

# Ways You Can Improve Personal Health and Aid Healing

*I have created this document to inform my patients of the most recent advances in fostering personal health after a breast cancer diagnosis. I have added the research articles for a deeper dive in...*

*These recommendations are not from the Lifespan Cancer Institute, but serve more as a guide from the result of my personal research.*

*~ Doreen Wiggins, MD*

## 1. Hydrate—Drink Water A Minimum of 64 oz/day

Water detoxifies the body, eliminates toxins, and is good for supporting tissues, organs, and joints.

Hydration can reduce gastrointestinal transit time decreasing constipation and eliminates carcinogens from the gut faster. This mechanism has been proposed as an explanation for the risk reduction for colorectal cancer by increased water intake. Frequent bowel motility can be helped by hydration, leading to decreased gastrointestinal transit time of the gut content and is associated with increased estrogen excretion in the stool and lower serum estrogen level. Water hydration will help the body process radiation, chemotherapy, and aid in healing.

### Filter your tap water

Filtering your water will help reduce your exposure to known or suspected carcinogens and hormone-disrupting chemicals. A report from the *President's Cancer Panel* on how to reduce exposure to carcinogens suggests that home-

filtered tap water is a safer bet than bottled water, whose quality often is not higher—and in some cases is worse—than that of municipal sources, according to a study by the Environmental Working Group.

### Avoid chemical contaminants

Store water in stainless steel or glass to avoid chemical contaminants, such as BPA, that can leach from plastic bottles.



## **2. Eat Your Veggies and Fruit, “The Rainbow of Phytonutrients”**

The foods we eat directly impact our genes, and cellular function. Plant focused nutrition can turn on cancer suppressor genes and turn off cancer promoter genes.

At every meal, aim to fill half your plate with fruits and veggies, since plants provide antioxidants and fiber. Fiber in the diet can help eliminate estrogens in the body because fiber has been shown to bind to excess estrogen in the colon and be eliminated with bowel movements.

***Find out more:***

- ☞ <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/foods-to-lower-estrogen>
- ☞ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4121395/pdf/nihms578625.pdf>

**Avoid added sugars, and sweets.** Tumors feed on sugar.

**Avoid processed foods which contain chemicals, hormones, pesticides, toxins.**

**Don't drink sodas, not even sugar free.**

All animal foods contain hormones. Growth hormones and estrogens are often added to animals to fatten them up. Choose animal proteins that are grass fed, hormone free, and antibiotic free. Pair animal protein with beans, fruits, and veggies to improve fiber and aid in elimination of hormones from the intestines.

A diet of drinking filtered water, focusing on nutrients in food (veggies, fruit, nuts, whole grains, and beans), eliminating fast and processed foods, eliminating soda, eating organic foods (no pesticides, no hormones, and no antibiotics) will decrease inflammation in the tissues of the body reducing risk of cancer (helps prevention, reduces recurrence), lowers risk of dementia, and reduces heart disease.

Visit the Environmental Working Group to learn more about foods that should be bought organic, and foods that have less risk of pesticides and hormones. This website also includes information regarding other environmental toxins, chemicals, and pesticides that could promote illness.

***Find out more:***

- ☞ <https://www.ewg.org>

**Blue Zones are the places with the highest longevity around the world.**

National Geographic Fellow and multiple New York Times bestselling author, Dan Buettner, has discovered five places in the world—dubbed blue zones—where people live the longest, and are healthiest: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece, and Loma Linda, California. The Blue Zones provide the keys to the secret of longevity, recipes for healthy eating, and insights to community.

***Follow the link for a recipe that is easy to make, tasty, and nutritious:***

- ☞ <https://www.bluezones.com/recipe/ikarian-longevity-stew-with-black-eyed-peas-recipe/>

**How can foods, medications, and supplements affect the microbiome?**

The microbiome is the genetic material of all the microbes—bacteria, fungi, protozoa and viruses—that live on and inside the human body. The number of genes in all the microbes in one person's microbiome is 200 times the number of genes in the human genome.

The collection of microbes, the human microbiome—can have an impact on cancer initiation, progression, and response to therapy, including cancer immunotherapy.

