

8 Steps to Getting Real with Cancer: Empowering Newly-Diagnosed Patients and Those Who Love Them

Marianne C. McDonough

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This book is an excellent choice for anyone involved in the cancer journey, from patients and their families to friends and medical staff.

The first few weeks after a cancer diagnosis can feel like complete chaos. A kaleidoscope of emotions whirls around a core feeling of shock, and the volume of incoming information can be overwhelming. In *8 Steps to Getting Real with Cancer*, Marianne C. McDonough gives practical and compassionate advice that shows how being honest and adopting a “survivor’s attitude” from the very start can help immensely in dealing with this crisis.

Written for cancer patients and those close to them, McDonough offers chapters on getting real with many aspects of the cancer journey, including oneself, one’s support system, the treatment process, and the future. She uses her own experience with breast cancer as an example of how this can be done, while acknowledging that everyone’s journey and beliefs will be different. Her examples and point of view are personal, but she encourages people to tweak the information to best fit their own needs.

McDonough successfully maintains a message that is consistently compassionate and positive while being straightforward and honest about the challenges. Cancer is a struggle, and she doesn’t sugarcoat that. Her goal is to empower others to navigate this difficult time, and her most helpful tools in accomplishing this are the sections that acknowledge and debunk the myths that can come up in the process of treatment. For example, patients often express that they don’t want to be a burden to their friends and family. McDonough counters that allowing others to participate in the cancer journey shows them that they are trusted and that their love and caring is accepted.

The book is not only filled with great advice, but is also organized in a way that fits perfectly with the situation of its readers. It’s a thin book that stashes easily into a purse or large pocket for taking on the go, and it’s broken up into small chapters that are the perfect length for reading while waiting for doctors’ appointments or treatment. Within the chapters are clearly designated sections that deal with myth vs. truth, practical applications for using the advice given, and a section called “Survivor Attitude” that gives a paragraph or two on how to cultivate a positive outlook. These sections are perfect for a quick pick-me-up when things are rough.

8 Steps is an excellent choice for anyone involved in the cancer journey, from patients and their families to friends and medical staff. McDonough’s personal story lets patients know they are not alone, and gives others insight into how the patient may feel and the best ways to be helpful. Her advice is on-point and her voice is authentic and confident, giving those in the midst of crisis a friend to turn to who has been there and done that, and who will help them do it, too.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (November 4, 2016)

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