

Cancer..

FACE IT, BEAT IT!

THE **NO-NONSENSE** PRACTICAL GUIDE TO **DEALING** WITH CANCER

Acknowledgements

Thank you without your contributions this programme wouldn't be possible.

The patients and staff of the Southern Area Hospice and Cancer Choices for giving me the opportunity to both add to and apply my knowledge and skills in the area of cancer self help.

Bronwyn Carson and Angus Donald, who both contributed to this programme on so many levels.

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This programme is dedicated to the memory of Arlene Feeney, a very special lady who believed in me, and who will always be remembered.

Stevie Chan.



Forward

I came into the world of helping people through my work as a Samaritan. It was here that the roots of my later career began as a psychotherapist. During a span of 20 years I have constantly been aware of the link between mental and physical well-being, studying the works of Dr Edward Bach and Louise Hay.

I have worked in G.P. practices, hospitals and in occupational health . I have grown and maintained a balanced and receptive view of both the work and conventional medicine and alternative medicine.

However, my life's work has given me the knowledge that our thinking creates our feelings and will therefore create ultimately our behavior. This includes our physical health. People literally 'think' themselves into healthy or unhealthy lives and situations.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to write this forward for the Cancer face it, beat it! Programme.

Stevie Chan's work raises and highlights the need for making choices and taking back control when faced with a diagnosis of cancer.

The programme informs the patient of how to limit the side-effects of treatment and calm the fears often associated with this disease. The programme offers text and audio help in the form of soothing hypnotic visualisations and practical exercises. These tools will help the reader to take charge of their life when faced with a cancer diagnosis or treatment. It looks at all the aspects of cancer diagnosis, be they treatable or terminal. It leads guidance to enable both the patient and the carer to work positively together, to maximise a sense of well-being.

I believe this book is a tool that will soon become a standard, to read and work through under any circumstances of cancer diagnosis. the programme will not only help the patient in their responses to treatment, but will further assist those medical professionals that do such a terrific job in cancer care treatments worldwide.

Bronwyn Carson MBACP (Accred)
Exeter, Devon
November 2014.

Do you know of anyone who has either beaten cancer or at the very least outlived their original prognosis? In either case I'd like you to read the following words of reassurance and hope from a few of the cancer survivors that I personally have had the pleasure of knowing. Everyone of them would have felt some, if not all of the feelings you are likely to be feeling now, let their words inspire you...

'It came as a great shock to me in 2004 when I was was diagnosed with breast cancer, despite losing close family members to cancer. At the time my thoughts were grim and didn't get any better during the treatment.

However, time passed by and with so much support from family, friends, cancer charities and a faith in God, the despair soon turned to hope. I began to feel emotionally strong and able to heal with what life was directing my way.

Soon I was able to support others after their cancer diagnosis and this helped to change my thinking in a much more positive way. Now, in my 11th year I have developed a positive outlook, since that terrible day when the consultant told me those dreaded words, which came about partly by being thankful for the day, each day that passed during and after treatment.

There will come a time when a Cancer diagnosis doesn't rule your life. It is my sincere wish that you will believe that'. - Lorraine.

'I'm guessing that you're reading this because you've had a recent cancer diagnosis and perhaps you are feeling concerned. Believe me. I didn't exactly jump for joy when my diagnosis was received! But, I learned how to flourish and create my own success story.

I'm not saying it was a breeze from the outset, I had to get my head around what I needed to do first and that's the area where some serious and consistent effort was required for a bit (about 2 weeks maybe?) THEN it was easy! let me skim over a bit of boring history.

In 2008 I discovered a lump in my right breast. my GP was fab, positive, reassuring etc. and said he would fast track me through the system as was the norm and that there was a real possibility that I had nothing to worry about. Within 2 weeks I'd been to the hospital prodded scanned and biopsied, this was actually a good supportive experience from the professionals and volunteers.

A week later I was back again for the results what I was back again for the results of the biopsy which confirmed cancer, this wasn't what I either expected or wanted to hear, but I have to say that this news was worsened by the attitude and delivery of the consultant. After she told me about the treatment plan, I asked the reasoning behind it she said (while sighing in a rather bored style at the time) "well it's an attempt to prolong your life a bit longer, so it's up to you".

The cancer care nurse was a lovely caring lady who took me to one side after this little meeting and told me that I'd probably go home and cry, and that this would be OK and normal. Well, I had to get back to work for the afternoon and then, on returning home, I did as I was instructed by the nurse - I duly cried.

I didn't know what to do or how I should feel or what I should say or ask. I was stunned and started to cancel everything, all future plans, I got in touch with people to share my news, and that's when my success story began to I suppose, that's when it began to flourish, and to succeed. Over and above the cancer I do recognise that I initially had an external reliance on people I spoke to, and the programme I was asked to follow by Stephen Chan, but I needed a plan and some perspective. At that time I needed clear concise instructions to follow that made sense, and that's exactly what I got, and I started to genuinely believe that I was going to be OK whatever.

I had to wait a couple of weeks before having the lump and the lymph nodes surgically removed and within that time I worked on managing my thoughts successfully, on planning, rehearsing, visualising, and really believing what was going to happen during my hospital visits and how I would heal and recover. I was prepared and very positive, I met some great people, had the surgery, reassured other patients, and recovered in super quick time. I had surgery on Thursday and would have been back to work on Monday if I'd been covered by my car insurance to drive, but as it was I took a week off work, It was April and the weather was lovely and I took full advantage of that holiday.

It was a couple of months later that I started chemo, applying the same type of attitude as with the surgery I was well prepared. I Met some lovely people, reassured the nurses and doctors (explaining to them my approach and beliefs so that where possible their attitude and language met mine) and enjoyed a very positive experience. Several of the professionals told me that they couldn't quite believe my attitude and how healthy I was! The receptionist said that she looked forward to the days when I'd be in for my appointments because the clinic took on a brighter feel. I didn't miss a day at work during and after chemo or the following radiotherapy, in fact I was busier than ever (I needed to be because my then partner had given up work due to the stress of it all? He's no longer my partner of course!)

My medical team, family and friends couldn't believe how I was feeling and what I was doing, feeling and looking great running most days, riding most days, all stable duties, working, playing, taking care of kids and home, walking miles and miles. Essentially enjoying life. I suppose the tricky part was managing well intentioned comments. For example, when I was asked how I was feeling and replied honestly that I was 'feeling great' only to be told 'oh, but just wait, it's a cumulative effect and soon you'll be feeling very tired and sick so be careful of feeling OK now because you'll only be disappointed.' Good job this wasn't the type of message I actually listened to!

The cancer marked the start of a great stage in my life and it can for you too. I forget that I once had breast cancer, I simply don't think about it unless I'm reminded. This doesn't mean that I don't want to think or talk about that time. In fact, and this might seem a bit odd for you to hear, one that I'm actually rather pleased to have experienced it because I've both developed and discovered strengths and abilities that I never knew I possessed. My cancer experience provided me with the opportunity to really flourish, to make positive changes, to recognise that I had choices where I'd previously believed I had none. For that I am very grateful
- **Ruthie.**

Thinking back to when I was told I had cancer seems like a lifetime away and in reality it's only 7 months ago, as I write this. It was December 17th and this day will probably always be imprinted on my mind, I remember feeling like I'd been hit by a ton of bricks and I struggled with the idea that I even had cancer at the time - this surely cannot happen to me! But there was no getting away from the truth and no matter how much denial I put myself through, I eventually had to face facts and to deal with the reality of the situation.

I remember asking the consultant what would happen if I didn't go through the treatment: the reply I received wasn't what I expected and went something like this, 'Russell, you have months to live!' This was the second biggest of the two shocks I got on that day, and in some ways hit me harder, as this comment put the whole thing into perspective.

None of us like to think we are going to die, when in reality we know we will, but when it's put to you like this, you are no longer able to think of yourself as immortal and the fake fantasy of immortality in your own mind is destroyed. So, what do I do? of course I had the treatments, but more importantly I focused on the positives, as failure wasn't an option for me. also during my treatment, I even focused my mind on the drugs when they were being pumped into me, and in particular the 'R' in R-CHOP which is designed to target the cancer cells in a way that helps other drugs help to kill it off. When I was on this peculiar infusion, I would often sit there and focus my mind on the drug targeting the cancer cells myself and in some way felt I was helping the drug to do its work.

I cannot say that going through the treatment was plain sailing, because it wasn't. I was really sick on it and I ended up in hospital with sepsis for a week on three separate occasions. I also got fungal pneumonia and pleurisy, but despite all of that, and yes I did get down on occasions, as I am only human, I came out the other end with the cancer gone.

I have joked towards the end of the process that there is one other good thing that came out of being treated for cancer and that is my phobia of needles has also been cured. There is no way that you can go through having 28 consecutive days of cannulas for infusion and fungal pneumonia treatment and not be cured of a phobia, which was on top of all the blood tests and chemo infusions I had!

I am now celebrating the end of cancer with my family, which is really quite emotional for me. Only this morning I went into my garden to really appreciate my life. The smell of the flowers, the sounds of the birds and the fantastic colours that life brings. As I walk around the garden I had tears in my eyes, as I thought about the second chance that I have been given and the opportunity to celebrate my life and the wonders that this brings!' - Russell

'As they were wheeling me down towards surgery I had a grin on my face. The nurse and the anesthetist looked at me and thought there was something wrong with me. But there wasn't. I'd been working towards this moment for the past two months. I had been exercising my fitness levels, I had changed my diet and had been working through various mind exercises to have the best possible thoughts I could have during my stay at the hospital. Not only that, I had planned the next few months to work out what I would be doing.

Now, I couldn't work out exactly what I would be doing because I didn't know what the outcome of the operation would be. However, I planned for most contingencies. I knew that even with the best case scenario with abdominal surgery I would be immobile for quite some time, so I planned that time. I was certain that I wasn't going to be sat in a chair for three months watching Jeremy Kyle. I got quite a lot done in that time. I wrote a radio play and continued my studies with the Open University. over the next year I got back to playing golf and almost a year to the day I won one of the top golf competitions at my club' -
Rob.

'It is now almost 15 years since my first diagnosis for cancer. It is amazing as looking back now, it sometimes feels as though it happened to someone else. In June of 1998, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma after discovering a lump in my neck. It had been there for a while but I ignored it. I presumed that it was because I had a cold and a bit rundown. However it just got bigger, I had no other adverse symptoms or feelings. If it wasn't for the lump I was perfectly healthy.

I received surgery to investigate the lump and lymph nodes. I still did not think that it was anything other than a lump caused by some other infection that I had picked up. On receiving the diagnosis I decided to fight it as much as I could. I was determined to live my life as full as I was able to.

During chemotherapy, I had lost all my hair, my eyebrows and eyelashes, so it was definitely not a time I wanted to draw attention to myself. However I was determined to carry on with life as fully as was possible.

I got the all clear in June 2005 only to have it reappear two years later in 2007, that was a great blow, but again was determined to stay positive and focused on all the good things that were in my life. I knew I had defeated it before and believed that I could do it again.

Set yourself positive goals, positive things to do. Never look at your illness in a negative light, but accept it just as you would with any other illness. You should always have a positive outlook and plan what great adventures you are going on in the future.

Your frame of mind, the way you talk, and your outlook for tomorrow must be positive and fun. avoid all those people who just want to feel sorry for you, They just pull you down with their negativity, tell them you feel wonderful and isn't life great and watch their faces -
Michael.

Be inspired

'My friend and colleague Stephen Chan asked me to write something about my own experience with cancer, and here it is. the best advice I can give anyone with this diagnosis is EDUCATE YOURSELF ! This will increase your sense of power and control.

No doctor knows everything there is to know, and for that reason, I did not wholly trust what my UK doctors told me. I listened to them and to their advice, and then made it my business to find out more; this changed the 'game plan' for me. If you can. take some time to learn what yo can. It was really important to me to believe wholeheartedly that I was doing the best I could do to help myself to heal. This lead me to consult Dr Francisco Contreras at the Oasis of Hope in Mexico.

I stayed in the clinic for 2 weeks, this was the pivotal point in my cancer 'journey' - before I started treatment in the UK. Then, based on Dr Contrera's advice and, on what I had learned myself through my own research, I felt really confident about going through the treatment that was prescribed for me here. I believed I was doing the right things for me.

*I am still here 13 years later and in really good health. I continue to do most of what I learned to support myself through the treatment as a way of maintaining health. Whatever you do, I wish you well on your journey' - **Beaula.***

'Being diagnosed with breast cancer is an unusual experience. The immediacy of diagnosis followed by a roller coaster of appointments and treatment plans, can leave you totally off balance. Nothing is as bleak as it feels in those first few days and weeks of uncertainty as you try to absorb what is happening to your life which is in sudden turmoil. Amazingly there is light at the end of the tunnel, and the earlier you come to terms with those things which are within your control, the earlier you start to find your level and your way through the gamut of emotions.

The Cancer face it, beat it! Programme offers techniques and understanding of the natural human responses to such a situation and a way of managing your thinking, your feelings, and therefore your behavior. I can honestly say I found a positive way through this certain time of my life. I walked and talked, and worked and managed to normalise what was happening in a way I thought hardly possible.

*I organised the close people around me to embrace the healthy caring support I needed to embrace the process whatever that process may have been, I have continued to embrace the experience and rarely look back and I move on with my life. I have been through this experience and I know you can all come through it too regardless of diagnosis or treatment you can make this journey easier with this programme' - **Bronwyn.***

The Cancer face it, beat it ! Programme

Massive leaps have been made in the overall cancer survival rates with around half of all diagnosed patients recovering after their original diagnosis. However, what is often overlooked is the mental trauma that often accompanies the diagnosis of cancer - the Cancer face it, beat it! Programme has been designed to fill this void.

The Cancer face it, beat it! Programme is a research based, complimentary, psychological empowerment approach to cancer treatment, that has been created to work alongside your medical treatments.

Each step of the programme has been designed to give you the power and the control to ease both your emotional and physical symptoms, whilst at the same time strengthening your beliefs about your abilities to recover from cancer.

The programme covers every stage of your journey, whether you have just been diagnosed and are finding it difficult to cope, or you are feeling apprehensive of the any possible side effects of the treatment you are about to start, or even if you are finding it hard to accept that palliative care is the only option available to you for the time being, you will find something in this programme that will help you.

The journey ahead of you might not be straightforward as you would like it to be, so I recommend that you read through the following brief summaries and familiarise yourself with the content. This will give your sense of power and control a welcomed boost, and the peace of mind that comes with knowing that there will always be something in this programme to assist you.

PART 1- HEALTHY SUPPORT

Here you are offered advice on what is believed to be the healthiest type of support that will be of most benefit to you as you begin this part of your journey.

You will learn how to create an open, honest, loving and supportive environment. One where everyone's feelings are respected and taken into consideration, which is essential for improving the quality of life of everyone involved.

This will provide you with the type of support that is more of a help rather than a hindrance, and one that will provide you with the most supportive atmosphere for recovery.

Part 2 - YOUR HEALTH AND YOU TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE

This is where you really begin to take back your inner power and control. You will understand how each and everyone of us has a very active role to play when it comes to the state of both our physical and mental health.

You will also learn about stress and how it affects both the psychological and physiological state of your health.

Exercises are provided to help you to identify the major stressors that were happening in your life prior to diagnosis. Once you are aware of those stressors you will learn more effective ways of coping with stress itself. This will enable you to feel physically and mentally more empowered to live a far richer and enjoyable life.

PART 3 - YOU TAKING BACK YOUR POWER AND CONTROL

Once you begin to take back responsibility for your life by recognising that your experience of life, and how you feel and react to life is driven by the way you think about life, you start to gain a greater sense of power and control over every single aspect of whatever is happening in your life.

You will learn about the personal power and control that is within us all, and the more of this you realise you possess, then the greater the belief you will have in yourself, and in your ability to reclaim your health, making you even more proactive.

PART 4 - ESTEEMING YOURSELF

A lot of people suffer from self-esteem issues. This is mainly because many of us were never taught what self-esteem actually is, and how to esteem ourselves. You will also learn how the way in which you talk to yourself impacts upon your self-esteem, and how you can instantly transform your unhelpful negative thoughts into helpful positive ones, helping you to feel as if you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

PART 5 - RELAX AND VISUALISE YOURSELF BACK TO HEALTH

Relaxation has been proven to boost the immune system by up to 20%. Here you learn about the enormous benefits to be had through the use of deep relaxation and positive mental imagery.

With the aid of audios you will be able to utilise these powerful tools to smash the cycle of fear and tension that can often accompany a cancer diagnosis, and to also further strengthen your belief in your abilities of recovery.

You will become less stressed, and discover how being relaxed changes your perception of life. This means you will be able to emotionally cope far more effectively with any situation.

Positive mental imagery is also an invaluable key to uncovering any negative beliefs and thoughts just hiding under the surface that could be impeding your recovery.

The positive mental imagery exercise helps to create positive changes to your expectations. It's a journey of self discovery as you learn how to visualise your recovery back to health.

PART 6 - THE BENEFITS OF DISEASE

In today's society the fear of being judged negatively by others can often make it very difficult for some of us to admit that we're struggling with the pressures of life.

Strange as it may seem, when someone becomes ill it can seem as if this is one of the very few occasions when it's acceptable to admit that one is not coping. Here illness actually provides permission to ask for attention, love, help and support that is needed, but didn't feel could be asked for before diagnosis.

Here you will identify, without blame or guilt, some of the 'possible' hidden benefits of being ill that you could 'unknowingly' be using, that could be sabotaging your recovery. This will then enable you to formulate positive and less destructive ways through which you can still have your emotional needs met without illness.

PART 7 - PAIN MANAGEMENT

Here you will gain a better understanding of pain. Pain and discomfort is often a messenger of our fears and anxieties. Once these are recognised and addressed a reduction in pain and discomfort will follow. An audio is provided to guide you through some very powerful pain control techniques.

PART 8 - RESENTMENT vs FORGIVENESS

Holding onto negative thoughts creates a vicious cycle that will hinder recovery. The audio provided in this section offers you the opportunity to break any negative, unhelpful thoughts, feelings cycle, especially ones connected to anger and resentment.

PART 9 - EXERCISE AND NUTRITION

Research shows that exercise and nutrition plays a very important role when it comes to living a healthy life. Physical exercise is the natural way in which our body releases the harmful effects of stress and tension.

Many of the most dramatic recoveries from cancer, were made by those who adopted a healthier lifestyle following their diagnosis.

PART 10 - CREATING A LIFE WORTH LIVING

After a diagnosis of cancer, it's so easy to stop thinking about living and worry about dying instead, and this can increase the desire to give up or withdraw. Here we learn how to confront these destructive thoughts and the knock on effects this negative mindset will have upon your quality of life.