Eating nutritious foods high in fiber and fresh fruits and vegetables can help feed the beneficial, or "good", bacteria that already live inside your gut. These are called prebiotic foods. You can also eat foods that contain beneficial bacteria to help repopulate your gut microbiome. Fermented foods such as yogurt, sauerkraut, and kombucha have these bacteria. They are called probiotic foods.

Besides food, medications and supplements can act as probiotics or prebiotics. Synbiotics are supplements that combine both probiotics and prebiotics.

Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy can disrupt your gut microbiome. Scientists are studying whether probiotics could help rebalance the microbiome in a person receiving cancer treatment. For instance, some research has shown that probiotics may reduce diarrhea in people receiving chemotherapy for lung cancer and in people who have surgery for colon cancer.

Other scientists worry about the safety and risks of probiotics. For example, many probiotics are sold as dietary supplements. This means they are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Always talk with your doctor if you are thinking about taking any supplements, including probiotics, prebiotics, or synbiotics. This is particularly important to do during cancer treatment.

Our fat cells contain estrogen and are hormone factories, if overweight at cancer diagnosis, reducing weight can have improved survival benefits.

From "Sustained Weight Loss and Risk of Breast Cancer in Women 50 Years and Older: A Pooled Analysis of Prospective Data":

*"These results suggest that sustained weight loss, even modest amounts, is associated with lower breast cancer risk for women aged 50 years and older. Breast cancer prevention may be a strong weight-loss motivator for the two-thirds of American women who are overweight or obese."*

#### **Find out more:**

- ☞ <https://www.cancer.net/blog/2020-12/your-microbiome-and-cancer-what-know>
- ☞ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7492760/pdf/djz226.pdf>

## **MORE REFERENCES**

### **Websites**

- radicalremission.com
- nutritionfacts.org
- integrativecanceranswers.com
- drjeffreyrediger.com/cured-the-life-changing-science-of-spontaneous-healing-testing/
- dresselstyn.com/site/
- nutritionstudies.org
- www.bluezones.com

- "Cured" Jeffrey Rediger, MD

- "How Not to Die" Michael Greger, MD
- "The China Study" Drs. Colin and Timothy Campbell
- "Blue Zones Kitchen" Dan Buettner

### **PodCasts**

- Chris Beat Cancer
- Heal
- NutritionFacts

### **Books**

- "The Telomere Effect" Dr.s Elizabeth Blackburn and Elissa pEel
- "Radical Remission" Kelly Turner, PhD

### 3. Sleep A Minimum of 7 Hours Each Night

#### Can Sleep Affect Cancer?

It is well-established that sleep plays a central role in human health.

Some of the systems that may be influenced by sleep in ways that affect cancer risk include the brain, the immune system, the production and regulation of hormones, and metabolism and body weight.

Sleep may affect how cells function, altering their environment or the signals that affect how they grow.

Evidence has emerged that different components of sleep—sleep duration, sleep quality, circadian rhythm, and sleep disorders—can affect cancer risk.

#### Sleep Duration

Research has found that people who sleep less than six hours per night have a higher risk of death from any cause, and one large-scale study found that people with short sleep have an increased cancer risk.

For specific types of cancer, short sleep duration has been associated with a greater risk of colon polyps that can become cancer. In older adults, some research has tied reduced sleep duration to a higher likelihood of stomach cancer, and found potential correlations with Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma as well as cancers of the thyroid, bladder, head, and neck.

In animal studies, sleep deprivation has been connected to greater “wear and tear” on cells, potentially leading to the type of DNA damage that can give rise to cancer.

**In addition, insufficient sleep may indirectly heighten cancer risk.** Insufficient sleep has been strongly linked to obesity, which is an established risk factor for many types of cancer, especially breast cancer.

Lack of sleep is related to immune system issues like persistent inflammation, which is believed to raise cancer risk.

Sleep allows the immune system to increase the production of “natural killer cells” that destroy both cancer cells, and viral infections.

