beneficial for you

**Find a quiet space** – set aside uninterrupted time in a quiet, comfortable setting and devote 20 minutes or so to writing

**Protect your thoughts and writings** – keep your journal in a safe spot where it won't be damaged and people won't flip through it without your consent

**Don't worry about grammar, spelling or sentence structure** – focus on the subject of your writing, not the technicalities

**Seek professional help** – if journaling leaves you more upset than relieved, reach out for additional guidance and support

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# Find support in the community

Support groups provide outlets for patients to listen, share and connect with others who are in similar situations. They're platforms for mental and emotional release and can be extremely beneficial for individuals facing cancer. But before selecting a support group, it's important to take some time to reflect on your needs and personality. What are you looking to get from the support group – are you seeking emotional support, information and education, or a combination of both? Are you comfortable sharing your stories and struggles in person, or do you prefer a more anonymous platform?

Depending on your answers to these questions, the route of support you pursue might vary. Read on to find the best fit for you.

## **Hospital support groups**

Hospital support groups are in-person sessions – typically meeting on a weekly or monthly basis – that give patients the opportunity to connect with other attendees on a personal level. The groups are led by trained counselors, healthcare professionals or group members and might invite doctors or speakers to share expert advice.

## **Newsletters and email lists**

If you're all about info, all the time, then newsletters and email lists are for you. These platforms send information written by group members or healthcare professionals to the entire mailing list and can offer patients support right at home.

### **Blogs**

Looking for a touch of humor? Hoping to read about someone's journey with the same type of cancer you face? Blogs offer a casual, honest platform to read and write about cancer. Visitors often take to the comments section to share stories and connect with fellow patients in an informal way.

### **Chat rooms**

Chat rooms give patients the benefits of one-on-one conversation, digitally. Patients might scroll through the comments without ever engaging or start up hour-long conversations with other chat room visitors. Whether or not patients choose to comment, chat rooms can offer instantaneous support for many.

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## Have a good laugh

An age-old saying claims that laughter is the best medicine. And according to a number of recent studies, evidence supports the fact that laughter can reduce pain, improve blood vessel function, release chemicals that relax muscles, produce feelings of pleasure and stimulate the body's immune system. While laughter can have these same physical effects in cancer patients, it also has another very important power – boosting a person's mind and spirit.

Finding laughter while fighting cancer may seem difficult, but it could actually be more attainable than you think. Try popping in one of your favorite comedies, watching humorous videos of animals online, playing with your children or grandchildren, listening to a comedy sketch, or picking up a microphone or kitchen spoon and singing some karaoke.

While laughter can't necessarily get rid of cancer, it could help you better cope with and *survive* cancer. And that might be the best medicine of all.

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## Make fitness fun

Exercise can help fight fatigue, nausea and pain associated with cancer while boosting your spirits and improving your quality of life. The exercise you choose doesn't have to be boring and it certainly doesn't have to be a chore. Try something new to make fitness fun – whether that means taking ballroom dance classes, doing yoga in the park, biking, hiking or walking the mall.

According to the [American Cancer Society](#), regular exercise during cancer treatment can help you:

- Keep or improve your physical abilities
- Improve balance, lower risk of falls and broken bones
- Keep muscles from wasting due to inactivity
- Lower the risk of heart disease
- Lessen the risk of osteoporosis
- Improve blood flow to your legs and lower the risk of blood clots

- Make you less dependent on others for help with normal activities of daily living
- Improve your self-esteem
- Lower the risk of being anxious or depressed
- Lessen nausea
- Improve your ability to keep social contacts
- Lessen fatigue
- Control your weight
- Improve your quality of life

It's important to check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program. Ask your cancer team if your blood work is okay and if it is safe for you to exercise during treatment. Do not exercise if you are already experiencing unrelieved pain, fever, nausea and vomiting, or other symptoms that cause concern. If exercise causes discomfort, elevated heart rate or shortness of breath, make sure to talk to your doctor before continuing.

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## Celebrate your successes

Looking at the entire process of chemotherapy can be daunting – full of changes and unknowns. But taking treatment day by day and celebrating little milestones can put your mind at ease and make the process far more bearable.

At the end of each cycle of chemotherapy, for example, treat yourself to something special. Make a reservation at your favorite restaurant, purchase that pair of shoes you've been eyeing, book a massage or enjoy a long soak in the tub. By celebrating achievements as they come, you're more likely to live in the moment and maintain a positive outlook throughout your cancer journey.

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While cancer might take a toll on you physically, finding small ways to boost your mind and spirit during treatment could reap countless benefits for you and your loved ones and make each day a little brighter.

Visit the Covenant Cancer Care Center page to learn more about boosting the mind and spirit.  
[CovenantCancerCare.com](http://CovenantCancerCare.com)