Learning the importance of setting worthwhile goals helps to maintain a better quality of life and reinforce the will to live. You will create a life that will be worth living, and the expectation that you will live it!

PART 11 - FACING THE FEAR OF RELAPSE AND DEATH

Death is often a subject that's avoided and never discussed, which can turn it into a fearful prospect. Our lives are influenced by our beliefs, and thoughts. The fact that our beliefs create our experience of reality means that by examining your beliefs you can decide which ones actually serve you, and improve your quality of life.

When unhelpful thoughts and beliefs are left unchallenged they will continue to create negative feelings, emotions and reactions cycles. Allowing the fear of death and relapse to go unchallenged can go on to completely overwhelm and lead to isolation, because the individual feels unable to discuss their very real concerns openly with those who are nearest and dearest.

An audio is provided that will enable you to explore your beliefs and feelings on this subject. Even if the diagnosis is terminal and palliative care is the only option you are being offered for the time being, you will learn that it's still NOT the end of your journey!

Part 12 - WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Here a few words of advice are offered on your next steps as you continue on the journey that we call life.

The Cancer face it, beat it! Programme audios

As you progress through this programme you will be prompted to use specific audios in conjunction with your manual.

- Positive mental imagery - Part 5
- Limiting your side-effects - part 5
- Pain management - Part 7
- Healing light and letting go of resentment - Part 8
- Facing your fear - Part 11

There are also other supplementary audios for you to use if or when you feel the need for some extra help with the different stages and treatments you may come across on your journey. these are:

- Staying positive - it is recommended that you listen to this at the beginning and throughout the whole programme.
- Relax whilst awaiting test results - Listen to before and whilst awaiting test results.
- Relax with needles and cannulas - This will help if you experience problems with needles and cannulas.
- Surgery calmness - this will help with any surgery you may choose to undergo.

**The audios can be found on the complimentary cancer help page at
www.ulsterhypnotherapy.com
The password is RELAX**

The main focus of the Cancer face it, beat it! Programme is to enable you to take back your personal power and control, which in turn will reduce your stress levels, which in turn will give your immune system a much needed boost.

Part 1: Healthy support

This programme is a whole person approach to cancer and the treatment of it. Here, you will be challenging and changing any unhelpful beliefs that you may have about your ability to improve, and even recover completely.

You are going to learn how your beliefs, perceptions and expectations have influenced everything that you have ever experienced in your life, even when it comes to illness and disease.

Our attitude towards any challenge, including disease is 90% of the battle against it. When we change our attitude we feel far more capable in our ability to positively influence the state of our health.

Research - *patients with metastatic melanoma and metastatic breast cancer who were able to minimise the impact of the disease experienced longer survival times.*

You are probably finding out that the range of emotions and lifestyle changes that accompany the diagnosis of cancer don't just affect one person. Therefore, everyone who is involved needs healthy support and assistance to deal with their own feelings during these most challenging of times.

Here, it isn't so much about the support, but the type of support that really matters. For example, you could have a huge amount of supporters and yet still feel very much alone. Whilst on the other hand, you could have one good friend and feel that you have all the support you need.

This is why it's so important for you to seek out the type of support that serves your intention, which is that you are going to recover from your present situation, or at the very least make the very most of the time you have left. To be living our lives to the full, no matter how long or short that time may be, is something we should all be striving for.

In this part of the programme I offer guidance on what I believe to be the healthiest type of support that will assist you as you begin this chapter of your life. Letting the ones closest to you know what you are learning from this programme, means that together you will be aware of the most beneficial type of support. This enables your support to become a help rather than a hindrance when called upon.

No talking on eggshells

Ideally your support should make you feel that they are present and that they are listening, regardless of what you want to talk about. It doesn't matter whether it's about something serious, or it's just an outlet for your frustrations. They must allow you to do this, even if they would prefer it if you talked about something else.

It's vital that you feel comfortable enough to be able to express how you are thinking and feeling without judgement, because the expression of your thoughts, feelings and emotions is an essential part of your recovery process.

If you feel that you're not allowed to discuss the things that presently matter the most to you, with those who mean the most to you, will only lead to a sense of isolation and loneliness.

Let your support know that you won't always be seeking solutions or answers, and that sometimes they may be required to just listen and create a space where you are allowed to express and clarify to yourself exactly what it is that you are thinking and feeling.

Your thoughts and feelings are justified and valid and need to be explored and expressed, especially the negative and unhelpful ones which will compromise your immune system (*Part 2: Your health and you taking an active role*).

You are asking them to listen without judgment, and to listen to what is being said, and not how it's being said. Time is too precious to be wasted by carrying thoughts and feelings of bitterness, anger, resentment or frustration.

There might be occasions when you seem distraught and overwhelmed. If this is the case, then the best thing that they can do is - 'do nothing'. They have to simply sit back, and give you the space that allows you to explore, and or even vent your thoughts and emotions. Then, once you are done, they can ask you if there is anything you would like them to do.

There could be times when a hug will be accepted favorably and there could be times when it won't. For example, if you are deciding to feel sorry for yourself, you might ask them to leave you alone. If this is the case, let them exactly it is that you mean, do you want them to stay or go, or do you want them to keep quiet for a while?

There may be times when they could be met with an explosion of feelings seemingly directed at them. If so, remind them that it's not about them, and that venting is about you and your thoughts and feelings. When they know this it will help to keep the lines of communication open.

It's OK for your support to acknowledge how they feel about what you have said. When they do this you will know that they are not only acknowledging your thoughts and feelings, but they are also being honest with their own. This is very important, because if they begin to withhold their thoughts and feelings, they could start to withdraw emotionally from the supportive relationship.

Everyone being honest and truthful is vital throughout this time, so encouraging your support to voice their fears, limitations and boundaries is just as important as you voicing yours, and whenever there is something they feel they can't do, encourage them to tell you.

Here are some ideas for you to share with your support which will help you all:

- Occasionally, all you will be asking your support to do is to accept and acknowledge whatever it is that you are thinking and feeling. At times like this, them simply nodding or saying "I understand" will be better than trying to offer an opinion or advice. The act of giving your time and listening is one of the most precious gifts that you can give and receive.
- Whenever someone is talking more than they are listening, or finishing the other person's sentences it is often an indication of their own insecurities. Real listening is active listening, which is being totally attentive to the other person.
- Become comfortable with the silences, there is no need to fill them. Silences are useful moments of introspection that are necessary during meaningful conversations and times of soul searching.
- Keep in mind that many of your feelings will differ from those around you, since you are all having a very different experience. So, there will often be very different responses to the same questions. Acknowledge that everyone doesn't have to think, feel or behave the same way. Difficulties will arise within a support group, when these differences are not allowed, and it's assumed that everyone should be thinking, feeling and behaving the same way.

There is one behavior that has been shown to influence the prognosis of cancer, It's the inability to express negative emotions such as fear and anger. These tend to be people who have a strong sense of duty and responsibility and will often 'people please' in order to avoid confrontation or perceived judgement.

Research - *constantly pleasing others was the typical behavior of a cancer patient. Their friends would describe them as being exceptionally fine, thoughtful, uncomplaining and almost 'too good to be true'.*

Think negative thoughts creates/triggers negative emotions, regardless of whether you keep them to yourself or not.

So, the expressing or venting of negative thoughts and their consequential feelings frees you from the damage that can be caused when they are suppressed. Suppressed thoughts and emotions can hamper the effectiveness of your treatments and your recovery by keeping you stuck in a negative mindset making it difficult for you to move on.

You will do yourself a huge favor by getting whatever it is off your chest, gaining some perspective, challenging and changing what you are thinking, and letting it go so you can move on asap.

Research - *the personalities of 637 patients and 714 control subjects were studied. The distinctions observed between the two groups was the that ones with a tendency to display socially acceptable reactions, along with a preference to avoid conflict and offending others, were those associated with a poor prognosis.*

Rescuing

One might think that 'rescuing' is providing caring help and support, but it can psychologically and physically incapacitate you as it only serves to reinforce any unhelpful and disempowering beliefs that you may have about you being weak, helpless and incapable of taking charge of your own life.

It is important that you feel that you are still an integral part of your support group sharing the highs and the lows. So, exclusion from discussion on the assumption that you already have too much to deal with, or that you should be kept in the dark 'for your own good', doesn't help in the slightest. This is an example of rescuing.

Everyone's psychological well-being benefits when feelings are openly discussed. When feelings are shared closeness is created, when feelings are withheld closeness is lost.

Society tells us that we should do everything possible for the sick, which often leads to smothering. If you are allowed or encouraged to take on that victim role. For example, "I'm helpless and hopeless, please help me," then it can be easy for your support group to inadvertently take up the rescuer mentality which will be detrimental to you and your recovery.

Rescuing is totally counterproductive, as it keeps you locked in an unhealthy 'victim' mentality by taking away your belief that you have the power and ability within yourself to resolve your own problems.

The challenge you and your support may face is recognising the line between giving support and colluding with any limiting beliefs that you may hold. Recovery from disease WILL depend upon YOU finding and using YOUR own inner resources...and NOT relying on someone else's!

Rewarding health, not illness

You must be encouraged to do whatever you can for yourself for as long as, and as soon as you are able to do so. It's easy to be a little over the top with support and love whenever someone is perceived as being ill and helpless, but as hard as it may seem, it is imperative that self-responsibility is taken back as soon as recovery begins.

If you should begin to develop any sort of conscious, or more often unconscious benefit from your condition, your drive to get better will automatically lessen. However, this doesn't mean taking away all the love, attention and support, just balancing it out.

Here are some ideas for you to share which will help all involved in this process:

- Letting you do things for yourself when appropriate, and being praised when you do. Instead of jumping in with an 'you're sick and should be taking it easy' attitude, which only creates and strengthens the, 'you are helpless and hopeless' mind-set that must be avoided at all costs.
- Your support being aware of any signs of improvement and making you aware of them too.
- Life can often seem as if it's been taken up with disease related activities such as GP appointments, treatments etc. Therefore, balance it out by having some quality time out together. Don't wait till you are better, living doesn't have to stop because of cancer, the more enjoyable life is the more you will want to hang on to it!
- Ideally, the family needs to remain positive in the belief that you can recover, or at the very least still enjoy life. This means 100% support whatever treatments you decide upon. This can be easier said than done, because some still equate cancer with death. If this is the case, they need to do the research and educate themselves about cancer, and to put their own doubts aside, and to still support you 100%, because at the end of the day it is still your life.
- Supporters still need to have their own daily life commitments met. A sense of normality gives all involved a healthy message of encouragement. You should be treated as though you are expected to live, and it's important that you believe that you will - for as long as you possibly can.

'In the 1970's Sam Shoeman was diagnosed with end-stage liver cancer, he was given only months to live, he died in the allotted time frame. Yet his autopsy revealed that his doctors had made a mistake, his tumor was only one tiny nodule that couldn't have killed him - so why did he die?. The only thing that they could determine was that he didn't die from cancer, but from believing he was dying from cancer...'If everyone treats you as if you are dying, you buy into it. Everything in your whole being becomes about dying.'

The idea is to establish a line of open, honest, and clear communication where everyone's thoughts and feelings are taken into account for the harmony and comfort of everyone who is involved.

A professional counsellor can provide any additional help that your support may find difficult to give, because your support could be just 'too close', or their own issues could possibly be hindering constructive progress.

A professional could also be useful in bringing your support group together by helping them to define their individual roles. Anyone who decides to seek some form of 'outside' support shouldn't be looked upon as failure. Everyone has their own emotional needs that also need to be met.

It's unrealistic to expect that everyone must be positive all of the time. 'Setbacks' are a part of life and should be treated as such. Accepting this helps to regain perspective, and get back to the business of living asap.

Being open with each other will enhance the personal growth of everyone involved, which in due course will lead to a greater closeness and understanding for everyone involved.

People who have participated in programmes such as this, and have worked on their recovery by confronting their unhelpful beliefs and thoughts towards disease have discovered and developed powerful inner psychological strengths and resources. The very same applies to those members of your support team.

The closeness, love, honesty, openness and understanding that facing cancer evokes, also has the capacity to galvanise the human spirit, providing everyone with that inner strength that will carry them through the rest of their days - no matter what the future may hold.

Feedback - *The type of support I needed was the type that gave me space to find my level in managing a breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. Early on, I learned that people's well meant sympathy left me feeling small and very vulnerable, so I had to be clear with everyone that I didn't want this type of support. As treatment progressed it was very helpful to do normal things to keep the diagnosis and treatment in perspective.*

Key notes

- Communicate and discuss what type of support you need from your supporters.
- Encourage your supporters to help you to keep your life as normal as possible.
- Do not allow yourself or others to define you by your diagnosis.
- It's the type of support that really matters.
- It is vital that everyone is encouraged to be honest and truthful.
- One of the characteristics that has been shown to influence the prognosis of cancer is an inability to express negative emotions i.e. fear and anger.
- Rescuing is totally counterproductive, it takes away your belief that you have the power and ability within yourself to resolve your own problems which keeps you locked in an unhealthy 'victim' mentality.
- It's essential for you to be encouraged to do whatever you can for yourself as soon as and for as long as you possibly can.
- The idea is to establish open, honest, and clear communication where everyone's thoughts and feelings are taken into account.

Part 2: Your health and you taking an active role

Your body is designed with mechanisms that help to maintain equilibrium and balance, which aids your immune system to help keep it disease free. An imbalance will often result in illness, and imbalance is often an indication that there are problems elsewhere in your life.

Imbalances could be an unhealthy diet and lifestyle, the pressures of unreasonable workload or expectations of yourself, in other words, the inability to keep a healthy balance of work, rest and play.

When we are no longer at ease we become **DIS-EASED**.

Research - they injected subjects with 1 of 5 different strains of the cold virus or a placebo. As expected, some of the subjects contracted the cold whilst some didn't. The results showed that statistically the risk of getting ill was directly related to the amount of stress the subjects had been experiencing over the past year. Stress was the only determining factor in getting ill. This and numerous other studies prove beyond any level of doubt that changes in one's mental state are always accompanied by changes in one's physiology.

The stress factor

When we feel under a real, or even a perceived threat the body automatically switches to survival mode, the 'fight or flight' response. Once this response is triggered many hormones are released into the body to provide it with sufficient energy to enable us to either fight or take flight.

In small doses the fight or flight hormones are a natural and beneficial part of your body's defense mechanism, which means that stress isn't inherently bad for us.

However, when we allow our stressful periods to last longer than necessary is when this very same lifesaving response can have a catastrophic impact on the state of our health, because it then can suppress and even stop the body's natural ability to balance and heal itself.

So, the longer you allow yourself to remain stressed the more it depletes your immune system, as well as creating anxiety, depression, unhappiness and dis-ease.

"Stress creates un-ease and unease creates dis-ease"

There are three types of stress

Acute Stress is associated with the normal day to day events that we allow ourselves to get stressed over. Acute stress is usually short term which prevents it from causing the damaging effects that are commonly associated with the longer-term stresses.

Episodic Acute Stress is a longer-term stress, that's associated with feeling as if you are constantly worrying about something, always on the go, chasing deadlines, as if you have too many balls in the air, constantly worrying. Worst case scenario thinking habit is a source of episodic stress.

Chronic Stress is associated with the relentless day after day demands, pressures and never ending troubles related to feeling stuck or trapped in an unhappy relationship, a dysfunctional family life, being in a despised job or career, living in poverty, which incessantly grinds and wears a person down, leaving them physically and mentally depleted with no apparent hope or way out of their seemingly miserable lives. Chronic stress has been linked to heart attacks, strokes, depression and even serious dis-eases such as cancer, it can also lead to suicide.

Being human means that we can become accustomed to changes very quickly, which can be a good thing and a bad thing, because it means that we can get used to acute stress very quickly and end up 'putting up' with it rather than sorting it out.

Another reason why we tend to 'put up' with rather than sort out our stress is because we've been brought up to believe that the stress we feel is something that happens to us, that someone or something is making me feel the way I do, so it's not my responsibility, so I can do nothing about it.

The belief that stress happens to us is nothing more than a limiting belief. I'm literally telling myself that I can't do anything to change the way that I am feeling other than avoid whatever it is I believe is making me feel the way I do, or do something or take something in order to comfort myself.

The three types of stress have been mentioned purely for reference purposes, because personally I believe that the stress we feel is created by the way in which we as individuals think about things. This makes the stress we experience something that we have power and control over.

Let me explain; the things that we believe create our stress are known as stressors, however, you and I both know that we don't get stressed over the same things. Therefore, the important question is this - is our stress created by the things we are looking at, or is our stress created by the way we are thinking about the things we are looking at?

Stress is a bodily reaction to an uncomfortable thought - that is the nature of fight or flight!

When we allow ourselves to believe that someone or something is making us feel the way we do we are telling ourselves that we are powerless to do anything about it.

For example, one day I noticed that my daughter was upset. I asked her why? 'It's mum!' was her reply. I reminded her that her mum was miles away shopping, therefore how could she possibly be making her feel the way she did?

I also put it to her that if she really believed that her mum, who was miles away was making her feel the way she did, what could she do about how she felt?

'Absolutely nothing' was her reply. I joked that that wasn't technically true, I handed her my mobile and suggested she call her mum and to ask her to stop making her feel the way she did, she laughed at the absurdity of this idea.

She accepted that her mum couldn't be making her feel the way she did, which allowed her to see that her feelings must have been created by what she had been thinking.

She realised that she felt upset because she had been thinking about an argument that they had a few days ago.

She could see that the argument was in the past and that it was her thinking about the argument in the present, that was what was creating the upsetting feelings she was feeling in the present .

Now, she understood this, I asked her what could she do about how she felt now?

She replied, 'I think about the argument in less negative way, or I can distract myself by think something else, or go for a walk, or listen to some music, or watch a movie, or call a friend, I can do lots of things to change my thoughts which will change the way I am feeling!'

I also added that even if her mother was present and trying to make her feel bad or whatever, how she felt about whatever was being said or done to her would be completely how she was thinking about what was being said or done. In the very same way that she chooses how she thinks, feels and reacts to a compliment, something she disagrees with, or something that is said by someone she doesn't care about - this is our personal power and control.

OUR FEELINGS ARE CREATED BY OUR THOUGHTS IF WE DON'T THINK IT, WE DON'T FEEL IT.