We've all heard how important sleep is and rightly so... Sleep loss is linked to a slew of health issues, including:

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Dementia
- Health Disease
- Weakened immune system



Matthew Walker, a British scientist and professor of neuroscience and psychology at the University of California Berkeley, has focused his research on the impact that sleep has on human health and disease. In his 2017 publication, *Why We Sleep*, Walker dives into 4 years of research to discuss how sleep deprivation is linked to numerous diseases. (See the following page for Walker's 12 tips for Good Sleep.)

**Avoid sleeping pills!** Sleeping pills have been significantly related to a higher cancer risk and increased risk for mortality.

Sleeping is helpful for immune function, reducing cardiovascular risk, and helping to heal the body and brain.

#### Find out more.

If you are having sleeping difficulties discuss with your physicians, and turn to these resources:

- ☞ If you're interested in reading more about the impact sleep has on our health, check out Matthew Walker's book "Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams" <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/physical-health/cancer-and-sleep>
- ☞ <https://www.center4research.org/trouble-sleeping-pills-not-safe-solution/>
- ☞ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/sep/21/why-we-sleep-by-matthew-walker-review>
- ☞ <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need>
- ☞ [\(This is an excellent resource\)](https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects/sleep-disorders-pdq)

# WALKER'S 12 TIPS FOR GOOD SLEEP AKA "SLEEP HYGIENE"

<b>STICK TO A SLEEP SCHEDULE</b> <p>We're creatures of habit and we should strive to keep our sleep schedule more or less the same everyday. This means weekends too! Sleeping in late on the weekends only interrupts the pattern we've spent the week nailing down. Schedule your sleep schedule and stick to it.</p>	<b>DON'T EXERCISE TOO LATE IN THE DAY</b> <p>Exercise is always strongly encouraged and can help with sleep, however, we should try to time in our exercise routine no later than 3 hours before bed. Exercising in the beginning of the day and getting sunshine can help with sleep.</p>	<b>AVOID CAFFEINE AND NICOTINE</b> <p>Keeping it plain and simple: caffeine and nicotine are stimulants. Even consuming these in the afternoon can have an effect on your sleep. Nicotine, in particular, while it's a mild stimulant compared to caffeine, will often wake up smokers earlier than they would naturally, due to the nicotine withdrawal.</p>
<b>AVOID ALCOHOLIC DRINKS BEFORE BED</b> <p>If alcohol is present in your system before going to bed, it will interrupt your REM sleep, keeping you in the lighter stages of sleep.</p>	<b>AVOID MEDICINES THAT DELAY OR DISRUPT YOUR SLEEP (IF POSSIBLE)</b> <p>A handful of commonly prescribed heart and blood medications can disrupt your sleep patterns if taken before bed. If you find yourself having trouble sleeping, it is recommended you speak to your doctor to see if any of the drugs you're taking are contributing to sleep issues. Even over-the-counter drugs can have deleterious effects on your sleep.</p>	<b>AVOID LARGER MEALS AND BEVERAGES LATE AT NIGHT</b> <p>Heavy meals can cause digestive issues, which will interfere with sleep. Also, drinking too many fluids can cause frequent trips to the bathroom. So keep both light! Try to eat 3 hours before bedtime.</p>
<b>DON'T NAP AFTER 3 PM</b> <p>Although naps can be a great pick-me-up, taking them too late in the day can make it hard to fall asleep at night.</p>	<b>MAKE SURE TO LEAVE TIME TO UNWIND BEFORE BED</b> <p>Scheduling in time to relax before bed is a great way to prep your body to unwind before falling to sleep. Dim the lights, decrease stimulation.</p>	<b>TAKE A HOT BATH BEFORE BED</b> <p>A good way to unwind before bed is by taking a nice hot bath. The resulting drop in body temperature may help you to feel sleepy. Epsom salt bathes and lavender oil can help relax the body and mind.</p>
<b>GADGET-FREE BEDROOM</b> <p>Cell phones and computers can be a major distraction if used before bed. The light they emit, especially the blue light, suppresses the secretion of melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep/wake cycle which increases in the evening.</p>	<b>GET THE RIGHT SUNLIGHT EXPOSURE</b> <p>Sun exposure during the day helps to regulate sleeping patterns. It's recommended to soak in the sun at least 30 minutes a day.</p>	<b>DON'T STAY IN BED IF YOU CAN'T SLEEP</b> <p>If you find yourself tossing and turning in bed for more than 20 minutes, it's recommended to get up and do something else until you feel sleepy, like reading a book.</p>
<p><b>MY PERSONAL SLEEP INCENTIVE:</b> About 30 mins prior to bed, stand raise your arms above your head as far as you can, add a little arch to your back, open your mouth wide and yawn. Yawn big, and exhale! This simple action sends a signal to the brain telling the brain and body that the time to sleep is soon. It is a natural process, babies do it, we have just forgotten how to trigger the brain to sleep.</p>		