Feedback - *The turning point of my treatment was when I realised and accepted that the storms were always in here (pointing to her head) and they were never out there. By accepting this I felt able to begin working on calming my storms. When I believed the storms were out there, what else could I do except suffer and wait for them to pass.'*

Anticipatory anxiety

There are two types of anxiety. There is real time anxiety, which is the emotional response that we create whenever something challenging happens in 'real' time. For example, an accident.

Then there is anticipatory anxiety is the emotional response that is created when we think about things that we fear might happen. In other words, they are the 'what ifs' and the 'buts' - also known as worrying.

A study proved that 85% of the things that we worry about never happen, but what about the 15% that did happen? Well, 79% of those participants reported that it wasn't as bad as they expected, and that they handled it a lot better than thought they would have, and that the experience actually taught them valuable lessons. So, research says that 97% of the time there's nothing to worry about - I know you have already experienced this.

Also, remember that you can't react, take control, or even take action over something that hasn't actually happened, and may not ever happen, which understandably, will make you feel even more powerless and more stressed!

Now, Imagine how you would react if the worst did happen and you've already worked yourself into a high state of stress? Do you think you would be able to think and react in a calm rational manner, or do you think you would have a complete meltdown?

If the worst were to happen, it wouldn't feel as bad as it does when you're simply worrying about it, because if it did happen, at least you would be able to take action and do something about it, you could even run away, but whilst it hasn't happened, all you can do is worry yourself sick.

The movie industry very effectively uses ways to create anticipatory anxiety, with scary music or dramatic setups, causing us to cling to our seats with fear in anticipation of what is about to happen so we will jump out of our seats when it does - this is the power of anticipatory anxiety.

Another example of anticipatory anxiety is when someone with a 'situational' fear or a phobia is creating the feelings of fear within themselves, but blaming something outside of themselves for how they are feeling. For example, a fear of flying, the flight (the situation) maybe months away, and whenever the sufferer thinks about the upcoming flight, do you think they're thinking about what a lovely comfortable, enjoyable flight it could be?

No, they're thinking about every possible thing that could go wrong, the 'what ifs' the 'buts' and literally frightening the bejesus out of themselves.

So, as the flight draws closer and closer they will be thinking those scary thoughts more and more, and each time they do this their anxiety will build and build. Until, finally, they are sat on the plane, now every sound or bump will feel a million times worse, and they are going to over-react to everything, all because of the anticipatory anxiety they have built up over the previous weeks. All because every time they thought about flying in such a terrifying way, they completely wound themselves up emotionally - it's all in the build up! This example also illustrates that there is always an emotional consequence for the way YOU CHOOSE to think.

Research - Dental injections were used to demonstrate that the physical reactions from patients were the same for the anticipation of an injection as it was towards the actual injection.

Stress and cancer

Although there is no proven direct link between stress and cancer, what has been proven is the harmful effect stress has upon your immune system, and whenever your immune system is compromised, it becomes less effective at fighting off pathogens such as germs, viruses, bacteria or other micro-organisms that can cause harmful cell changes and dis-ease.

Whether or not a direct link between stress and cancer is ever proved, your immune system will find it easier to keep you healthy or even recover from dis-ease if you learn how to keep your stress down to a minimum.

How you can minimise your stress

The stress response is your body's natural survival mechanism, which makes it impossible to avoid completely. However, remember that damage only occurs when the body isn't given an opportunity to wind down and return to a state of balance.

So, learning how to effectively manage the frequency, intensity and duration of your stress response will help you to both feel better, and assist you in your fight against dis-ease by boosting your immune system.

In any given situation the amount of stress you create is directly linked to the amount of personal power and control you think and thus feel you have over that situation.

Remember this simple formula...

MORE Personal Power and Control = **LESS** Stress and Anxiety.

LESS Personal Power and Control = **MORE** Stress and Anxiety.

It is widely recognised that around 90% of the factors that determine the overall state of our health are due to the direct conscious lifestyle decisions we make such as, a regular exercise, a healthy diet, stopping smoking, reducing your alcohol intake etc.

However, our health is also affected by our emotional and psychological states, and it's this mind and body interaction which affects the chemical balance of the body and most importantly the immune system.

Our emotional and psychological states also affect our circulation, digestion, and nervous systems, all of which have a huge bearing on the overall state of our health. Any negative emotions and feelings will have a detrimental effect upon our wellbeing.

Thoughts cause feelings, emotions and a bodily effect!

Whilst we readily accept the simpler mind and body connections, such as blushing or the frequent trips to the toilet during times of nervousness, and how fear can cause our hearts to race and break out in cold sweats. However, this interaction is often strangely overlooked when it comes to our emotions in relation to the 'bigger' illnesses.

Think back to periods in your life when you felt overworked, physically or mentally run down and under a lot of emotional pressure, did it coincide with the onset of a 'minor' ailment such as a cold, headache, aches and pains or a cold sore etc?

Research - 163 women who went for a routine breast screening were studied. The women diagnosed with breast cancer had experienced the most life-changing events during the previous two years. They also noted that the experience of a single major event was more damaging than regular exposure. This led them to conclude that those patients with more experience in handling stressors might be less physically affected by the event.

When making a conscious effort to influence your health it's important for us to look back at the six to eighteen months that preceded the onset of your diagnosis. This will enable you to examine your thoughts, thinking habits, attitudes and behaviours, and the triggers that possibly played a part in onset of your poor health.

When you do this you are not only taking the first and probably the most important and most empowering step on your journey back to fitness and health, you're also taking back your personal power and control!

Remember that this is not about you taking the blame you are only looking at the part you might have played in your current situation

Smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, and living an unhealthy lifestyle will not guarantee that someone will develop cancer. So, this is not about looking for someone to blame, it is about accepting without judgement that we have an active role when it comes to the present state of our health.

Accepting means that we can have as much of an active role in our recovery, and in doing so we reaffirm that all important mindset that says 'I have personal power and control!'

Remember, that in any given situation the amount of stress you create is directly affected by the amount of control you think you have. Basically, its about how much personal power and control do you believe you have over what you make of your life.

Research - there is a noticeable connection between life-changing events and cancer progression, especially in those cases where clients displayed hopelessness. It's suggested that clients who experience severe life events, and interpret them in such a way that they find themselves hopeless and helpless have a higher probability of developing cancer.

The following exercise will help you to understand and relate to the process just discussed, and of course reap the benefits in return. Think of five major challenges or stressors that were happening in your life six to eighteen months prior to your diagnosis. Take your time; think deeply and honestly about your answers and write them down, also write down the way you were thinking about them at the time.

You have now probably uncovered a number of 'external' things, things outside of you that you believed were 'making' you feel stressed and anxious at the time. Now, remember, that stress doesn't actually happen to us, and that stress and anxiety are a part of our fight or flight response, which makes it something that is triggered whenever we think about something in a threatening, scary, powerless way.

There are over 400 recognised phobias in the world. That's 400 things in the world that someone believes triggers their fight or flight response, which is basically what a phobic reaction is.

However, if it was true that things make us feel the way we do, then why don't we all have 400 phobias? We don't all have 400 phobias, simply because we don't all think threatening, scary, powerless thoughts about the same 400 things.

Now that you know that our stress and anxiety is created by the way in which we think about things that are happening in life, take a look at what you wrote about the five major changes or stressors that were happening in your life prior to diagnosis and take a look at the way you were thinking about them. Was your fight or flight response triggered by the way you were thinking about them rather the other way around?

Now, think about any current stressors in your life and ask yourself are you thinking about them in the very same threatening, scary, powerless way you did in the past?

If so, then you have identified the unhelpful thinking habits that you need to start changing. These are the unhelpful thinking habits, the unhelpful way you have been looking at things that will still be creating unnecessary stress and anxiety that you are experiencing as un-ease and dis-ease. All of which can form a negative blockage to your recovery.

Start challenging and changing these thoughts into more helpful, thoughtful, encouraging, positive thoughts. Start talking to yourself as you would do to someone you care about, someone you love. Do this and making it your new thinking habit will reduce your stress creating thoughts, restore your balance and help your body's natural defenses to return to their natural and normal potency.

Key notes:

- When we are no longer at ease we become dis-eased
- **VERY IMPORTANT** - In small doses the stress hormones are natural and beneficial. It is only when stressful periods become prolonged, that they can negatively affect the state of your health.
- The longer you allow yourself to remain in a stressed state the more depleted your immune system becomes, which can result in anxiety, depression, unhappiness and dis-ease.
- Anticipatory anxiety is the anxiety that is created by constantly thinking over and dwelling on all the awful negative possibilities that haven't and may not ever happen.
- Learning how to minimise your stressful periods will make it easier for your immune system to keep you healthy and even recover from dis-ease.
- **MORE** Personal Power and Control = **LESS** Stress and Anxiety.
- **LESS** Personal Power and Control = **MORE** Stress and Anxiety.
- Identify your stress and stressors and start to work on changing these by changing the way you think, feel and react to them.
- Challenging and change these threatening, scary, powerless, unhelpful thinking habits by talking to yourself as you would do to someone cared about, and make this your new empowering way you talk to yourself - your new empowering thinking habit

Part 3: You taking back the power and the control

The amount of effort we put into changing anything hugely depends on how much personal power and control we believe we have over whatever it is that we want to change or influence. The more power, control, and influence we believe we have, then the more effort we will put in, and vice versa. Believing and thus feeling powerful and in control of what you make of your life is the backbone of this whole programme.

You already possess within you all the personal power and control you need to make all the necessary adjustments which will inevitably benefit your health. However, in order to claim your personal power and control you must first accept responsibility for your life, if you don't, then you give up your ability to respond.

Personal Power

How much personal power and control do you feel you have over your life?

Your answer to that question will have a direct impact on how powerful or powerless you will feel regarding your capability to do anything that concerns you, your thinking, your feelings, your actions, and what you make of life.

The more that you believe that your life and what you make of it is down to your own thoughts, feelings and actions, then the greater your sense of personal power and control over your life will be.

Having a greater sense of personal power and control over your life means the more you believe that life is what you make of it.

A greater sense of personal power and control mean that you respond, you find a way around, over, under, or through, to cope with and tolerate things when they don't go to plan. Whilst, at the same time you acknowledge, praise, credit and appreciate your own work and efforts when you are successful. This gives you a 'can do' attitude that makes you more pro-active - this is crucial element to your physical and mental well-being.

Remember - MORE Personal Power and Control = **LESS** Stress and Anxiety.

Whilst on the other hand, allowing yourself to believe that your life, your future, and how you think, feel, act and behave is being controlled by someone or something outside of you, outside of your power and control such as; what other people say or do, genetics, superstitions, higher powers, karma, chance, luck or fate etc. Creates the illusion that life and things just happen to you, things are being done to you, which in turn lessens your sense of personal power and control over your life which means more stress and anxiety.

Believing that you have little or no personal power and control means that you automatically give for your successes and achievements in life to other powers outside of you. This prevents you from taking complete ownership of any of your successes and achievements, which has and a devastating impact on your self-esteem which is on a key component of your mental wellbeing (more on this later).

Please don't think that I am being a closed-minded when it comes to the things that we have generally been conditioned to give our personal power and control away to. You might even believe that your beliefs in these other powers are kind of helping you to cover all of your bases. However, I remind you of what I said at the start of this chapter and the relationship between personal power and control and effort. The less personal power and control you believe you have the more stressed and anxious you will feel. Well, what do you think and happens when you allow yourself to believe that your life is influenced by or controlled by these other powers?

You will put less effort into doing things that will change your life. You will not put a lot of work and effort into something that you felt you had very little power and control over - this is human nature!

Purely based upon this relationship between your personal power and control, effort, stress and anxiety you can see that there are huge consequences when you give your personal power and control away indiscriminately. So, please be careful of how much of your personal power and control you give away, especially at a time when you really need it the most.

At the end the day, do you really think that it's a good idea to allow yourself to believe that whether you are going to have a good or bad day today depends on how many magpies you see today, the alignment of the planets, the weather, luck, chance or fate, or even in the hands of someone else?

For example, weight loss is a prime example of this personal power and control and effort relationship. The negative consequence of someone believing that their weight problems are say, 50% down to genetics, metabolism, age, or being big boned, is that they are literally telling themselves that it's only 50% down to them and the work and effort they put into it. This results in at least 50% reduction in the the amount of work and effort they will put into changing what needs to be changed in order to lose weight. This can only result in failure.

Believing that you 'can' improve or recover from illness by becoming more pro-active and living a healthier lifestyle still doesn't guarantee success. However, the positive effect of these empowering beliefs will trigger powerful thoughts, feelings and actions, and with this you will do everything you possibly can do to help yourself, because you feel more positive and powerful.

The negative consequence of believing that you 'can't' will only trigger feelings of helpless and hopelessness, which can only demotivate you causing you do nothing to help yourself.

Please, and without beating yourself up, recognise and accept that the majority of things that affect your life and health are clearly and undeniably within your power and are definitely your responsibility - become aware of your key role in this thoughts, feelings and actions cycle.

When it comes to influencing your life, you and your efforts are the only measurable, reliable and predictable powers at work. However, you can't have this power if you keep recklessly giving it away. The price you pay for allowing yourself to believe that you have little or no personal power and control is thinking and feeling that you are not in control of your life.

Remember - Less Personal Control and Control = More Stress and Anxiety!

You can clearly see why it is essential for you to build up your sense of personal power and control over your life, because if you don't believe that you have the power or control to influence an outcome then you won't put in the necessary work and effort it takes to effect it - and this applies to every single problem or symptom you have, or will ever have.

This isn't to say that we create, or are responsible for every single thing that happens in our lives. People close to us become sick, accidents do happen. However, if you believe that your experience of life really is what you make of it, then you will believe that you have, or can acquire the skills and resources to be able to deal, and cope with any setbacks may come your way, and let's face it, you have been dealing with setbacks throughout your life.

However, many of us never strengthened our sense of personal power and control, because rather than being taught to credit the work and effort we put into our achievements and successes, we were encouraged to give it away to those other things such as, luck, superstitions, fate, a higher power etc. We didn't know how important it is to pat ourselves on the back and acknowledged that we actually have the skills and resources.

WE HAVE PERSONAL POWER AND CONTROL!

How we react to setback will be dictated by how we think, and thus feel about it. Our thoughts create the feelings and emotions that we have to cope with, or tolerate. So, it's completely up to you how you want to think, feel and react, but bear in mind, that it's you who will have to deal with the emotional consequences of your thoughts.

While it's understandable that you might want to allow yourself to feel upset, but I would not recommend making yourself feel as if it's the end of the world.

Believing that your life is about what you put into it, increases your sense of personal power and control. Thinking and feeling this way reduces your stress and anxiety, whilst igniting your fighting spirit to take action and change it, or at the very least, change the way you think and feel about it.

YOU now accept that it's all down to YOU to create the life that YOU want!
Now YOU become proactive!

Many people just like you, have used their personal power and control to create full, happy and successful lives regardless of what life presented them.

Ruth had a lump and lymph nodes surgically removed on a Thursday and would returned to work on the Monday if her car insurers hadn't insisted that she took a week off work.

She applied the same attitude a couple of months later when she started her chemotherapy. She reassured the nurses and doctors by explaining to them her approach and beliefs, so that where possible their attitude and language met hers. With this Ruth managed to create and enjoyed a very positive experience.

Several of the professionals told her that they couldn't quite believe her attitude and how healthy she was. The receptionist even said that she looked forward to the days when Ruth would be in because the whole area took on a lighter, brighter feel when she was there.

Ruth didn't miss a day at work during and after her chemotherapy or radiotherapy, in fact she was busier than ever. Her medical team, family and friends couldn't believe how she was feeling and what she was doing.

Ruth was feeling and looking great, running most days, riding most days, all stable duties, working, playing, taking care of kids and home, walking miles and miles, essentially enjoying life. She got the 5 year all clear and continues to lead a healthy life.

You may not be able to choose what life puts before you, but you can always choose how you think, feel and react to it! Knowing this, means that you can change the way you think and feel about your dis-ease, treatments or circumstances.

When you do this, you will develop the very same mindset that Ruth, and countless others in world have had to develop in order to triumph over the challenges that life presented them. All you have to do is reclaim your personal power and control.

Reclaiming your personal power and control

Whatever anyone else says or does, or whatever happened, or is happening in our lives is simply an event. We then place labels on these events which then makes them an experience.

The label we choose decides what the experience means to us and how it effects us. Whether we label something as being good or bad, an opportunity or a disaster doesn't actually change what's happening in reality. What it does do, is it determines how we will feel and react, and whether it seems easier or harder for us to manage, tolerate and to cope with.

We don't experience reality, we experience what we think and feel about reality, we experience the label we place on reality. The labels are our thoughts, our interpretations, and our perceptions - and this is what influences how we will feel and how we will act.

*Research - into the physiology of 'voodoo death' where the victims would actually die because they believed so strongly that they were under a spell and would soon die. The research concluded that the deaths were actually caused by the prolonged exposure to the **distress created from the belief that they were under a death spell**. The actual physiological cause of death was an over activated sympathetic nervous system **triggered by the belief that they were going to die**.*

It's like this, nothing in the world is of itself enjoyable, it's all about how we think about it. If this wasn't true then we would all love chocolate milkshake and beauty wouldn't be in the eye of the beholder. Equally, nothing in the world is in of itself stressful, not your dis-ease, your spouse, your kids, your job. Nothing is stressful unless you think about it in a stressful way.

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" William Shakespeare

These are the choices each and everyone of us has:

- You choose the way in which you see things.
- You choose the meaning you give to any experience.
- You choose the part of the experience you focus upon.
- You choose what you compare an experience to.
- You choose how much importance to give to an experience.
- You choose to imagine whatever might happen next.
- You choose what you expect of yourself, of others and of life.

Until now, you have probably been unaware of the impact that your choice of thought has had upon your feelings and actions. This is not your fault, no-one taught you that you always had, and always will have a choice over how you think. Years of practice are what have made the way in which you make your thinking choices habitual, and habits usually only take a few weeks of persistent and continuous practice to change.

How you feel is created by how you think about things, and given that you have a choice in the way in which you think about things, means that you can choose how you think and feel.

With that in mind, from now on remember:

- There is always more than one way in which you can choose to see things.
- There is always more than one meaning you can choose to give to an experience.
- There are numerous parts of an experience you can choose to focus on.
- There are numerous things you could choose to imagine might happen next.
- There is any amount of importance you can choose to attach to an experience.
- There are countless things you can choose to compare an experience to.

Knowing that you have a choice is in of itself empowering. Choosing to develop a whole new way of thinking and talking to yourself, enables you to literally change the way in which you think and feel about you as well as your life experiences.