## 4. Move the Body

**Engaging in regular aerobic cardiovascular movement, and muscle strengthening activities can directly impact and improve breast cancer outcome and survival.**

Exercise appeared far more likely than other lifestyle factors to reduce the risk for breast cancer recurrence and mortality, according to a review published in Canadian Medical Association Journal.

Although physical activity showed the strongest benefit, people who did not gain weight also demonstrated lower risk for breast cancer recurrence and mortality.

**Exercise reduced breast cancer recurrence and mortality by 40%, whereas weight gain of more than 10% after diagnosis appeared associated with increased mortality risk.**

**Exercise can...**

- improve cognitive function associated with cancer treatment.
- help maintain and improve cardiovascular function in cancer treatment and survivorship.
- help improve a sense of wellbeing, increase physical tolerance, decrease fatigue, and decrease feelings of anxiety and depression.

In a recent study, "*Lifestyle modifications for patients with breast cancer to improve prognosis and optimize overall health*", the most significant factor in outcome was physical exercise, which reduced the risk of recurrence as well as mortality. These effects were even stronger for postmenopausal women, women with a body mass index above 25, and women who met the recommended levels of activity as specified by cancer society guidelines. The researchers noted that adherence to these recommendations is generally low, as patients' physical activity tends to decrease after a breast cancer diagnosis, making the development of initiatives to encourage exercise in this population especially crucial.

**Read the article.**

☞ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5318212/pdf/189e268.pdf>

**Current guidelines are 150 minutes per week of exercise and 2 weight lifting or strengthening sessions per week**

**Movement should be enjoyed so you will be more likely to make it a part of your daily routine.**

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Campbell KL, Winters-Stone KM, Wiskemann J, May AM, Schwartz AL, Courneya KS, Zucker DS, Matthews CE, Ligibel JA, Gerber LH, Morris GS, Patel AV, Hue TF, Perna FM, Schmitz KH. Exercise Guidelines for Cancer Survivors: Consensus Statement from International Multidisciplinary Roundtable. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2019 Nov;51(11):2375-2390. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0000000000002116. PMID: 31626055.

**"A body in motion stays in motion"**

For many, "exercise" can be a word that promotes negative thoughts or feelings. However...

**exercise can be fun!** Dancing in your kitchen, meeting a friend for a walk, or training to challenge yourself to participate in an exercise event, such as a breast cancer walk can inspire you to move.

**Tips to get started:**

- Make sure you discuss your exercise intent with your cancer provider and/or your PCP. **Don't overdo it!**
- Listen to your body, take it slow and build gradually. If you can walk for 10 minutes without difficulty, slowly add increments of an extra minute over time.
- Chart your exercise progress to get inspired by how far you have come.
- Many phones or other devices can track your steps, and hourly movement, keep track.
- Try to have a friend or family member join you, it will be more fun, and you will be more likely to keep to a schedule.
- Move the body every 20 minutes instead of once per hour. Every 20 minutes, stand, walk around, lift your body from a seated position 10 times, try to keep your body in motion more regularly.

You do not have to go to a gym or buy expensive equipment to add resistance/weight lifting to daily activity, use common household items.

## **Pin these exercise suggestions.**

- ☞ <https://www.organicauthority.com/health/7-at-home-workouts-that-build-strength-with-common-household-items>
- ☞ <https://www.wellandgood.com/household-items-to-use-as-exercise-equipment/>

## **Try Yoga!**

Doing yoga at home or in the studio can have significant improvements in breast cancer treatment and survivorship (chair yoga is possible if movement is limited.)

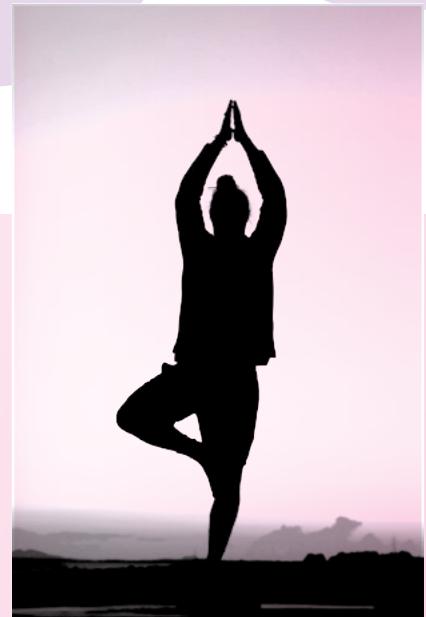
*"Yoga improves multiple aspects of QOL, cancer-specific symptoms, psychological outcomes, and important biomarkers such as stress hormone regulation, immune function, and inflammatory markers. As a low-cost and safe intervention, yoga should be provided alongside the standard of care to help improve multiple aspects of cancer patients' adjustment to cancer and its treatment."*

### **THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF A REGULAR YOGA PRACTICE THAT HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH:**

- reduces and manages anxiety;
- improves mood, less depression;
- increases a sense of well-being and quality of life;
- improves social functioning;
- improves breathing/lung volume, less dyspnea;
- reduces in fatigue and joint pain;
- reduces the number of hot flashes;
- improves sleep quality;
- increases flexibility and strength;
- reduces pain;
- is effective in treating PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder);
- reduces need for sleep medications;
- improves "autonomic response" (response to stress), thereby reducing or eliminating the physiological symptoms of stress.

#### **Find out more**

- ☞ <https://www.thecancerspecialist.com/2020/01/31/benefits-of-yoga-for-cancer-survivors/>



## 5. Stress's Impact on Cancer's Development

**There is significant information that stress not only affects us psychologically, but physically on all systems of the body. How we perceive stress can greatly impact hormones, chemical processes, peptides, inflammation, neuroimmunoendocrine, and cardiovascular functioning, leading to disease states.**

When we are stressed, we engage our sympathetic system. The body releases a surge of hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, that triggers various inflammatory responses. The emotional, physical, and chemical reactions that occurs with a stressful event (palpitations, shortness of breath, sweating palms, surge of energy, and fear) happens rapidly causing a multitude of changes within the body and mind, within 90 seconds the changes dissipate, and flush out. However, if the stressful situation continues, the sympathetic system stays in the alarm mode. There is no "rest and digest", no healing from the parasympathetic system. When you're in a constant state of psychological stress, those triggers don't shut off, which could lead to chronic inflammation and, potentially, cancer growth or cancer metastasis.

### **Read more.**

- ☞ <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/feelings/stress-fact-sheet>
- ☞ <https://somaticmovementcenter.com/challenge-threat-stress-response/>

### **Meet Stressful Thoughts and Beliefs with Reframing**

Using reframing techniques can be simple and easy, especially with practice. Examples of ways to reframe stress are below:

- Learn about thinking patterns
- The first step in reframing is to educate yourself about some of the negative thinking patterns that may greatly increase your stress levels.
- What are the thoughts that you say to yourself?
- How many of your thoughts are negative?
- How do these thoughts impact how your body feels?

### **Notice Your Thoughts**

The next step is to catch yourself when you're slipping into overly negative and stress-inducing patterns of thinking. Creating awareness of the negative thoughts, or self-talk, is an important part of challenging—and ultimately changing—them. One thing you can do is just become more mindful of your thoughts, as though you're an observer. **When you catch negative thinking, observe how you feel in your body.** If you want, you can even keep a journal and start recording what's happening in your life, and your thoughts surrounding these events, and then examine these thoughts through your observations, to get more practice in catching these thoughts.