Please note, I am not insinuating that you are to blame or at fault, or that there must be something wrong with you for thinking and feeling the way you do. Nor am I dismissing the importance of your experiences. For example, the loss of a loved one etc. and I'm definitely not trying to excuse someone else's behaviour or actions you may have chosen to take offence to.

Whatever you have thought or felt, or are presently thinking and feeling is understandable, and you wouldn't be the first or last person to be thinking, feeling and reacting or the way you are, because after all you are only human, but this still doesn't necessarily make it healthy or beneficial for you.

Being human makes every single one of us fallible. Which means that we all have, and will for the rest of our lives think, say and do things that will often make our lives feel worse instead of better, so please don't beat yourself up, this is the way it is.

However, remember that your thoughts and your interpretations about whatever is happening in your life will dictate how you will feel and act, so please choose wisely, because there will always be emotional and physical consequences for the way in which you choose to think.

So, you can see that it is possible to be responsible for your own thoughts, which means you can be responsible for how much you are affected by them, so if you want to feel better consistently, there is really only one way to do it - **CHANGE THE WAY IN WHICH YOU THINK!**

'Even when we are not responsible for the circumstances we find ourselves in, we are still responsible for the meaning we give to our lives, as we chose our attitudes and our behaviours in such situations'. Victor Frankl the Jewish psychiatrist who survived Nazi concentration camps.

Challenging and changing your current unhelpful thinking habits by taking control of how you think, feel and react to life will enable your sense of personal power and control to start growing very quickly, and remember...

MORE Personal Power and Control = **LESS** Stress and Anxiety!

Here are a few more ways in which you **STOP** giving your personal power and control away:

- **STOP IT!** - If you not being proactive and simply handing everything over to your medical team. Become more proactive by researching and discussing your treatment options, arrange treatment times to suit you. Peter decided that he would only take time off work when he felt he couldn't work, he arranged his treatment days around his work schedule, and ended up not needing a day off at all. You doing this programme counts as you taking an active role.
- **STOP IT!** - If you are giving up your responsibility, the power to respond, the power to change the way you are thinking and feeling by playing the blame game. You can't be responsible for everything that happens in your life, but you can always take responsibility for the way you are thinking and thus feeling. When you have a choice between being right and being at peace - always choose peace.
- **STOP IT!** - If you are allowing yourself to believe that areas of your life are being controlled by magical superstitious forces outside of you. Here's some basic psychology, in any given situation the amount of anxiety and stress you feel depends on the amount of control you feel we have over it! Think about this, do you really think that believing that whether you are going to have a good or bad day is down to luck, a black cat, a magpie, a piece of wood, or anything or anyone else for that matter, is a good thing? Would you not rather believe that your life depends on the work and effort you put into it, that you have direct influence over it. Also, because superstitions are NOT based on facts that affect everyone, means that they only affect or have power over the believer. So, do these things really have power over us or do we give them the power these things have over our power? Stop giving away your personal power and control, because right now you need.
- **STOP IT!** - If you avoid trying new things. We need to step outside of our comfort zone in order to become stronger and more confident. So, try new things, visit new places, challenge yourself. Start talking yourself into things instead of talking yourself out of them, then after you've had a go! Make sure to pat yourself on the back and boost your personal power and control.
- **STOP IT!** - If you are allowing others to make decisions for you. Take back your personal power and control and start making your own decisions without fear of failure. No one fears failure, they fear feeling like a failure. You are the only person who can make you feel like a failure, so promise yourself you won't do it and tell yourself - ***'I don't make mistakes I learn lessons!'***
- **STOP IT!** - If you moan, grump, and go on about things that you've no control over, such as the weather, road works, football results, bad news, gossip, the soaps etc. why would you want to give control of your thoughts and feelings to things that you have absolutely no control over?
- **STOP IT!** - If you are obsessing over one part of your life that presently feels awful. When you do this you're magnifying it, losing perspective and making it seem as if the whole of your life is awful. Stand back, and distract yourself for a while, and regain your perspective.
- **STOP IT!** - If you are looking at life through the dark filters of pessimism, change them to the rose-tinted filters of optimism instead. Reality exists outside of our heads, our experience of reality exists in our heads. This is because our experience of reality is what we make of it through the filters that are our thoughts. Choosing to view life through our rose-tinted filters means we feel happier, more positive, more resilient, and more powerful, and when we feel like this we can handle whatever life presents us with a spring in our step and a smile on our faces.

- **STOP IT!** - If you are in the habit of making a song and dance about everything. Stop using dramatic, catastrophic language embellishing minor day to day challenges and blowing them out of proportion. Being dramatic instantly causes you lose perspective and makes minor setbacks seem feel worse and last longer. Don't you have enough to deal with without the excess emotional consequences of your own amateur dramatics?

Your words are manifestations of your thoughts, and your body believes and acts on every word you say. So, be mindful of what you are saying to yourself - if you can't say anything nice, then say nothing at all.

Remember that you are the only person who listens and reacts to you 100% of the time.

**Think positive powerful thoughts and you will feel positive and powerful.
Think negative depressive thoughts and you will feel negative and depressed.**

Key notes:

- The more personal power and control you believe you possess the more you will believe that your life, your future and how you feel are because of you, your thoughts and your actions.
- Believing that your life is all about your efforts and what you put into it, gives you a greater sense of personal power and control over your life.
- What is actually happening around you isn't creating your reality, what you are choosing to think or perceive is what is creating your reality.
- If you want to feel better consistently, there is really only one way to do it - **CHANGE THE WAY IN WHICH YOU THINK!**
- You always have a choice in any experience and remember that your perspective becomes your reality.
- Become proactive and maintain as much control as you possible can by asking questions and exercising your options, rather than being a good, passive patient.
- **STOP IT!** Whenever you notice you are giving your personal power and control away!

Part 4: Esteeming yourself

Self-esteem

Having high levels of self-esteem is one of the most important things you need in order to be successful at anything that requires work and effort from you, this includes regaining your health. The problem is that many of us weren't taught what self-esteem actually is.

Self-esteem is made up of two words self, and esteem. It's what you think of you, it's essentially self-evaluation, it's how much you value yourself, it's your self-worth, and it's a measure of your inner power and control.

This is great news! because it means that your self-esteem is something that you have power and control over because you are the only person who can give affect your self-esteem is you, and thinking highly of yourself is the **ONLY** way that you can esteem yourself.

However, many of us been brought up with damaging limiting beliefs such as "self-praise is no recommendation", or "self-praise is no praise", and when we do praise ourselves we run the risk of being told that it's showing off, boasting or bragging. If you were brought up with this type of ideology, as I was, how could we not have self-esteem and confidence issues?

Your levels of self-esteem are a key element of your personal power, how powerful, or powerless you feel about you. This has a direct impact on whether your thoughts will be of a positive or negative nature, whether you will be automatically processing life through your rose-tinted or grey-tinted lenses.

Low self-esteem comes from having a negative perception of oneself. There are two main reasons for this.

- Number one, habitually putting yourself and the things that you do down. Basically mentally bullying yourself.
- Number two, never being taught to 'internally' process or praise yourself for all of your achievements, successes or accomplishments.

When you do this to yourself how can you possibly have a high opinion of yourself, how can you possibly hold yourself in high esteem?

Now, your friends and family all have a different perception of you, because they don't think about you the way you do, they don't see what you see when they look at you. They know that you aren't perfect, just as you know that they aren't perfect. However, they don't focus continuously on your imperfections, or the multitude of other things that you constantly nit-pick and criticise yourself for on a daily basis, and because of this they have more balanced, and more rounded and more likable view of you.

On the whole they focus on the things that they like and love about you, and this is why they hold you in higher esteem than you do yourself. It's a good job that you are the only person who sees and thinks of you the way that you do - so, whose perception is closer to the truth - **'all'** of theirs or **'just'** yours?

Research - has established there is a link between ones lack of self-worth and cancer. In a study of 250 people it was noted that feelings of unworthiness and self-dislike were the main characteristics displayed by the cancer patients, whilst the control group lacked these feelings.

What you think and believe about yourself isn't reality.

During your lifetime you've had literally billions of experiences, and from all of these experiences you could create a multitude of different beliefs about yourself. What you believe about you all depends on the 'handful' of experiences you most frequently focus upon.

For example, if you ONLY focused on the times that you lost your temper and shouted at your kids, then you are going to have the belief that you are a terrible parent. However if you ONLY focused on the times that you nursed and cared for them, then you would have the belief that you are a wonderful parent - so, which belief is reality?

What you believe about yourself is based upon the few out of literally hundreds of experiences that you have been currently thinking about. Your self-esteem is also influenced by how you think about, or see yourself in experiences that haven't, and may not even happen yet - WHAT?

Oh yes, simply by imagining yourself in future situations as being unlikeable, weak and stupid will effect your current levels of self-esteem.

It really is your choice how you see yourself, so you can choose to focus on the experiences which will create the positive empowering feelings of high self-esteem and powerfulness. Or you can choose ones to focus on ones that will create the negative disempowering feelings of low self-esteem and powerlessness.

However, many people have been led to believe that our levels of self-esteem are formed and somehow 'fixed', that there's some sort of ceiling to our self-esteem levels, because of things that have happened in our past. If you believe this, as I did, then of course this is going to limit the amount of effort you will put into trying to change it - why would you bother if you thought if it was fixed?

However, I can prove to you that your levels of self-esteem aren't fixed and that they actually fluctuate, because it's determined by what you have been currently thinking about yourself, which makes your level of self-esteem only a few days old.

Why and how our levels of self-esteem fluctuate

Gary, who was consulting for weight loss, informed me that recently, for the first time in his life he had experienced the endorphin rush known as the 'runners high'. I asked him how did he think this happened? He told me that he believed that it was because he had trekked up and down our biggest mountain at the weekend.

I asked Gary on a scale of 0% to 100% how good did he feel about himself, how high did he think his self-esteem was immediately after his trek, he replied 90+%!

I then asked him could there have been anything else other than the trek that day that might have contributed to his 90+% self-esteem that day?

He thought about it and added that the weather was lovely and sunny, the company of his partner, the lovely people they met on the trek, being off work and being in the great outdoors would have all been contributing factors to his high self-esteem that day.

I asked him, "am I correct in thinking that you think that the trek, the endorphins, the weather, the company of your partner, and all those other lovely trekkers, being off work and being outdoors all contributed to pushing your usual 15% self-esteem up to 90+%?" - He agreed.

I informed him that his levels of self-esteem that day had nothing to do with the things he had just mentioned, because all of those things were outside factors. As we have learned, we all feel the way we do because of inner factors, which are of course our thoughts, he found this hard to believe.

To prove my point, I asked Gary to imagine that whilst on his trek his Mum had phoned him in a very distressed state to tell him his Dad had been involved in a serious car accident and was in the middle of having emergency surgery. I asked Gary that now with this on his mind, did he think that at anytime during or after his trek would he feel 90%+? He said 'no'.

Only a few minutes ago Gary firmly believed that it was the trek, his endorphins, his partners company, the weather, being off work and the great outdoors all came together to push his levels of self-esteem up to 90% .Why aren't they doing it now? The reason why they aren't doing it now is because they didn't push it up in the first place.

Gary felt the way he did that day because he was thinking good, positive and empowering thoughts whilst on his trek, and these thoughts were why he felt 90% and not because of what was going on around him. On the other hand, if he had have been negative thoughts whilst on his trek, his self-esteem would have plummeted regardless of where he was, who he's with, or whatever he's doing.

Whilst Gary was on his trek he wasn't thinking anything negative. He wasn't thinking about any of the painful things from his childhood, or the breakup of his last relationship, he wasn't even thinking about work in the morning. As long as Gary is thinking good, positive thoughts, his 'usual' low levels of self-esteem are non-existent!

Now, if our levels of self-esteem were set or 'fixed' in the past, or because we have something wrong with our brain chemistry, then how can it be that Gary's, and our very own self-esteem levels regularly fluctuate?

This is because self-esteem isn't fixed, it does fluctuate, and it all depends on the quality of your current thoughts!

It's not where you are or what you are doing, it's what you are thinking that counts!

How to increase your levels of self-esteem

Self-esteem is what you think of yourself, it's not set in stone, and it fluctuates depending on the thoughts you are currently having. The reason as to why we have self-esteem issues is because we were never taught what self-esteem is in the first place. So, we didn't know that we need to actually to own, to give ourselves credit, and to praise ourselves for our achievements and successes in order to have high self-esteem.

Instead, we learned to give the credit for our successes and achievements to those outside powers that we covered in the last chapter - luck, chance, other people, a higher power, fate, the alignment of the planets, spirits of our dear departed, the placement of furniture, guardian angels etc. We learned to credit everyone and everything else for our successes and achievements, everything else except ourselves, our own work and effort, our own resilience, our own will power, our own resources and inner power - how crazy is that?

In order to increase your levels of self-esteem you simply have to start taking back the credit you have been giving away to the external beliefs you learned about in the last chapter, and you do this by internally processing them, basically start giving credit where credit is due.

Here's an example of what I do with my clients to give you the gist of what to do when it comes to internally processing your positive experiences.

I ask, "Do you have a driving license?" The answer is usually 'yes', I then ask "when you passed your test what did you put it down to, what did you accredit this to?"

Here is a selection of the answers I have heard over the years;

- *"I was pregnant"*
- *"I was lucky"*
- *"It was the end of the year and I'm sure they have to pass so many a year"*
- *"I felt that Granny was watching over me"*
- *"I think the examiner fancied me"*
- *"I prayed a lot"*

Here is my personal favourite, *"I stalled the car at the very start of the test, and thought 'that's me failed', so I sobbed the whole way through the rest of the test. When he passed me I thought it must be because he didn't have the heart to fail me"*

What did all these people fail to do?

They failed to internally process passing their driving test. They didn't acknowledge what they personally did in order to pass their driving test, and because they didn't do this, the positive experience of passing their driving test meant little to nothing to them, and therefore did nothing for their self-esteem.

For all that it meant to them, they might as well have won it in a raffle. Actually it might have meant more to them if they had won it in a raffle, then at least they could have felt a bit special for being 'lucky'.

When I ask them to really think about what they had to do in order to pass their driving test they came up with internal things such as;

- *'I saved for and took lessons'*
- *'I was a good attentive student'*
- *'I put loads of effort into it'*
- *'I overcame my nerves'*
- *'I didn't give up when I failed the first time'*
- *'I studied and learned the highway code'*

You see how this is a completely different way of processing passing their driving test. This is what it means to internally process your positive experiences. When you do this you are only stating the facts, and you are owning your achievements and successes, and most importantly you are not boasting, you are boosting your self-esteem.

To raise your self-esteem you don't have to think you are perfect or the best, you simply have to give credit where credit is due, and acknowledge that you done good based on the work and effort you have put into everything that you do.

The table below is an example of what I want you to do. I want you to create a table of ten of your own positive experiences. No matter how big or small they may seem, I've provided four examples to help you, two of which can be cancer specific.

The examples I have given you also illustrate that your positives don't have to be something huge in order to make it onto your list. It's not everyday you get the opportunity to save the world or someone's life, but your daily life is filled with countless small positives, and little victories. We need to stop taking them and ourselves for granted, and start paying more attention to them - **YOUR SELF-ESTEEM DEPENDS ON THEM!**

The positive experience or event	Why this experience or event is positive or what did I do in order to achieve it?	What does this positive experience or event say about you?
I ran a hot bath today.	A hot bath eases my discomfort and I usually struggle to run a bath for myself.	I am still capable of doing things for myself even when I don't feel 100% and I am still independent!
Today's treatments and appointment.	We decided that we would do something nice afterwards and go for a lovely walk a long the beach.	I am taking control of my thoughts, feelings and make to most of my life again!
Sent an awkward text message.	I've been putting it off because I'm afraid of feeling judged.	I am the only person who can make me feel the way I do!
Did a new workout today.	I am stepping outside of my comfort zone.	I can do anything that I put my mind to!

You are now going to provided with a few more examples of positives that could otherwise slip under your radar.

Some of these are particularly good because they get you to appreciate and process your progress and the work and effort you are putting into making changes. They are not just focusing on end results, so you are celebrating every step of the journey. You are also highlighting that you are learning to manage your thoughts and feelings more effectively, which is even more important than solely focusing on tangible goals.

- Whenever you have stepped outside of your comfort zone and tried something new.
- Whenever you speak your mind and are more open and honest about your thoughts and feelings.
- Whenever you chose to keep calm and in control instead of getting angry or frustrated.
- Whenever you confronted a situation, rather than avoid it.
- Whenever you noticed and stopped comparing yourself to someone else.
- Whenever you catch yourself worrying or stressing, and put a stop to it.
- Whenever you take control of your life.
- Whenever you do something to improve your life, even in some small way.
- Whenever you make an effort to improve your social or work life.
- Whenever you receive and accept a compliment you would have normally discarded.
- When ever you chose to do something you enjoy, just for the fun of it.
- Whenever you notice and stop beating yourself up over something you thought you didn't do well enough or you should have done better at and cut yourself some slack.

Remember to always praise your work and effort and not just your successes!

Whenever someone says or does something nice for you, it's still saying something positive about you e.g. when they arrange a date with you, it says that you are good company. It's also so important for you to acknowledge what your positives say about you and your capabilities.

It's really important for you to process your list of ten as illustrated in order to familiarise yourself with the process of internalising. Once you have done this, I want you to transfer your list in brief onto your mobile phone or a notebook e.g. remember to acknowledge what they say about you.

- I remained calm throughout my treatments = I'm in control of my emotions.
- I went for a walk = I'm keeping myself fit.
- I'm eating despite losing my appetite = I can do anything I put my mind to.
- I managed to stay positive today = I'm in control of my thoughts.

Fully processing your positives in this way provides you with the evidence as to why you have every right to feel good about yourself. This is far more meaningful and powerful than saying some airy fairy positive affirmations and mantras to yourself, and hoping that they'll stick.

Creating the habit of taking a minute or two to read and process your list at least 5 times a day. Setting 2 hour reminders on your phone or using your list as a screen saver means it will never be too far away from your thoughts, and your self-esteem will be getting constantly topped up.

Then, every day, add a new positive in at number 1 and remove the one that was at number 10, This gives you a continuously flowing list of ten positives only a fingertip away. If you don't have a suitable mobile device, then use a small notebook.

I guarantee that if you fully follow those instructions your self-esteem will begin to soar within a few weeks. It's very difficult to feel worthless, powerless and helpless when you are constantly reminding yourself of all that is good and positive about you and your life. When your self-esteem is high you feel as if you could change the world, when it's low, getting out of bed feels difficult.

The keeping and frequent processing of your positives list is probably be the most important thing you could do for yourself when it comes to strengthening your personal inner power.

When you are thinking positively about yourself, it's so important to be able to back it up with evidence. This is why positive thinking, affirmations and quotes are not as effective as we have been led to believe.

For example, someone who was consulting for work related anxiety, told me that they had started to say to themselves 'I love work'. Which they were led to believe was a great positive affirmation to frequently repeat to themselves.

When I asked them what did they love about work? They didn't have an answer, so basically they were lying to themselves. Which isn't exactly great for one's self-esteem. I asked them to think about what benefits they received from work?

"Wages!" was their reply. I asked them to be more specific to into more detail.

They said that their wages provided a roof over their head, the heating to keep them warm, kept them fed and clothed, paid for holidays, it also felt great to be able to provide for their family and be independent. I asked them if they loved their job now?

They said, "well I wouldn't go as far as far as to say I love it, but I do really appreciate the things it allows me to do". I then suggested that, "I really appreciate my work and all the benefits it provides", would be a far better affirmation that would really resonate with them, rather than some empty generic positive phrase.

Remember - Processing your positives regularly is one of the single most important things you can do for yourself, because it has a huge part to play in the quality of your life. Your self-esteem is your personal power, it's literally your fighting spirit. You already know that everything feels more difficult and laborious when your self-esteem is low.

Now imagine this...what if your self-esteem right now was turned up to 90%!

You would be literally rushing to meet that day with a bounce in your step because you feel that 90% power and energy surging through your body. You have 90% power and energy at your fingertips to put into every single thing you want to do today!

The way in which you talk to yourself affects your self-esteem

Remember that our self-esteem is what we think about ourselves. It's also affected by the way in which we talk to ourselves, both inside and outside of our head. What you say to yourself and what you are thinking are basically the same thing.

So, do you talk to yourself in a kind, loving, caring, nurturing, encouraging manner or do you continually undermine yourself; putting yourself down with undermining comments like; you are ugly, you are fat, you are lazy, your hair is a mess, you are imperfect and unlovable etc.

If you are doing the latter, then it's as if you are living with a bully inside your head who is systematically putting you down, criticising you, making you feel unlikeable, weak and stupid, lowering your self-esteem, and making you afraid of living your life.

Imagine how much higher your self-esteem will be, and how much easier your life will be when you stop bullying yourself and begin talking and treating yourself as if you actually cared about you and your psychological welfare.

A simple and effective way to turn all of that around is to become your own best friend - you do know what it takes to be someone's best friend don't you?

Best friends play down the bad times and big up the good times, they tell us to calm down and gain perspective whenever we're beating ourselves up, they pick us up when we feel down, they encourage us, they are there through the good and the bad times, they are positive, they are kind, caring and loving, they help to strengthen and build us up.

I suspect that you already do all of this and more for someone else...imagine how amazing your life will be now that you are going to do this for you - **be your own best friend**.

Being your own best friend will also greatly lessen the impact of any 'setbacks' that are a part of life's journey. For example, with weight loss clients I teach them the importance of not berating or beating themselves up whenever they have a 'setback' in their healthy lifestyle plans, which they have done in the past. Every time they did that they not only lowered their self-esteem, they also blew the setback completely out of proportion and lost perspective, which only increased the negative feelings they created in the first place over it.

They would then try to manage this self-escalating emotional nightmare with the self-esteem that they've just pounded into the ground. Now, can't see how well they had been doing over the past few weeks, so the healthy lifestyle gets ditched and they turn to the one thing that they use for comfort...food! Another healthy habit bites the dust!

Life is never plain sailing, it never goes in a straight line, there are always going to be setbacks. However, being your own best friend will stop the bully from making a mountain out of a molehill whenever there's setback, helping you to pick yourself up and get back on track asap.

Here's a way to help you...let's create a circuit breaker.

A circuit breaker is a manually or automatically operated electrical switch designed to protect an electric circuit from damage caused by overload or short circuit. It's basic function is to detect a fault condition and interrupt current flow' - Wikipedia.

Creating your circuit breaker

Your circuit breaker is a powerful skill and resource which you can use to stop you from losing perspective whenever you have a setback so you get back to the business of living asap.

A circuit breaker isn't a cure for dis-ease or solution for your situation, it is simply a very helpful and powerful tool that enables you to very quickly change the way in which you are emotionally reacting when you are thinking and feeling negatively, losing your perspective and your ability to think clearly.

Your thoughts create your feelings, and the thoughts that we overthink become the most difficult to push away. These thoughts are like bullies.

A bully doesn't just come up and hit you - that is just plain assault. An effective bully threatens you with potential dangers in the future, in the same way that thinking negatively about the future creates anticipatory anxiety.

When you find yourself starting to negatively overthink and brood over something, losing perspective and making it bigger and bigger, you can use your circuit breaker to break your train of thought, snap yourself out of it, gain some perspective and get back to the business of healthy thinking and healthy living asap!

Here's how to create your circuit breaker that gives you the power to take back control of your thoughts and feelings and clarity of thought.

The moment you become aware that you are brooding or obsessing over negative, unhelpful and limiting thoughts that are of no benefit to you at all, for example, "I will never get my health back" or "I'm really afraid of the treatments". I want you to shout '**STOP IT!**' in an authority voice, as if you are saying I've had enough of this, this isn't helping, and I am done with it! Shout it out loud when you are on your own, and in your head when you aren't. Command yourself to '**STOP IT!**'

Now, praise yourself, tell you yourself well done and give yourself a pat on the back, and really congratulate yourself for noticing and halting those negative thoughts and avoided the consequences. Really acknowledge that you have the skills, you have the power and control!

Now, you have stopped yourself thinking of, and focusing on what you fear might happen in life, start thinking about what you want to happen in life. Think of something more positive and helpful and focus on this instead.

For example change "I will never get my health back", becomes "I'm making myself feel better and better every day", or "I'm in charge of my life and making steps to make myself fitter and healthier". "I'm really afraid of the treatment", becomes "the treatment I have chosen is truly for my benefit and this choice is helping to strengthen my health and destroy the cancer".

When you change your thoughts and the way you are talking to yourself, it is vital that you also visualise it, as if it's happening.

If it's convenient for you to close your eyes then do it, if not, you can do it in your minds eye with your eyes open (although, obviously DO NOT do this whilst driving or operating machinery) imagine what you want to happen in your life, mentally rehearse it, as if it was really happening right now. Make it bigger and brighter, make the colours more vibrant, make the sounds louder and clearer, and really begin feel these new powerful, positive thoughts in all of their magnificent glory, making it all as strong and powerful as you possibly can.

In the first example, you are thinking and feeling really strong, full of energy and happy. In the second example, you are visualising yourself being and feeling really confident and healthy whilst breezing through your treatments.

Sometimes just telling yourself to **'STOP IT!'** and changing the quality of your thoughts will be enough to snap yourself out of it. However sometimes, you may feel the need to go a step further, and get up and actually move, or have a good stretch, especially when you have been brooding for a while. It's much easier to change how you feel when you physically move.

For example, if you're watching TV at home then move to a different chair, or go and make a cuppa, go for a walk, phone a positive friend, or watch a comedy. If you're busy at your desk at work or driving and unable to move away temporarily, then change the way you are sitting, or change the position of your hands, open the window, or take a few deep relaxing breaths.

Also, the more dramatic you can be with your circuit breaker the more of an emotional switch you will generate, the greater the impact your circuit breaker will have upon you.

It's very important that you understand that all positive mental imagery and suggestion is a process of self-direction, and not one of self-deception. This has got nothing to do with what's actually happening right now, it's all about focusing upon what you want to happen, and taking control of your imagination to create the positivity and confidence which will drive you in the direction you want to go.

"Focus on what you want in life and not on what you fear"

Key notes:

- The only person who can positively and negatively affect your self-esteem is you!
- What you believe about yourself is based upon how you have been currently thinking about you.
- Remember that when you are handing over the power and responsibility for your life to outside powers and sources such as luck, chance, other people, a higher power, fate, horoscopes, spirits of our dear departed, the placement of furniture, guardian angels etc. you are simply giving away your esteem and power.
- Self-esteem is esteeming your self. Building your self-esteem means acknowledging and internally processing your successes. This is crucial when it comes to achieving what you want in life.
- REMEMBER - internally processing, owning your positives is one of most important parts of this programme – it adds to your personal power and control, and your fighting spirit!
- Process your positives at least 5 times a day to keep your self-esteem fully charged.
- Talk to yourself in a kind, loving, caring, nurturing, encouraging manner and be your own best friend, in fact be your own best everything.
- Create and use your own circuit breaker to instantly change your unhelpful negative thoughts into helpful positive ones. Practice it and get really good at it, it's a powerful tool!

Part 5: Relax and visualise yourself back to health.

Research - extensive use of relaxation and breathing exercises as a foundation for imagery exercises was found to have a beneficial effect upon a client's quality of life, and in some cases even increased survival times.

True relaxation is mentally 'switching off', as opposed to spending an evening in front of the TV with a glass of wine, or reading a good book. Although these types of activities can be a enjoyable distraction and physically relaxing, however, you can still be very much mentally switched on whilst you are doing them.

True relaxation recharges you both physically and mentally, and has been proven to not only help to feel better, but also to live longer.

The use of deep relaxation together with positive mental imagery is yet another way in which you will regain that all important sense of control that is often lost when cancer is diagnosed. During these times it's very easy to feel a sense of separation from a body that has seemingly let you down by becoming ill, and with this a loss of faith in your body's ability to regain your health.

More control = Less Stress and Less Control = More Stress.

Deep relaxation and positive mental imagery will help to reunite your mind and your body and enable them to once again work together with the single aim of regaining your health.

Deep relaxation and positive mental imagery will actively support you with whatever course of treatments you decide to receive.

Deep relaxation also enables you to get off that treadmill of continual stress, tension and fear for a much needed respite, or as I've been told many times before "it's like allowing someone else drive the bus for a while."

Positive mental imagery

With positive mental imagery you will create new powerful positive beliefs that will activate your body's natural defences. Changing your perceptions about your immune system, your treatments and your cancer, which will have positive impact on both your experience and your outcome.

Research - clients suffering from metastatic cancers (secondary cancers) were instructed to use relaxation and imagery. This included imagining their immune systems being actively involved with their medical treatments, and being healthier each day in order to support and enhance the healing process. Results showed that after six months of practice there was a measurable improvement in the performance of their immune systems than before.

It's been proven time and time again that the use of positive mental imagery is one of the most effective tools that a person can use against cancer, the reduction of pain, and the reduction of the possible undesirable side effects commonly associated with cancer treatments. This technique is a powerful and effective way to motivate yourself in the recovery of your health.

Research - studies have demonstrated that relaxation can directly increase immune function.

The most successful and powerful people throughout history have one thing in common, they all created clear mental images of what they desired. By doing this a person actually makes a clear mental statement of what they want to happen. When this is persistently and consistently repeated, you begin to believe and thus begin to expect and act in ways that are consistent with your desired goals - what you think upon really does grow.

It's very important that you understand that positive mental imagery is a process of self-direction and not one of self-deception. Remember that the mental imagery exercise is not about what is taking place right now, it's about focusing upon what you want to happen. So, it doesn't matter one iota what's happening in the present moment.

It's just as easy to choose to imagine a positive outcome as it is to imagine a negative one, but do you really want to have to suffer the emotional and physical consequences if for whatever reason you choose to imagine a negative one?

Research - 1983 a group of patients being treated for stomach cancer showed that 1/3 of them experienced nausea, 1/5 experienced vomiting and 1/3 experienced hair loss... these were expected statistics. However what wasn't expected and confounded the researchers was that these patients had only received a placebo treatment. The side effects were created by their expectations.

As time goes by you will understand and use all the information that will come in to you in the form of symbols and images that your mind will provide you. This will help you to build and develop more powerful and beneficial images, and also give you with a better understanding of any underlying negative beliefs that you may have concerning yourself, the treatments and cancer. Which in turn, means that you will be able to change and alter these perceptions into ones that will have the maximum impact to support your recovery.

By regularly practicing positive mental imagery you will once again think and feel that you have an active role to play in your recovery, adding to your sense of control which will naturally lower your levels of stress and anxiety, whilst giving your immune system a welcomed boost and again reinforcing that essential 'will to live' attitude, and re-establishing the lines of communication between your mind and body in the process.

Effectively visualising yourself getting better dispels thoughts and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. You will begin to feel better, and when you feel better your sense of confidence and optimism will become stronger and stronger.

Practice makes progress when it comes to the effectiveness of positive mental imagery. You can use the reminder that you have set on your mobile phone that reminds you to process your positives as a reminder to practice your positive mental imagery too.

Research - A study into the use of immune system enhancing imagery, provided proof that there was a clear link between the frequency of the use of imagery exercises and an enhanced immune system function, and the more they practiced the stronger the effects were. They also observed that the exercises didn't have to be practiced in solitude, they can be done anywhere and at anytime your attention isn't required to do something else.

The 'Positive Mental Imagery' audio can be found on the Complimentary Cancer Help Page at www.ulsterhypnotherapy.com (password is RELAX). When you have finished return and carry on from here.

Welcome back, before you begin drawing the images your mind presented to you whilst you were listening to the audio on a separate piece of paper, here are some other hints to help you with this exercise:

- If you were having problems 'seeing' the images, relax, this is probably because you are like me, and you're the one in three of the population who don't have a picture imagination. However, you will have a 'sense' of whatever it is in your mind, so you don't need to be able to see it as a picture or photo just as long as you know what the images represent.
- If you found that parts of the exercise were difficult for you to believe or accept it's your mind's way of letting you know that you probably have some underlying limiting negative beliefs, fears or attitudes concerning your dis-ease and your ability to recover. Become aware of them, then challenge and change them, as they will hinder your recovery.
- You can change and alter any limiting negative beliefs, fears or attitudes that are represented by your symbols and images by turning them into ones that will have the maximum impact for your recovery. For example, if you see the cancer as a hard impenetrable rock, change it into a weak and feeble blob of jelly - which is actually closer to what it really is.
- You may feel that you are only 'fooling' yourself, when you are saying and imaging the cancer is 'shrinking' when in reality it's got bigger. At times like this it may seem impossible to visualise something positive, in fact it may even feel as if you are actually lying to yourself, but remember what you learned earlier, positive mental imagery is a process of self-direction, and not self-deception. The mental imagery exercise is not about what 'is' actually taking place right now, it's about focusing upon what you 'want' to happen. This makes it perfectly OK for you to picture and imagine the cancer shrinking, regardless of what might be happening in the present moment. It doesn't matter one iota what is happening now, remember, it's takes the same amount of effort to picture a positive outcome as it is does a negative.
- Now, get yourself a piece of paper and some colored crayons and begin drawing the images that your mind had presented to you whilst you listened to the audio, and draw yourself, your cancer, your treatments, and your white blood cells fighting your cancer.

The benefits of the relaxation and positive mental imagery exercises

So that you have an idea of what you can expect from the exercise that you have just done, I have included a list of a few of the benefits that you will receive when you practice and also positively update this positive mental imagery exercise regularly.

- When people are diagnosed with a major illness such as cancer they are often left feeling fearful, powerless and out of control, which creates even more stress. Relaxation and mental imagery enables you to regain the feeling that you have an active role in your recovery. You regain some sense of control again which brings your stress levels down.
- The exercise will facilitate a change in attitude and reinforce that essential 'will to live'.
- The exercise allows you to access your inner mind. This is where much of how we really see ourselves can be found, and brought to our awareness.
- The exercise will allow you to examine your current beliefs and attitudes about yourself and cancer, represented by your symbols and visualisations. This in turn means that you have the opportunity to change and alter these perceptions, if necessary to those which will have the maximum impact on your recovery.
- In its most simplistic form the exercise can just be used as a powerful aid for relaxation, which means a lowering of stress and tension which in of itself is great for your health.
- The exercise can be used to dispel the sense of helplessness and hopelessness that can lead to depression. Helplessness and hopelessness have been proven to be a major component in the development of cancer, and these are the feelings that will begin to change as you visualise yourself getting better. This means you will begin to feel better, and if you feel better you begin to get better and better, as your sense of confidence, and optimism grow from strength to strength.

The idea that believing that you are ill, can make you ill may a little seem far-fetched, yet rigorous trials have established beyond doubt that it's true, as is the belief that positive beliefs can actually improve health.

The Story of Mr. Wright: In 1957 psychologist Bruno Klopfer reported in the Journal of Projective Techniques, that he was treating Mr. Wright, who had an advanced cancer called lymphosarcoma which caused tumors the size of oranges on his neck, chest, abdomen, armpits. His cancer also caused his chest to fill up with two quarts of fluid every day, which had to be drained in order for him to breathe.

Mr. Wright desperately wanted to live and his hope was placed on a promising new drug called Krebiozen which was being evaluated at the very same clinic. However, Mr Wright didn't qualify for the trial because the drug was only being offered to people who were believed to have at least three months left to live, and Dr Klopfer expected Mr. Wright to be dead within days.

Despite his state Mr Wright didn't give up, he pestered Dr Klopfer until he reluctantly gave in and injected him with Krebiozen on a Friday, despite thinking that Mr Wright would be dead by Monday.

On the following Monday to Dr Klopfer's surprise Mr Wright was very much alive, chatting and walking around the ward, his "tumour masses had melted like snowballs on a hot stove" to half their original size. Krebiozen treatment was continued and within ten days after the first dose Mr. Wright was able to return home apparently disease free.

Two months later, reports questioning the effectiveness of Krebiozen began to surface. Mr. Wright listened to these reports and understandably began to lose faith. After two months of practically perfect health, he relapsed and his cancer returned.

Dr Klopfer, who genuinely wanted to help save his patient, saw this as an opportunity to find out what was really going on, and to shed some light on the well-documented cures reported by the 'quacks'.

So, he told Mr. Wright that Krebiozen was as effective as first reported, but some of the initial supplies of the drug had deteriorated during shipping, making them less effective. He told Mr Wright that he now had a new batch of super-refined, double-strength Krebiozen that he could give him. (This of course wasn't the truth.)

Dr Klopfer injected the newly optimistic Mr. Wright with nothing more than fresh water. The seemingly miraculous happened again and were even more dramatic than the first time. The tumours melted away, the fluid in his chest disappeared, the 'water' injections continued and Mr. Wright went home symptom free and feeling great again.

Over two months later, the American Medical Association announced to the press that tests proved that Krebiozen was worthless as a cancer treatment. This time, Mr. Wright lost all faith in his treatment, his cancer returned, and he died in less than two days after reading the report.