Another helpful practice is meditation, where you learn to quiet your mind and examine your thoughts. Once you become more of an observer, it's easier to notice your thoughts rather than remaining caught up in them. Learn how to detach from the negative things you say to yourself. Remember this: "I am not my thoughts."

### **Challenge Your Thoughts**

As you notice your negative thoughts, an effective part of reframing involves examining the truth and accuracy (or lack thereof) of these thoughts.

- Are the things you are telling yourself even true?
- Also, what are some other ways to interpret the same set of events?
- Which ways of seeing things serve you better?

Instead of seeing things the way you always have, challenge every negative thought, and see if you can adopt thoughts that fit your situation, but reflect a more positive outlook. This can be helpful when fear surrounding your cancer diagnosis occurs. Our bodies are aware of our thoughts. Negative self talk increases stress and stiffness in the body. If there is discomfort in the body, negative self talk may accentuate sensations of pain.

## Replace Your Thoughts With More Positive Thoughts

Have you ever been to a hospital and noticed that the nurses often ask people about their 'discomfort' rather than their 'pain'? That's reframing in action. If the patient is in searing pain, the term 'discomfort' becomes annoying and seems to reflect a disconnect in understanding, but if the pain is mild, reframing it as 'discomfort' can actually minimize the experience of pain for many patients.

This is a useful reframing trick that we can all put into practice. When you're looking at something negative, see if you can change your self talk to use less strong, less negative emotions.

When you're looking at a potentially stressful situation, see if you can view it as a challenge versus a threat. Look for the 'opportunity' in each situation and see if you can see your stressors on the more positive edge of reality—see them in a way that still fits the facts of your situation, but that is less negative and more optimistic and positive.

That's the gist of reframing, and you can do it as often as you'd like. Most people are surprised at what a big impact reframing can have on their experience of stress—**changing the way you look at your life can truly change your life.**

### *Learn more about reframing.*

- ☞ <https://www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-reframing-for-stress-management-3144872>

Decreasing stress, and negative thinking can be aided in a practice of daily gratitude.

### **Here are 10 simple ways to become more grateful:**

- ☞ <https://www.mindful.org/an-introduction-to-mindful-gratitude/>

## Keep a Gratitude Journal.

Establish a daily practice in which you remind yourself of the gifts, grace, benefits, and good things you enjoy. Recalling moments of gratitude associated with ordinary events, your personal attributes, or valued people in your life gives you the potential to interweave a sustainable theme of gratefulness into your life.

## Remember the Bad.

To be grateful in your current state, it is helpful to remember the hard times that you once experienced. When you remember how difficult life used to be and how far you have come, you set up an explicit contrast in your mind, and this contrast is fertile ground for gratefulness.

## Ask Yourself Three Questions.

Meditate on your relationships with parents, friends, siblings, work associates, children, and partners using these three questions:

- "What have I received from \_\_?"
- "What have I given to \_\_?"
- "What troubles and difficulty have I caused?"

## Share Your Gratitude with Others.

Research has found that expressing gratitude can strengthen relationships. So the next time your partner, friend, or family member does something you appreciate, be sure to let them know.

## Come to Your Senses.

Through our senses—the ability to touch, see, smell, taste, and hear—we gain an appreciation of what it means to be human and of what an incredible miracle it is to be alive. If not feeling well, connecting to nature, feeling the wind, warm sunshine, hearing birds sing and watching nature can be an emersion of the senses and connection to something much bigger than yourself.

## Use Visual Reminders.

Because the two primary obstacles to gratefulness are forgetfulness and a lack of mindful awareness, visual reminders can serve as cues to trigger thoughts of gratitude. Often times, the best visual reminders are other people. Witnessing others at the cancer center can cultivate a sense of compassion for others—share a smile.

## Make a Vow to Practice Gratitude.

Research shows that making an oath to perform a behavior increases the likelihood that the action will be executed. Therefore, write your own gratitude vow, which could be as simple as "I vow to count my blessings each day," and post it somewhere where you will be reminded of it every day.