Mr Wright's story is a very extreme example of how negative beliefs can often increase the chance of a poor prognosis. Whilst on the other hand the belief that one can and will overcome the disease and live a long and happy life has often resulted in a more positive outcome.

The '**possible**' side effects for cancer treatment have been well reported, and because of this chemotherapy has become the cancer treatment that creates the most fear and concern, which in turn creates anticipatory anxiety.

However, what is not so well reported is that most of the people who have a positive mental attitude and are more accepting of their treatments, actually suffer far less, or less severe side effects. Do you think your body will be more accepting, or more resistant to chemo if you think of it as some sort of radioactive poison that you are being forced to take?

Listening to the 'Limiting your side-effects' audio which can be found on the Complimentary Cancer Help page at www.ulsterhypnotherapy.com will be of great benefit to you if you are about to commence on a course of chemotherapy - the password is RELAX.

You have learned that having a positive view of your treatments, seeing them as your powerful life-saving allies, will help to psychologically maximise the effectiveness of them. Having a negative fearful view of your treatments can have nothing but a detrimental effect upon them.

This is wonderfully demonstrated in the following Cancer face it, beat it! Programme feedback.

The time had come to start the Chemo and Mum was worried, the doctors seemed so keen to stress how ill she was going to feel and how bad the side effects were going to be.

With the help of Stevie I worked with Mum to change her perception of the Chemo. We visualized the Chemo being her friend and fighting the cancer whilst leaving the rest of her body alone. Also she could see the cancer being beaten and her own immune system getting stronger to help attack the Cancer.

Mum started her treatment with no fear and the side effects were far less than she was told to expect. I firmly believe that because she wasn't looking for the side effects they didn't appear, and any side effects she did have were much less profound due to the fact that she wasn't dwelling on them.

A huge display of the effect the mind can have is when Mum was on steroids; she didn't like taking them but was told that if she stopped them she would find that her legs would become weak.

She stopped taking them and within hours she was unable to walk properly and needed a frame to get around, On seeing this a nurse said "Don't be daft, you'll not lose the use of your legs that quick" amazingly Mum was able to walk around unaided within a few hours of believing that the steroids would still be helping her for quite some time.

Key notes:

- Deep relaxation allows you to recharge both your physical and mental batteries.
- Positive mental imagery helps to create new powerful positive beliefs that will activate your body's natural defences. By changing your perceptions about your immune system, your treatments and your cancer you can positively affect your experience and outcome.
- Practice makes progress when it comes to the effectiveness of positive mental imagery.
- People who had a positive mental attitude and were more accepting of their treatments actually suffered far less, or less severe side effects.

Part 6: The benefits of dis-ease

Dis-ease can come from an in turn create fear, anxiety, stress, pain, anguish and suffering, it's a vicious cycle. However, as the saying goes every cloud has a silver lining, and as unbelievable as it may seem even dis-ease can have its seductive benefits.

In a culture that still fails to recognise that emotional and physical health is intrinsically connected, dis-ease can often become an unconscious cry for help. It may be the only way through which we feel certain legitimate needs, such as support, love, attention, sympathy, or simply a break can be met. This process is commonly known a secondary gain, or hidden gain.

For some, dis-ease can feel like the only acceptable guilt free way in which they can justifiably take a respite from all of the pressures and responsibilities of a hectic life, but it's double edged sword.

There is always a positive intention behind everything we do, however right now the notion of this might be difficult for you to accept.

It is important to remember that this is something that is rarely done intentionally.

Positive Intentions

The inability to express the pain of our unmet needs can trigger a sequence of events that will ultimately lead to those needs being met. Unfortunately this could have also had a role to play in the development of dis-ease, in these cases the disease is an unfortunate side-effect.

For example, I held a pain management workshop at a pensioners day center. I taught them some simple positive thinking exercises to practice at home. I returned two weeks later to see how they had progressed.

There was one lady in particular who was achieving extraordinary results. Two weeks previously, her legs had been completely bandaged because of her blistering skin, she was in constant pain, and she also shuffled about with the aid of a walking frame. Now, she breezed joyfully in to see me without her walking frame and showing me that her skin condition had almost completely cleared up. It was an amazing transformation, and I just told her to carry on doing what she was doing.

Two months later one of the staff told me that this lady had regressed back to the way that she was before my first visit. Everyone of the staff believed as I do now, that when she started to get better there was no longer a need for the twice daily visits of nursing staff and her GP to treat her and change her dressings. The care and attention that came with these visits, especially for someone who was living alone was a daily source of comfort and attention. For this lady the care and attention she was receiving were her secondary gain.

At this point I would like you to understand that whatever needs that might be being met through dis-ease are fully legitimate and deserving, as are you, but dis-ease is a heavy price to pay. The alternative solution is to change your 'rules' and give yourself permission to speak up and consciously ask to have your needs met.

Dis-ease can be likened to a distraction and can only put problems on hold. Whether it's getting away from a despised job, or just having your emotional needs met. The only true resolution is to confront and change your personal limiting attitudes around asking for what you want.

Dis-ease can give us permission to act and behave differently. However once we become healthy again, if we don't feel that we can continue with this new freedom of expression and we lose what we gained, then our old unhelpful habits and behaviours will probably return, and we will once again find ourselves back on the same psychological and physically destructive treadmill.

This is why some survivors have reported that they 'strangely' became depressed when told that their dis-ease was in remission. This reaction is the opposite of what they would have expected, and often causes great confusion. However, it makes sense when you bear in mind that whilst on the surface they are genuinely pleased with such positive news, yet on an unconscious level they are feeling the loss of any perceived benefits they had gained.

If, for you the news of improved health does bring with it feelings of depression, then it's a clear indication that important psychological work needs to be done in order to uncover your secondary gain that is now kicking up a fuss.

Now, no one would ever want to admit that they could be standing in the way of their own recovery, so this process for some may not be as easy as it would at first seem.

Most of us at some time in our lives have been guilty of using illness as an 'easier' means to obtain or avoid something rather than speaking up. Acknowledging your wants, needs, fears and insecurities will help to gently open the doors to learning more practical and less damaging ways in which you can have your needs and desires fulfilled.

Research - Cancer patients commonly demonstrated an unawareness of their own emotional needs, higher levels of self-denial, larger tumours and weaker immune systems in comparison to other patients.

Remember that having a secondary or hidden benefit is nothing to be ashamed about. It's a natural behavioral mechanism that can unknowingly easily entrap everyone single of us. Secondary or hidden benefit doesn't mean that the dis-ease is a positive for us. The positives are the benefits that we are unaware of that being ill provides.

What has dis-ease brought me?

To answer this question, we must first identify what needs could be being met by your dis-ease, once you have done this you will be able to explore other less damaging ways in which these needs can be met. The following exercise will enable you to do this.

Ask yourself - **'How might I be benefiting from my symptoms?'**

Then on a piece of paper make a list of the things that come to mind.

Some people do not have secondary or hidden benefits, so you could be thinking that this exercise isn't been applicable to you. However, I do recommend that you do take a little time and think about the points which are mentioned below and do the exercise anyway, just in case.

Take your time and think deeply and honestly before answering.

Here are a few of the most common benefits:

- Permission to avoid dealing with a troublesome problem or situation.
- Expectations of disability leave from work.
- The prospect of special treatment and attention from others.
- Freedom from work, chores, family responsibilities, and unpleasant duties.
- Permission to behave irresponsibly or treat others badly because you can't control yourself.
- Not having to meet your own or the high expectations of others.
- Power to get others to conform to your 'special' needs.
- Feeling able to take, without having to give.
- Feelings of significance and being special because of your condition.
- Expectations of financial gain / compensation for pain and suffering.
- Inclusion and intimacy, becoming part of a loving and supportive network of fellow sufferers and caregivers.
- Avoiding the discomfort that self-examination often entails, and of having to put the effort into changing oneself.
- Avoidance of responsibility and the pressures of thinking that these responsibilities are going to ultimately demand more than you can provide. Fear that you might now be 'found out' as not really capable or competent to cope with this higher level of expectation.
- Loss of love or attention e.g. if you get well you will have to move out of current peer group, family, support network etc.
- A distraction from emotional problems. Physical pain can often be used as a smokescreen for emotional pain. There is no pain worse than emotional pain (anyone who has experienced grief can testify to this).

Now you see why wanting to hold on to present symptoms and conditions can seem such an attractive proposition, albeit unknowingly.

Now that you have your list, review it and consider what underlying needs are, or were being met by your dis-ease. Was it love and attention? Were there unresolved issues that needed to be explored? Were you just stressed and needed time out?

Whatever you do please don't allow yourself to be a victim. If you do, you automatically strip yourself of the power to change your circumstances, and you will be always looking for an outer solution for what is a very much an internal problem.

You can also do this exercise:

1. Write a list of the things that you say "I can't do" due to illness.
2. Then substitute "I can't" for "I don't have to," this will also help flush out any secondary gains. For example "I can't work," becomes "I don't have to work," or "I can't take care of anything anymore," becomes "I don't have to take care of anything anymore, including myself."
3. Take note of where others now have to accommodate you.
4. Take note of where you now don't have to accommodate others.
5. Try to think of what limiting beliefs or rules are in place that might prevent these needs being met once you are well again. Write them down.

Love, support and security are things that we crave for, and asking for them seems a relatively simple thing to do, however this is often easier said than done whilst we are fit and healthy. So, just giving yourself permission to ask for these most basic of human needs from your loved ones, could be the simplest yet most important lessons you could ever learn.

Your problem could be that you simply haven't allowed yourself a respite from all of the stress and tension you been feeling under. If this is the case, ask yourself the following questions, but don't over think your answers. Your first instinctive thoughts can often be the most beneficial and revealing.

- What beliefs / thoughts that are holding me back from allowing myself to recharge my batteries, without needing to be ill to justify taking a break?
- Am I too proud to ask for help, and if so why?
- Am I afraid of being seen as being weak by admitting that the pressures are getting the better of me?
- Do I believe it's my duty to put the needs of others before my own?
- Whose permission / approval do I believe I need in order to make changes in my life?

Now ask yourself...

- Where did these beliefs and rules come from?
- Who put them there?
- Now, most importantly, which of these beliefs no longer serve any useful purpose in my life now? Then change them!

A few years ago when I examined my own beliefs about myself, I discovered that at the very top of my list of beliefs were two, that unknown to me, were in conflict with each other, so they were basically canceling each other out, and my life was at a standstill. The beliefs were, 'I have to keep everyone happy', and 'I want to walk the path I have chosen', obviously these were going to clash.

By looking into the origins of the two beliefs, I was able to decide which one was the more important to me at that moment in time. I realised that the belief 'I have to keep everyone happy' was given to me by parents in my childhood because I am the oldest sibling. A responsibility I definitely no longer wanted. Whilst the belief that 'I want to walk the path I have chosen' was definitely my own, and based upon what I as an adult chose to be responsible for.

With this awareness it was then easy to re-prioritize, and from that moment on striving to achieve my hopes and dreams and the life that I want for me has become a whole lot easier.

Like mine, most of your unhelpful and limiting rules and beliefs will be just under the surface, but with a little time and effort this self-assessment process will give you the opportunity to remove any barriers that could be hindering your recovery. It will also enable you to avoid future suffering.

As you are aware of the inner rules and beliefs which have played such a huge role in the creation of your present situation, you will also become aware of healthy alternative ways to go forward.

During a ten week CBT Stress Management Programme the women who both recognised and acknowledged their secondary gains experienced an increase in their immune functioning. It was concluded that the biological change was largely due to their efforts into finding out if there were any possible benefits from their disease.

The 'Gift' of cancer

Sounds paradoxical, but is it really? I've met many people with cancer who have told me of the gift that cancer brings. Yes, it's true that our initial reaction to a diagnosis can be shocking and emotional, and it's understandable that in an instant you are reminded that life is finite. This is usually followed by a period of soul searching, questioning, and re-evaluating, which in itself can create even more challenges;

- Why me?
- Why now?
- Why cancer?
- Can I beat this?
- How long do I have left?
- Will this be painful?
- Will I be able to handle it?
- Is there anything I can do to help myself?
- How will this affect my lifestyle?

Next you begin to assess what is REALLY important to you;

- Is it really my job?
- Is it really my new car?
- Is it really my new house?
- Is it really my pay rise?

The gift of cancer can be as simple as the appreciation of how precious life is in this present moment;

- This breath you are now taking.
- Your touch.
- A smile.
- A hug.
- The taste and texture of your food.
- The ability to walk unaided.
- The beauty of nature.
- The warmth of a fire on a cold day.
- The ability to give and receive love.
- A moment of comfort.

Each and every moment can now become what it's supposed to be - PRECIOUS

**Yesterday is the past and tomorrow is the future, today is a gift,
which is why they call it the present - Bill Keane.**

It is so easy for us to take so much for granted and allow so much of our lives to become routine, monotonous, automatic and mundane. However you have it in your power to reevaluate and use this experience as your wake up call and give yourself permission to break free from the self-imposed shackles of the 'Must do's', 'Should do's', and 'Cannot do's' of unhelpful and disempowering limiting beliefs.

If you do this for yourself it could feel as if you have awoken from a dream, and are observing the world through new eyes, living in the moment, in the here and now as you begin to fully appreciate each and everything moment of your life.

This is the new heightened awareness that is often referred to as 'The Gift'.

Is this attitude denial?

I don't think so; it's the way in which people who have survived near death experiences often respond. They realise the value of the moment, the here and the now and in doing so begin to live life to the full.

If like me, and you are not fighting a life threatening disease, learn from the experiences of those who have, and give yourself permission to do the things you want to do...

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

***"Life, a precious gift we take for granted, barely noticed until when we mourn its passing,
then wonder with regret...where did it all go?"***

Key notes:

- Secondary gains or hidden gains are not on a conscious level.
- Examine your life at present looking for your possible secondary gains.
- Identify what needs are being met by your dis-ease.
- Understand that whatever the needs are that are being met, they are still fully legitimate and deserving.
- Explore and find new ways of living your life to the full.
- Become aware of healthy alternative ways to met your needs as you go forward.
- What could 'The GIFT' of cancer be to you?

Part 7: Pain management

During times of good health we usually don't pay a lot of attention to minor aches and pains, but after a cancer diagnosis it is understandable if you are now a little more hyper-vigilant and sensitive towards the slightest twinge of discomfort. Now every single discomfort, ache pain or twinge can take on a whole new meaning and significance which can play on your mind - but, only if you allow it to.

One of the most frightening aspects of dis-ease can be the prospect of any potential pain and discomfort which can only creates anticipatory anxiety.

Now, before you learn methods of pain management, there are a couple of very important points you need to remember. Firstly, pain is your body's way of getting your attention, it's letting you know that there is something physically or emotionally wrong.

There is however always the possibility that it's something more serious, therefore before you apply any pain management techniques **always** get checked out by your GP first.

Don't be alarmed if you are noticing, or begin notice an pain you weren't aware of as you begin to learn about pain management. This is quite common, because pain is often suppressed to a degree when you are distracted and not giving it your attention. If this is the case, it's a positive, and will serve to validate what you are going to learn. Pain is subjective, and you will soon possess the skills to be able to ease it at will.

Pain is subjective

Pain is a feeling, a sensation, which makes it subjective, and just like everything else in life the way in which we think has an impact on it. This is why two people can experience the same source of pain in the same quantity, yet their experiences or perceptions can be totally different. For example, if I were to place a clamp on your arm, you might only be able to tolerate it for a few seconds, whereas someone else might be able to bear the exact same stimulus for a few minutes - this is known as pain tolerance, and it is different for everyone.

Pain is a signal, a sign that there's something wrong which requires your attention which is resulting in your discomfort, however the issue may not always be entirely a physical one. So, in order to manage pain effectively you need to take into account both your physical and emotional states.

Pain or discomfort

At this point I'm going to stop using the word pain, because the usual perception of pain is too black and white, which makes it seen as being either on or off. This is a very limiting way of thinking about it. So, from this point onwards I'm going to refer to it as discomfort - which is what it actually is.

The more comfortable you feel the less discomfort you feel, and vice versa, this is more than just a clever play on words. We experience many different degrees of discomfort, so given a choice, would you prefer to simply feel uncomfortable, or be 'in' pain?

Now, let's explore some of the emotional issues that could possibly be connected to your discomfort. Remember that these connections are nearly always hidden just below the surface.

Discomfort triggers

The exercise you did in Part 2 that made you aware of your internal stressors, now apply it to any discomfort you may be experiencing now. For example, a friend at the time of her cancer diagnosis developed a sciatic type discomfort that would often feel severe enough to actually immobilise her. She told me that her thoughts around this made her more uncomfortable than her thoughts of the cancer - how was this possible

All of the knowledge she had gained about cancer created a sense of predictability, increasing her sense of inner power and control about it. However, she felt less in control because she didn't understand her 'sudden' sciatic discomfort, and less control equals more stress, exasperating her discomfort. She also didn't realise that her emotional state at the time of her diagnosis was what was behind the physical tension that resulted in her sciatic discomfort in the first place. However, now it was her stressing about the discomfort which was what was now keeping it going.

The 'benefits' of discomfort

In part 6 we looked at the various ways in which we can benefit from dis-ease. These very same principles also apply to discomfort, often to an even greater degree. For example, when we're uncomfortable this can serve as a reminder to those around us that we are ill, and we need all the love, care and attention we can get, which can all be a secondary gain for pain. However, by applying the same exercise from part 6 to your discomfort will enable you to greatly reduce your discomfort, because it will no longer serve a purpose.

It would be understandable if you are thinking *'this is absurd, how could I possibly be doing this to myself, and what could I possibly gain from feeling uncomfortable?'* If this is so, remember that nobody would intentionally bring suffering upon themselves. However, suffering can sometimes be the only way that a part of us feels it can be acknowledged.

Keeping an open mind, ask yourself *'what could this discomfort be bringing me, how might I be benefiting from it?'* Then make a list of the things that come to mind. Remember as with all the exercises in this programme, in order for you to receive the full benefits you will need to take your time and really think deeply and honestly before answering.

Here are a few of the most common benefits I have come across;

- The permission to avoid dealing with a troublesome problem or situation.
- Disability leave from work.
- Special treatment and attention from others.
- Freedom from work, chores, family responsibilities, and any unpleasant duties.
- Permission to behave irresponsibly or mistreat others, because you 'can't' control yourself.
- Not having to meet your own or the high expectations of others.
- The power to get others to conform to your 'special' needs.
- Feeling that you are able to take, without having to give.
- Feeling that you are significant or somewhat special because of your condition.
- The expectation of financial gain or compensation for your pain and suffering.
- The inclusion and intimacy with becoming a part of a loving and supportive network of fellow sufferers and caregivers.

- Avoiding the discomfort that often accompanies self-examination, and having to put effort into changing oneself.
- Avoidance of responsibility - the pressures of thinking your responsibilities are going to ultimately demand more than you can give. This is linked to the fear of being 'found out' as not really being capable or competent to cope with higher levels of expectation.
- Loss of love or attention, for example, if you get well you will have to move out of your current peer group, family, support network etc.
- A distraction from emotional problems. Physical pain can often unknowingly be used as a smokescreen for emotional pain. Emotional pain is often worse than physical pain - anyone who has experienced grief can testify to this.

You can now see how wanting to hold on to present symptoms and conditions would seem an attractive proposition albeit unknowingly. Review your list and consider what underlying needs could be being met by your discomfort; is it love and attention? Are there unresolved issues that needed to be explored? Do you feel under pressure and needed some time out?

Whatever you do please don't allow yourself to be a victim. If you do, you automatically strip yourself of the power to change your circumstances. You will always be looking for an outer solution for what is very much an inner problem.

Physical discomfort often feels more endurable than emotional pain, and so it can be used as a distraction from conflicts that 'seem' too painful to face. During these times your mind can use physical discomfort as a 'smokescreen' to distract you from emotional discomfort. This can seem especially alluring if you don't believe that you possess the skills or resources needed in order to deal with the emotional conflict. If this is the case, then a little self-examination is all it will take to find a way to sort it out and reduce your discomfort in the process.

Tension, expectation, fear, anxiety, hunger and tiredness can all intensify our experience of discomfort. Discomfort and anxiety are intrinsically linked, one exacerbates the other. Anxiety will always make any discomfort feel worse.

The principles you learned in part 3 about your inner power, and anticipatory anxiety covered in part 2 will also apply to effective pain management. So, recap and apply those principles to any discomfort you may be 'expecting' to experience.

Controlling pain

Whilst it may feel normal to respond to the discomfort by tensing up, it will only increase its severity. However, relaxing your body greatly reduces discomfort naturally and relaxation aided by the appropriate suggestions is a proven effective discomfort management technique.

It is a lot more difficult to try to get discomfort under control when it catches you by surprise than if you are prepared ahead of time. So, preparation is what makes true discomfort control possible. If you are presently discomfort free, then learning how to quickly enter a state of deep relaxation will be very advantageous should you find experience any discomfort in the future.

Your expectations can increase discomfort, your expectations can also just decrease it.

Here are a few ways you can do this

Dis-comfort is perceived in the mind by interpreting the signals it receives from the body. The following techniques will enable you to alter that interpretation, which will in turn change your perception of dis-comfort to the point where it can be reduced, or even turned off.

You have control over your body - this is an example of mind over matter.

Now, listen to the audio entitled 'Pain Management' which can be found on Complimentary Cancer Help page at www.ulsterhypnotherapy.com to help you achieve this state. the password is RELAX. When you have finished return and carry on from here.

The cancer face it, beat it! Programme client's feedback on Pain Management;

The fundamental thing that I began to feel when working with the Audios and written material was getting back a sense of control. The imagery worked really well for me, and I began to talk to my body, and also began to listen to it. That may sound a bit silly but that is how it felt.

The preparation for surgery audio was absolutely essential for me, and I listened to this one virtually every day. It gave me a really good feeling about what was going to happen. I had spent a lot of time in hospital when I was a child and had a great fear of hospitals in general, but I could honestly say when I went in on this occasion I was in a very positive state.

Even when my operation was cancelled (moments before being taken down to surgery) it didn't take me more than about half an hour to get thinking in a positive way again... angry, but positive! The glove anaesthesia turned out to be a bonus teaching me how to effectively anaesthetise myself with confidence.

My one overriding memory was of walking in to see the Consultant for the first time, and as he explained what was going to happen, I was thinking 'this is going to work'.

The other thing I remember is going up to the Consultant after he had told me that the operation had been cancelled that day, and I put my arm around his shoulders and thanked him for telling me the way he did.. I knew then that I wasn't a passive bystander in my illness, but I was in control.

I know for certain that with the help of the programme I got through my illness and operation a lot better than I ever thought possible.

Key notes:

- Always get checked out by your GP before you apply any pain management techniques.
- Pain is a feeling and it is subjective - just like everything else in life, it's a perception.
- What has your discomfort brought you, how are you benefiting from it?
- Preparation and practice is what makes true discomfort control possible.
- Learn the techniques of deep relaxation to manage and control your discomfort.

Part 8: Resentment vs forgiveness

'Thoughts create emotions and emotions create a bodily effect'

Of all of the negative emotions that we are able to create, resentment is probably one of the most self-destructive.

Don't confuse resentment with anger, because anger is usually a single short lived emotion which can, if expressed and used correctly, be a very important motivating component of any change process.

Resentment on the other hand is the continuous replaying and re-creating in your head of an experience you once allowed yourself to get wound up about. We are able to keep resentment going long after the event, and the offender has long gone from our lives.

However justified we felt at the time it really isn't logical to continue to entertain destructive thoughts and feelings when they are actually having a detrimental effect upon the state of our mental and physical health. They will eat away at us, so the only people we are really hurting while we choose to hold on to resentment are us and those closest to us. We have now become the source of our stress and anxiety every time we decide to entertain our resentment, which will in turn affect our immune system.

At the time of the original incident we probably didn't feel we had a choice in how we reacted, but we can't use that excuse now. We now know that we most definitely have a choice to either let go or hold on to and prolong our suffering.

I'm not suggesting that you are to blame. It's not your fault. I am not dismissing the importance of any of your experiences, and I'm definitely not trying to excuse someone's actions or behaviour which you took offence to. Whatever you have thought or felt, or are presently thinking or feeling is perfectly understandable, and you wouldn't be the first or last person to be thinking or reacting the way in which you are, because after all you are only human - BUT, this doesn't necessarily make it healthy or beneficial for you.

Being human makes every one of us fallible. This means that we all have thought, felt, said, and done things that will that often have made our lives worse instead of better. We will for the rest of our lives occasionally think, feel, say and do things that are unhelpful so don't berate yourself because that's life.

Remember that your thoughts and your interpretations about a past or present situation will influence how you feel, and remember there's always an emotional consequence for the way in which you choose to think.

You are 100% responsible for your thoughts, which mean you are 100% responsible for how they affect you. If you want to consistently feel better, there is only one way to do it...

CHANGE THE WAY IN WHICH YOU THINK!

Whatever you think about someone or something you internally create the matching feelings and emotions, and you're the only one who actually feels them. You can't make someone feel what you are feeling unless they choose to, and even then they will only feel their perception of what it is you say you are feeling.

In essence whether you are thinking loving or hurtful thoughts towards someone or something, you are the only person who feels and experiences the emotional and physical responses to your thoughts.

Letting go of our resentment and forgiving is one of the most empowering things we can do for ourselves. You are not condoning whatever it is you feel has been done to you when you do this. What you are saying is that you are no longer allowing yourself to be affected by someone or something else, you have decided to finally put down the burden that you felt justified in carrying all this time. When you do this you are taking back the power and the control you had, albeit unknowingly given away to someone or something else.

I have also found that what often keeps the fires of resentment stoked, is the part or role we ourselves played in the events. Whilst we have been busy focusing all our attention on the external sources, we forgot to look inwardly - so, it's been hidden. This is often the at the root of any lingering resentment, and is why we are have difficulty letting it go completely. If this is the case, asking yourself the following questions will help:

- *What role did I play in the events?*
- *How did I contribute to the feelings I felt?*
- *Are the feelings I felt due to the way in which I reacted to the situation?*
- *Do I feel the way I do because my expectations weren't met?*
- *Do I feel the way I do because I felt that the situation was out of my control?*

Kevin's story

I was asked by a Macmillan nursing team if I would do some positivity work in the hope of lifting the spirits of Kevin, who was a cancer patient who had basically given up the fight, much to the dismay of his family and support team.

At Kevin's house his wife greeted me, then said, "you will have your work cut out here, he's upstairs in bed where he's been for the past week waiting to die."

Whilst Kevin and I chatted about how I could possibly help him, I couldn't help but notice that he was furious about some surgery that he'd received a few weeks ago. He angrily pointed to a large incision, and informed me that during his last hospital stay the surgeon had asked him if he would agree to some exploratory work, with the assurance of the surgeon that it would only by a small incision he agreed.

However, he was horrified and enraged when he awoke to find that the incision that had been made was considerably larger than he had anticipated.

A fortnight had since passed and Kevin's nursing team were completely perplexed as to why the incision wasn't healing or even closing up, in fact it seemed to be getting worse.

I pointed out to him that I couldn't help but think that there might be a connection between his obvious anger and resentment towards the surgeon, and the fact that the surgeon's work wasn't healing.

So, we decided to work on changing Kevin's thoughts towards the surgeon and his actions. He could accept that the surgeon did actually have Kevin's best interests at heart. Although it was OK that Kevin didn't agree with the surgeon's perception of what he thought was best, he could however accept that whatever was done was not done out of spite - it wasn't personal.

Kevin also accepted that it was impossible for the surgeon to be feeling any pain whenever Kevin was thinking bad thoughts about him. Kevin agreed that this wouldn't be the case and that the only people suffering whilst he was thinking these thoughts were his family and himself.

He now realised that for the sake of his own health, he needed to stop his angry, resentful thoughts. So, whenever he thought of the surgeon, he now pictured him smiling and happy, with a big circle of light around him, he even sent him nice wishes.

Kevin did find this difficult to do this at first. However, 'must do is a good master' so, he soon got into the habit of it - and guess what, within two weeks the wound had virtually healed.

For me, Kevin's story is one of the clearest examples of the constructive power of positive thinking and the destructive power of anger and resentments.

**'When you have a choice between being right or being at peace,
always choose peace'**

You find the 'Healing light and letting go of resentment' audio that will enable you to let go of any resentments you may still be carrying on the Complimentary Cancer Help page at www.ulsterhypnotherapy.com The password is RELAX.

Key notes:

- While you choose to hold on the resentment the only people who suffer are your family and you.
- Letting resentment go and forgiving is one of the most empowering things you can do for yourself.
- Notice times when you are winding yourself up and escalating your anger into resentment.
- Do the exercises to help identify your part in this and be aware of how you can work through your resentment with positive constructive thinking - forgiveness may be a part of this.
- Forgiveness doesn't involve condoning the actions of others.

Part 9: Exercise and nutrition

Physical exercise offers more than just the obvious physical benefits. People who exercise regularly generally feel less depressed than those who don't, and feeling depressed is a major emotional factor when it comes to dis-ease. This makes physical exercise one of the most effective ways to combat feeling depressed, making it potentially one of the most powerful aids to your recovery.

We have already looked at the harmful effect that the hormones released during times of stress can have upon our immune system function. Physical exercise uses these hormones in the way that nature intended thus preventing the accumulative damage that they can have on your immune system.

Research - when prevented from performing any physical activity the bodies of stressed animals deteriorated. However their bodily damage was minimised once they were allowed to be physically active again. It was also noted that prolonged, intense exercise performed on a daily basis could decrease the growth rate and size of a tumour.

Exercising regularly also demonstrates that you actually care about your body and you're taking care of it. This helps to re-establish the link that is essential to the wellbeing of the whole system.

A healthier body can also equal a healthier mind, people on regular physical activity programmes tend to have more self-belief in their inner power and higher levels of self-esteem.

Physical activity also strengthens your heart. It's also an ideal opportunity to pat yourself on the back and enjoy some endorphins - the feel good hormones.

When you develop a regular exercise routine you are effectively retaking control of your daily schedule. This is yet another way by which you can regain that all important sense of control over your life - and you know how important this mind-set is to your recovery.

Getting into a routine

Please note: You must consult your GP before embarking on any exercise programme. If you aren't used to physical exercise then seek the assistance of a qualified trainer. Making sure you exercise on a regular basis, at a comfortable pace, avoiding unnecessary pain or discomfort, and make it progressively more strenuous as you become fitter and stronger over time.

Exercise can simply be moving more. 45 min of brisk walking is just as beneficial as jogging for 30 min. Not everyone can jog for 30 minutes, but most people can walk briskly for 45 min, and here's the best bit, you don't have to do it all in one go to receive the benefits. Breaking it down to just a 10 min brisk walking four times a day will be just as good for you. Or, if you prefer, you can swim, cycle, dance, play tennis, do housework, walk to the shops, or simply begin parking at the far end of the car park, use your imagination and make it fun! Do whatever you can do - just do it!

Remember, don't overdo it! Keep within your safety limits. This is a lifestyle change, so if it feels too much like hard work then slow down and pace yourself. A reliable guide is that you should be able to just about maintain a conversation whilst exercising, slow down the moment you feel that you haven't enough breath to do this. Exercise responsibly and you will keep safe and injury free.

Please note: Our bodies respond better when doing exercises we enjoy. We can force ourselves to do exercises we don't enjoy, however we do this we risk triggering our fight or flight response. So, you can either exclusively do the exercises that you enjoy. Or, you can simply change the way in which you think about the exercises you don't enjoy and focusing on the benefits you are receiving from the exercise or, how good you are going to feel about yourself when you praise yourself for overcoming the challenge.

If you are physically limited or lacking in energy then simple exercises such as swinging and lifting your arms or legs, or moving your head, will be suffice. Essentially you are looking raise your heart rate by creating as much movement as you can comfortably managed. If you can't even do this, you can still do what the top sports people do, and use mental imagery and visualise yourself exercising, or dancing, or playing your favourite sports. This will create positive anticipation whilst strengthen your commitment to eventually do what you can. Again you are strengthening your sense of inner power and control by actually doing something, rather than feeling that you can do nothing.

Although there are many scientific papers that illustrate a link between diet and nutrition in the treatment and prevention of cancer, it is still an area that is often overlooked within cancer care.

Taking control of your diet is a proven way in which you can influence your health. It's also yet another way in which you can regain that all important sense of inner control and power. Although there are no guaranteed ways to prevent cancer, the NHS states, 'eating a healthy balanced diet can help reduce your risk of developing certain cancers'.

Research - concluded that 60% of all cancers of the esophagus, 45% of all colo-rectal cancers and 38% of breast cancers could be prevented if people ate a healthy diet, had a healthy body weight, and engaged in regular physical activity.

First and foremost it is important that you listen to any dietary advice given by your medical team. I would strongly advise you to seek the advice of a nutritionist or consult a nutritionist.

Here are some of the things that are generally recommended for a healthy dietary approach:

- Organic fresh fruit and vegetables. Organic meat and fish.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Cutting down on caffeinated drinks, red meat, dairy products, sugar and salt.
- Avoiding processed foods.

It doesn't have to be complicated - do what you can do and keep it simple.

Key notes:

- You must consult your GP before embarking on any exercise regime.
- Exercise is one of the most natural ways in which you can boost your immune system function.
- Exercise and nutrition play their part in living a healthy life.
- Do not overdo it remain within your safety limits. Take little steps and go at your own pace and build a sensible routine that suits you.
- Eating a healthy balanced diet can help reduce the risk of developing certain cancers.

Part 10: Creating a life worth living

You would like to think that when someone is diagnosed with a potentially life threatening illness that they would begin living life to the full, doing all the things that they had always wanted to do.

However, some people do the exact opposite, and become afraid, disenchanted, withdrawn, and instead of living life to the fullest - they begin preparing for death.

This attitude isn't surprising when you think of how many people are not making the most of their lives now, and living it to the fullest whilst being in good health.

It has been proven time and time again that the individuals who tend to live the longest are the ones who do make their lives worth living - they set themselves rewarding goals to live for.

Research - showed how finding a new meaning to life can positively effects the immune system. Of the 43 subjects (who had all lost a friend to breast cancer), the ones who had found a new meaning to their lives, and as a result were actively working towards goals, relationship and personal growth all experienced an increase in their immune system functioning.

Our goals and ambitions give our lives a sense direction and purpose. We are all unique, so it doesn't matter what your meaning of life might be, just as long as it's meaningful to you. Goals and ambitions are also the source of the inner strength and power we all need to keep living.

Goal setting

The goals that you set help you to determine and focus on your personal reasons for wanting to live, they also reconnect you to life itself. When you set goals you are saying, "there are still things that I want out of life and that I am willing to pursue them".

When you adopt this attitude you will start to emotionally, mentally and physically change, every part of your being will now begin to focus and aspire to achieve your goals.

Having something to live for means that your will to live will instinctively become stronger. Other important benefits of goal setting are:

- You are making a clear statement that you are expecting to recover and that you are both mentally and physically taking action.
- You are taking control of your life and saying that you have the ability and the confidence in yourself to achieve the things that you still want out of life.
- You are adopting the attitude that your life isn't something that 'just happens' to you, you are taking it by the scruff of the neck and saying "I expect more from life and I'm going for it!"
- Setting goals and doing your utmost to accomplish them, means that you are taking control of your life, stating that you and your needs are important and worthwhile.
- Setting goals gives life a purpose, a meaning, and something positive to concentrate your energies upon. You wouldn't get out of bed if you didn't have a reason to!

For some people this process might bring them face to face with their lack of belief in their ability to fulfill their goals causing them to think: "what is the point?"

The point is that you are taking back your sense of control and once again getting involved in the business of living. It's not just winning that gives life its meaning, it's also about the participation, it's about having a go!

"A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at" - Bruce Lee

Your goals are really a compass point, something you are using to steer your life towards a more positive and beneficial direction. What is important to you this week might not be as important next week, but you wouldn't have known this if it wasn't for your original goal. Therefore, don't make your goals too rigid, be flexible to the ever changing requirements and circumstances of your life.

"It's not about what happens in life that matters, what matters is how you handle it!" - Stevie Chan

Like steering a ship you focus upon where you want to go and you head in that general direction, but you won't be traveling in a straight line. You will have to constantly check and alter your course until you reach your destination. Remember, that you are the one steering, you decide what's important to you, and alter whatever is necessary in order for you to have the possible chance of reaching your destination.

"It depends on me if life is good, not on life, on me"
Alice Herz - Sommer. Concentration camp survivor.

What do 'I' want out of life?

That question probably sounded a little alien to you, because there is a strong possibility that you will be someone who has spent much of your life putting your needs bottom on your list of priorities. If this is you, then it's hardly surprising you don't know what you want for you.

Research - three groups of women with one consisting of 69 women with breast cancer, one consisting of 82 women with benign breast disease and one consisting of 71 healthy women were asked to write a self-descriptive text. The results showed that when it came to describing themselves the wording was very different for the three groups. What was remarkably different from the other groups was the breast cancer group's use of words such as timid, non-assertive, calm, and easy going and tendency to hold back anger.