## **Watch Your Language.**

Grateful people have a particular linguistic style that uses the language of gifts, givers, blessings, blessed, fortune, fortunate, and abundance. In gratitude, you should not focus on how inherently good you are, but rather on the inherently good things that others have done on your behalf.

## **Go Through the Motions.**

Grateful motions include smiling, saying thank you, and writing letters of gratitude. By "going through grateful motions," you'll trigger the emotion of gratitude more often.

## **Think Outside the Box.**

If you want to make the most out of opportunities to flex your gratitude muscles, you must look creatively for new situations and circumstances in which to feel grateful. Focus on something outside of your disease, such as a hobby or interest that makes your heart sing. Volunteer, or perform simple acts of kindness for others, it cultivates neuropeptides that helps to improve immune function and sense of wellbeing.

☞ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6805141/pdf/nihms-858345.pdf>

## **Manage Negative Emotions.**

**Our negative life experiences and suppressed emotions can linger and continue to have impact on our wellbeing.**

Researchers from the University of Rochester and Harvard School of Public Health found that people who suppress anger have a 70 percent higher risk of dying from cancer.

A University of Michigan study found that suppression of anger predicted earlier mortality in men and women.

The University of Tennessee showed that suppressed anger was a precursor to developing cancer, while the California Department of Health Services and NHI showed an increase in death from cancer for those who suppressed their anger.

Research at California Breast Cancer Research Program at Stanford University showed that powerful emotions cause a flood of cortisol that predicted early death in women with breast cancer.

## **Go to the source.**

☞ <https://www.lifehack.org/450385/cancer-is-linked-to-unexpressed-anger-studies-say-and-here-are-ways-to-deal-with-it>

Seeking help to address emotional concerns, previous negative experiences, or help managing feelings surrounding your cancer diagnosis is paramount. If you would like help, ask your oncology team to refer you to a therapist. If you feel a therapist is not your cup of tea, there are 2 excellent books focusing on how emotions impact cancer risk, and cancer outcome.

**Part of managing the stress of a cancer diagnosis, treatment and survivorship is taking control of your health.**

## **REFERENCES**

### **Books**

- "Radical Remission" Kelly Turner, PhD
- "Cured" Jeffrey Rediger, MD

### **Movie**

- "Heal" directed by Kelly Noonan-Gores and produced by Adam Schomer

### **Podcast**

- "Heal" with Kelly Noonan-Gores

## **Be open to making positive lifestyle changes.**

**If you drink alcohol...** consider reducing amount of daily intake, and consider taking occasional breaks from daily use.

*"Human data on alcohol and breast cancer risk are from non-randomized studies, and since the magnitude of the overall association is relatively modest at about 30-50% increase in breast cancer risk from moderate alcohol consumption."*

### **Review the study.**

- ☞ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3832299/pdf/nihms-482311.pdf>

**If you smoke...** adopt a strategy to quit smoking. Talk with your cancer team.

Smoking can cause a significant increased risk of breast cancer, especially in women who started smoking during adolescence or who have a family history of the disease, according to research.

### **Find out more.**

- ☞ <https://www.lifespan.org/centers-services/behavioral-medicine-clinical-services/smoking-cessation-counseling>
- ☞ <https://www.ajmc.com/view/study-links-smoking-to-increased-risk-of-breast-cancer>

If you are receiving any other care from naturopaths, or others not part of your cancer team of providers, let your cancer team know. Discuss any supplements, herbs or medicinal techniques to help create awareness, and build support.

## **6. Cultivate a meaningful relationship with yourself, and others.**

### **Find a deep sense of purpose, and meaning for your life.**

Life is precious, deep with meaning, often a cancer diagnosis bring us to a moment when our future is questioned.

*"Cancer survivors with a developed sense of purpose and who can adapt to their changing lives by finding new ways of achieving that purpose are able to stay mentally and physically active longer. Not only does that improve emotional well-being, but it can also mean a longer and more productive life, according to the studies."*

Cultivating meaningful relationships, allowing help from others, allowing connection and support can help aid healing and improve outcome.