The following checklist will enable you to identify the most suitable goals for you:

- Take a look back over your answers in part 6 - 'The benefits of dis-ease' and those answers will give you a clear indication of what it is that you really want for yourself. Remember, although these are genuine and valid emotional requirements. It's essential that these requirements are fulfilled by other less damaging and harmful ways.

- Simply ask yourself, "what is it I want badly enough to hang on for?" Or "what is there I want to do?" Or "What is worth getting out of bed for?" Keep asking yourself these questions until you create the biggest possible incentive that will inspire you to go that extra mile.
- Make sure your goals are balanced. Are your mental, physical and emotional needs being met? If they aren't, then you need to address this by assessing what the main focal point in your life has been up until now.
- Note which of your needs you might have neglected and then build your goals around what's been missing. For example, if you have been a workaholic, maybe you have been neglecting your leisure time, and not doing things that you enjoy doing - now is the time to do this! If you have spent too much time running a house and home, find yourself a social group doing something that you have always had an interest in, something that gives you a change of scenery a least once a week.
- Make each goal as clear and precise as you can. If one of your goals is to have a richer life, what does having a richer life mean? Does it mean money, intimate relationships, friendships, and what is it you have to do in order to get whatever it is?
- It's better to write down exactly what you want and exactly what you have to do in order to get it.
- Your goals need to be measurable otherwise you will never know if you have achieved them and miss enjoying the sense of achievement which is one of the major aims of this process. Set yourself reasonable, realistic targets, remembering that most of the things that we set out to achieve tend to take a little longer than first anticipated, especially the most precious ones.
- Success breeds success, so alongside your long-term goals set a few practical and reasonable short-term goals that are within reach of your present capacity and resources, but will require some work and effort to achieve them. Remembering to process them as shown in part 4 - Esteeming yourself. Goals such as spending more time with your children, or taking up a new hobby will provide you with the sustenance and motivation for you to keep striving for those bigger goals that take a little longer to achieve.
- Make your goals your responsibilities and dependent upon your actions. The more you make your goals dependent upon the actions of others the less power and control you will have over achieving them.
- Use your imagination and dare to dream big. Many an incredible goal has been achieved from a seemingly impossible dream
- Discussing your goals with family is fine if you need a little advice, a different perspective or clarity. However, be aware that when you do this you are opening yourself up to their fears and worries based upon their own attitudes and experiences. Therefore, don't be too discouraged if you don't get the encouragement you had hoped for.

"I find it fascinating that most people plan their vacations with better care than they do their lives. Perhaps that is because it's easier to escape than it is to change" - Jim Rohn

Let's do it!

Now that we've gone through the guidelines for deciding your goals, let's put pen to paper and begin listing them, and working out what you need to do in order for you to achieve them.

Start by writing 3 three month goals you want to achieve, then 3 six month goals you want to achieve, then 3 one year goals you want to achieve. Your short-term goals should be more centered upon bringing immediate satisfaction, whilst your long term goals should reflect your attitude and intention towards being around long enough to see them manifest.

Making a 'to do list' of what exactly it is you need to do, enables you to break your long-term goals down into smaller more manageable chunks and stages. This makes them feel more within your reach, and therefore under your control, whilst you wait for your long-term goals to flourish. Going on your dream holiday 'to do' list could comprise of:

- Do your own research on-line.
- Finding out the most economical way to get there and back.
- Start saving for the trip.
- Talk to people who have already been there to find out the must do, and see things and places.
- Arranging time off work, hospital appointments and so on..

Each stage on your 'to do' list will fuel your sense of hope and purpose. In the meantime your short term goals should be focused on producing results that will bring about immediate satisfaction and fulfillment whilst you're waiting to reap the rewards of your long-term goals.

Here is an example:

Short Term		Medium Term		Long Term
Weekly	Monthly	6 Monthly	Yearly & Beyond	
Start to look for local exercise classes.	Go and sit in on a few and join the ones that you like the most.	Monitor how well you are doing, and with your new confidence look for other advanced classes.	Plan to do a major sponsored event for charity.	
Make a list of places you most want to visit.	Start getting brochures, reserching on-line, working out costs, and start saving.	Plan to do your first trip.	Set it in the diary 'The big holiday!'	

The three key elements for success.

If you experience difficulty in achieving your goals, it's likely you are missing one of more of the three key elements to be successful. I believe that you require three key elements in order to succeed, and that these key elements will apply to every single goal you set for yourself.

First you need self-belief. The belief in yourself and your abilities in relation to achieving your specific goals, whatever these goals might be such as, regaining your health, keeping fit, changing your diet, managing your thinking, a new hobby etc.

Secondly, you need the necessary skill-set. Do you have or need to acquire certain capabilities or skills in order to achieve your goals. This also includes an understanding of how you are going to achieve success, along with possessing any psychological or physical skills needed for your specific goals.

Last, but not least you need effort. This also includes being determined, taking action, persisting in the face of challenges, applying your acquired skill-set and capabilities, and obviously putting sufficient effort into achieving your specific goals.

As an example, let's apply the three key elements in relation to this programme, let's look at how lacking any of these key elements can sabotage our success.

Not having self-belief in relation to achieving your goals will automatically affect the amount of effort you will put into achieving them. However, not having self-belief doesn't necessarily mean you can't be successful, it just means that you will create loads and loads of unnecessary anxiety because you'll doubt yourself every step of the way.

On the other hand you could have huge self-belief, and have a 'can do' attitude. So, you will put in loads of effort and be stubbornly determined to succeed. However, in time any amount of self-belief and effort you have will eventually diminish due to your lack of progress, because you lack the skills and resources to achieve your particular goal.

You might be someone who has the self-belief and the skill-sets, and still fail, if you don't put in the required amount of effort. This could be because your goals weren't as important to you as they first seemed, or you may have underestimated the amount of effort it would take to be successful with regards this particular goal. Also having high levels of self-belief, coupled with the 'can do' attitude can actually prevent one from seeing that they might not actually have all the knowledge required to be successful, which again will impact the amount of effort one puts in.

If you are experiencing any difficulties when it comes to achieving any of your present, and past goals, you will now be able to clearly see which of the three key elements you need or needed to tweak.

If it's a lack of self-belief, spend more time processing your positives as shown in part 4 - 'Esteeming yourself', and really focus on what your positives are saying about you. If it's the skills and resources you lack, then source them out, seek guidance then go out and get them. If it's effort and determination you are lacking. Review your goals to make sure that they are still important to you, and if they aren't, change them and make a commitment to yourself to push on a little harder.

Key notes

- The individuals with the longest survival times are usually the ones who make their lives one that's worth living.
- Any goal setting is an important element in your belief in a future. When setting goals we tell ourselves that life is worth hanging around for - it's worth living.
- Start to future pace your life by setting healthy achievable goals. Pace your goals from weekly to a five year (or anytime longer) plan. Be prepared to be flexible and adjust these when appropriate.
- Make sure you have the right amounts of each of the three key elements for success; self-belief, effort, and the required skill-set. These key elements will apply to every goal you set for yourself.

Part 11: Facing the fear of relapse and death

Billions of people have outlived their original prognosis, yet even those who are in recovery and have no signs of the dis-ease may still have it in the back of their minds fears of a possible relapse and with it a fear of death.

Some people can show improvement only to experience a setback in the form of a relapse. If this happens it can understandably throw a shadow of doubt over all the good positive work that they have done so far. In order to take back a sense of control over such events, you could examine your expectations regarding recovery, and openly discuss how you can come to grips with your fears and the 'what ifs' and 'but's' regarding the relapse and change the way you are thinking, feeling and reacting to it.

Remember, that up to now your life's journey has rarely, if ever, been straight forward, every single day you have encountered many unexpected twists and turns, and coped with it! Your present and your future will be no different. Often, simply being aware of the realistic possibility of relapse can be the simplest way to lessen the fear.

It's hugely beneficial for you to get into the habit of treating every twist and turn as just a setback, a blip, a lesson, or a new set of directions guiding you towards your ultimate goal, whatever that may be. Do this and you lessen the emotional impact you will have to deal with, because it's you who decides how much anything emotionally impacts upon you now.

The more you make of it, the worse you will make you feel, and the longer it will take for you to get over it and move on, and make no mistake about this, you will inevitably have to get over it at some point. For your own sake, make this as quickly as you possibly can.

To react with feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, confusion and emotional turmoil at the news of relapse for a period is understandable, but it's not mandatory. The amount of, and type of emotional support you receive from your support group can also have a part to play here. As you have learned in part 1, the healthy type of emotional support is very important during times of uncertainty. This love, care and understanding will boost your will to live and to fight on. However you have already learned that the most important thing you can rely on now, is your own positive attitude, helpful perceptions and beliefs - so use them!

Take back the control

As disappointing as a setback may seem, just like every other setback you have ever had, it will pass. Under the circumstances you can be forgiven for entertaining thoughts of giving up, but these thoughts will only accelerate your physical and mental decline. Use your circuit breaker and - **STOP IT!**

Right now, is the time to remind yourself of the mind-set you have been developing since you started this programme. Go back and recap all that you have learned so far. Now is the time to put 100% effort back into this and look upon this as just another setback.

Believe it!

Once you have (and you will) come to terms with this setback, remind yourself that whatever you felt was caused by your response to the news, and not by the news itself. Examine what just happened and what lessons can you learn from the way in which you thought, which created how you felt and reacted to the setback.

- Earlier changes could have been mainly motivated by either of these two powerful driving forces - motivation or desperation. However, it requires a certain amount of discipline to not only create, but to stick to new habits. However, no matter how beneficial these habits may be, anyone can become complacent and fall back into old habits. If this is so, just review what you have learned so far and put it all into practice once again.
- It's possible that you may require the help of a trained professional to help you to examine possible emotional conflicts, which could feel easier to face with the aid of professional help.
- Maybe a way to meet your needs still hasn't been found, and your dis-ease is still serving an emotional purpose? If so, a review of part 6 'The benefits of dis-ease' will be of benefit here.
- Could this be a message advising you to slow down and take your foot off the pedal? Trying to do too much, too fast, or too 'perfectly' creates a stress and pressure of its own.
- Could it possibly be a reminder that you are still not placing your own needs and health first?
- Taking a look at what was going on around the time of your relapse could provide some useful insight and valuable information which will go some way to explaining the possible reasons behind it. These can be used to re-appraise the actions you are or are not taking.

Death

When we are born the only thing that is certain is that we will die. For many people, this subject is fearfully avoided, let alone acknowledged, and it's this fear of a fear that is why it is so rarely discussed. This makes it a taboo subject, which makes it virtually impossible to talk openly about this most important subject with those closest to us.

When diagnosed with cancer often the problem isn't so much the fear of death itself, but of how it will come.

It is thought that many people intuitively know when their time has come. It has also been well documented that often people have 'hung on' towards the end, for the sake of loved ones who are unable to accept the inevitable. This would mean that as well as having to deal with dying, they also had the added pressure of having to keep a brave face for the sake of those they love.

Every time we run away from our fears - they grow. Therefore one of the best ways to reduce the fear of death and all its trappings, is to meet it head on by openly discussing it. Throughout this programme you have been asked to take an active role in your recovery, and likewise you can also have just an active a role in your dying.

This is so beautifully demonstrated in the Cancer face it, beat it! Programme feedback that follows:

"In 2008 my mother went to see the doctor for indigestion problems, and the fact that for the last year or so she had been feeling very tired and down. After being referred to the hospital it was discovered that she had cancer of the oesophagus. The initial prognosis was that she would have an operation to remove the cancer, followed by a bit of chemotherapy and things would be fine. Mum was looking forward to meeting the specialist to discuss the way forward.

After a consultation with the specialist options were reduced as it was discovered that the cancer had further advanced and surgery was no longer an option. Chemotherapy was suggested, and hope, though lessened was still present.

Visualisation work helped to change mums perception with chemotherapy and the possible side-effects. I firmly believe that as she wasn't looking for side effects they didn't appear.

The chemotherapy took its course and mum was feeling good during that period – however the chemotherapy did not prove effective.

One major thing we all learned was the importance of communicating. Mum and I had some great times just chatting. During our chats nothing was barred, subjects such as “Do you think you will beat this cancer?” “Are you afraid of dying?” “Have you any regrets?” I quoted to Mum one of Stevie’s sayings “If you make every day worth living for whatever time you have left then you will have lived more than most people that do not even know they are living.”

With that Mum thought for a moment and replied “I have the most wonderful husband, great sons, brilliant grandchildren, I do not want for anything and I’m completely content, I have lived a great life.”

The openness we shared was encouraged with all the family and it was made clear that Mum was not to be treated like a victim. Because of that we had some great times and lots of laughs she was still making funny comments right up to the end.

Mum knew that she was not going to beat cancer, but using the right language, being open, not holding grudges, appreciating life, having a laugh and getting on with living for whatever time was left, made a huge difference.”

I don’t believe that it’s negative or morbid to discuss the possibility of choosing to let go.

You don’t have a crystal ball and no-one can ever predict what obstacles may crop up on your journey back to health. For example, there could be the loss of a significant relationship, there could be a worry about the health of a family member, there could be financial worries etc. During times like this the effort of continuing to hold on to life could seem such a difficult struggle that the decision to stop struggling, and just letting go, may feel like the best form of relief.

One of the main aims of this programme is to enable you to enhance and enrich the quality of your living, or the quality of your dying for that matter.

Facing your fear

The next exercise is a guided fantasy that will enable you to gain a new perspective on your own mortality. Even if you are on the road to recovery, it is a fantastic exercise that will allow you to explore this taboo subject. It will give you certain insights which you have perhaps never explored, such as;

- Your beliefs regarding relapse.
- Your beliefs about dying.
- What you can say to your nearest and dearest that will help them. How everyone's life will go on when you leave.
- How you would like to be remembered.

This exercise isn't meant to impinge upon anyone's religious beliefs; it is just a framework into which you can incorporate your own personal belief system.

You will find the 'Facing your fear' audio on the Complimentary cancer help page at www.ulsterhypnotherapy.com the password is RELAX. After you have listening to it, return and carry on.

Even if the diagnosis is terminal and palliative care is for now the only option being offered - it's still not the end of your journey!

You can throw in the towel and make the rest of your days feel like a living hell. Or, you can make the very best of the time you have left, either way the choice is still very much yours. I am sure you will have heard stories like the one I am about to tell you now

My practice manager's 72 year old uncle was given 3 weeks to live and was told to go home and enjoy his final Christmas - he went on to enjoy another 5! During this time he just made the most of his life, and from time to time he improved enough to be moved from palliative care to receiving various further treatments.

When asked by his family whether the treatments were getting him down his answer was that he was glad to be still around to be receiving them. On one occasion when his GP questioned the wisdom of him continuing his weekend trips to his local club for a drink, he replied with smile 'what is it going to do, kill me?' During that time he also went on to outlive 16 of his 'healthy' friends.

What are your immediate priorities?

In part 10 we looked at goal setting, and how our goals can help us to determine and focus upon the reasons why we want to live. The following exercise is designed to enable you to re-prioritise your goals to get the best use and to make the very most of the time you may think have left. I have given you five examples to get you started;

1	Are there things you would still like to do?	Priority number?
2	Are there places you would like to visit?	Priority number?
3	Is there someone you would really like to talk to?	Priority number?
4	Is there something you have been putting off doing?	Priority number?
5	Is there anything you would like to resolve?	Priority number?

Feedback - "I am a counselling psychotherapist working in the field for some 20 years. I believe and have evidenced over the years that physical symptoms do not always seem to come from physical origins but from emotional states of mind. I was shocked therefore to find myself with a breast cancer diagnosis. The shock was overwhelming in the first instance and it took all my resolve, knowledge and learning to turn panic into strong wholesome state management. This I did the help of the Cancer face it, beat it! Programme'.

I listened to the audios to learn how to limit the side-effects, I amazed all around me by receiving chemotherapy, having a light lunch and then walking a 5-mile circular beach walk immediately afterwards the completion of my treatment. When having chemotherapy, it felt really important to me to normalise the event by reconnecting to nature and normal life, putting things back into normal perspective.

I learned that the experience of chemotherapy treatment and its side-effects can be overridden by positive thinking. So I positively looked upon the treatment as a very powerful healing elixir and welcomed it into my body to search out any rogue cancer cells and keep me safe. By doing this I had little to no real side-effects.

Finally I searched back over my life, 12 - 18 months preceding my diagnosis, to identify what was going on at the time that may have triggered the cancer. This is described in the programme as 'the gift'. It was only then that I realised I had been very good at looking after others but had overlooked at what cost this had been to me. I had to adjust things in my personal life and start to live my life deliberately instead of coincidentally as I had been doing. Lack of self-nurture, in my opinion, is without a doubt a primary cause of breast cancer.

I believe my experience has made me a more understanding person; it has changed my view of the world. Understanding the process has served me well. Surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy have given me a space to pause and re-evaluate my life for which I will always be grateful. This programme helped me process this experience as I navigated the journey."

"There is nothing to fear, just a place to grow." - Bron 2014.

Key notes:

- It's beneficial for you to get into the habit of treating every twist and turn as nothing more than a setback, or constructive feedback, or a new set of directions to your ultimate objective.
- It would be easy under the circumstances to be entertaining thoughts of giving up, but this will only accelerate your physical mental decline.
- One of the best ways to reduce the fear of death and all its trappings is to meet it head on by openly discussing it.
- If the diagnosis is terminal and palliative care is presently the only option you are offered - it is still not the end of your journey.

Part 12: Where do I go from here?

I sincerely hope that many of the processes covered in this programme have now become a part of your everyday life. The benefits you will have experiencing from these processes will encourage you to continue to put into practice all that you have learned.

If you have reached the stage where you are given the all clear, for a couple of months it will be beneficial for you to change your imagery to 'surveillance mode', for example picture your white blood cells patrolling your body, searching out and dealing with any abnormal cells, and continue to visualise yourself completely fit and healthy.

As time passes and your health improves it will be beneficial to spend less time on your specific health visualisations and more time working towards your goals which are your meaning of life.

As your health returns don't be surprised if your goals change, this is to be expected so remain flexible. The important thing is that you continue to create a life worth living and that you keep working on making it so.

Do keep up your exercise programme, you might have doubted the degree to which you believed you could influence your health, and now just look at how far you have come.

Carry on for the rest of your days implementing what you have learned through this programme over the past few weeks, and as your mental and physical health continues to improve this should provide you with more than enough reason to make taking control of your thoughts, your feelings, your reactions and your life an integral part of your daily routine.

"To your very good health and keep believing!" - Stevie Chan