*"A positive correlation has been observed between a patient's involvement in the medical decision-making and improved outcomes of care. Furthermore, patients with social support—those who have "the perception of being cared for and loved, being esteemed and valued, and being involved in social networks"—have shown to be healthier than those lacking social support. A whole-health approach could lead to favorable outcomes."*

### **Find out more.**

- ☞ <https://www.curetoday.com/view/the-gift-of-purpose-in-surviving-cancer>
- ☞ <https://news.uark.edu/articles/54130/researcher-finds-positive-implications-from-social-support-among-breast-cancer-patients>
- ☞ <https://www.gloriagemma.org>
- ☞ <https://www.nccn.org/patients/guidelines/content/PDF/survivorship-hl-patient.pdf>

## How to live with my body

my brain and  
heart divorced

a decade ago

over who was  
to blame about  
how big of a mess  
I have become

eventually,  
they couldn't be  
in the same room  
with each other

now my head and heart  
share custody of me

I stay with my brain  
during the week

and my heart  
gets me on weekends

they never speak to one another

- instead, they give me  
the same note to pass  
to each other every week

and their notes they  
send to one another always say the  
same thing:

"This is all your fault"

on Sundays  
my heart complains  
about how my  
head has let me down  
in the past

and on Wednesdays  
my head lists all  
of the times my  
heart has screwed  
things up for me  
in the future

they blame each  
other for the  
state of my life

there's been a lot  
of yelling - and crying

so,

lately, I've been  
spending a lot of  
time with my gut  
who serves as my  
unofficial therapist

most nights, I sneak out of the  
window in my ribcage

and slide down my spine  
and collapse on my  
gut's plush leather chair  
that's always open for me

~ and I just sit sit sit sit  
until the sun comes up

last evening,  
my gut asked me  
if I was having a hard  
time being caught  
between my heart  
and my head

I nodded

I said I didn't know  
if I could live with  
either of them anymore

"my heart is always sad about  
something that happened yesterday  
while my head is always worried  
about something that may happen  
tomorrow,"  
I lamented

my gut squeezed my hand

"I just can't live with  
my mistakes of the past  
or my anxiety about the future,"  
I sighed

my gut smiled and said:

"in that case,  
you should

go stay with your  
lungs for a while,"

I was confused  
- the look on my face gave it away

"if you are exhausted about  
your heart's obsession with  
the fixed past and your mind's focus  
on the uncertain future

your lungs are the perfect place for  
you

there is no yesterday in your lungs  
there is no tomorrow there either

there is only now  
there is only inhale  
there is only exhale  
there is only this moment

there is only breath

and in that breath  
you can rest while your  
heart and head work  
their relationship out."

this morning,  
while my brain  
was busy reading  
tea leaves

and while my  
heart was staring  
at old photographs

I packed a little  
bag and walked  
to the door of  
my lungs

before I could even knock  
she opened the door  
with a smile and as  
a gust of air embraced me  
she said

"what took you so long?"

~ poem by john roedel  
(johnroedel.com)

## 7. Breathe

In challenging situations, it is common to hold our breath, get tense, and feel as on a heightened sense of threat. Often we become stuck in our thoughts, like a loop of concern, misery and fear of the unknown. Perhaps the only feelings are chaotic, numb, or separate from who we are... One way to connect to the self, become grounded, and to begin to self soothe is finding mastery of the breath. It is simple to tap in and begin.

Practice feeling and understanding the breath during a time of ease. Sit in a comfortable position, relax the jaw and shoulders. Close your mouth and gentle breath through your nose. In and Out. One comfortable breath in for 4 seconds, and exhale for 6 seconds. Inhale of 4 seconds, and exhale 6 seconds. After a few minutes see if you can lengthen the exhale. See how you feel later, come back to the breath daily, for a few minutes. Try to use this breath during times of stress, or when you are feeling off center.



***Learn more about the benefits of breathing.***

- ☞ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/well/mind/breathe-exhale-repeat-the-benefits-of-controlled-breathing.html>

