



MOVING FORWARD
JOURNAL

INFORMATION HUB

We've put everything in one place. Our information hub brings together things that are important to you. You can watch or read – finding answers to your questions, helping you move forward. Whether you need some information about what to eat or how to exercise safely. Or advice from our expert speakers on managing the fear of recurrence.

Watch recordings of some of our latest Speakers Live talks.

It's there when you need it – at a time that's convenient for you.



WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

Everyone affected by breast cancer can turn to us for support. Whoever you are, and whatever your experience of breast cancer, our free services are always here for you.

breastcancernow.org/support-for-you

SPEAKERS LIVE TALKS

Do you want to learn more about topics relevant to your primary breast cancer diagnosis? Join one of our online Speakers Live sessions.

Speakers Live is an opportunity to learn more from experts about relevant topics. The webinars cover a wide range of topics, such as healthy eating, exercise, hormone therapy, sleep and the emotional impact of breast cancer.

[0345 077 1893](tel:03450771893)

YOUNGER WOMEN TOGETHER

You might feel like you're the only younger woman with breast cancer. But we'll make sure you're not alone.

Younger Women Together gives tailored support and the chance to meet people who understand what you're going through, in a space that's just for people aged 18-45.

Our 1 day, and 2 day residential events happen at locations across the UK. Or sign up to take part online, with 4 group sessions over 4 weeks.

[0345 077 1893](tel:03450771893)

services@breastcancernow.org

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR MEN WITH BREAST CANCER

If you are a man facing breast cancer, we're here. We've designed a page in collaboration with men affected by breast cancer, to bring together information and support that you might find helpful.

SOMEONE LIKE ME

You never have to face breast cancer alone. We'll match you with a trained volunteer who's had a similar diagnosis or experience of breast cancer to you.

They'll be a phone call or email away to answer your questions, offer support or simply listen. Whatever you need to talk about. Because there's nothing like finding someone who really understands what you're going through.

[0800 138 6551](tel:08001386551)

someonelikeme@breastcancernow.org

CONTACT OUR NURSES

Worried about breast cancer, or have a question about breast health?

Our specialist team are ready to listen on our free and confidential helpline and Ask Our Nurses email. Whatever you're going through right now, we're here to help you feel more confident, informed and supported.

[0808 800 6000](tel:08088006000)

nurse@breastcancernow.org



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We're Breast Cancer Now, the UK's largest breast cancer research and support charity. We're the place to turn to for anything and everything to do with breast cancer.

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PART 1

Looking back to move forward

Welcome to your Moving Forward journal. This journal has been designed to accompany Breast Cancer Now's Moving Forward course. Many of the activities inside were suggested, designed and developed by people who, like you, have had a diagnosis of breast cancer.

The journal is designed to help you think about and reflect on your experience of breast cancer, as this can help your recovery. You can come back to the journal in the future if you want to, to see how far you've come.

Your course facilitator will guide you through some of the activities during the course. There are also optional activities that you can do in your own time if you want to.

This is your journal to keep and to use in whatever way is helpful for you. We hope you enjoy the course.

ANGELA'S STORY

"I'm 56 now, and was 54 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer following a routine mammogram. I've got 2 grown up children and 3 grandchildren. We hadn't long relocated from the Midlands down to Somerset when I was diagnosed. It turned my world upside down.

The move has been brilliant because we've got a much slower pace of life. We're much healthier, and we can get out and walk on the beach. But the fact that we were living here meant that I hadn't got long-term friends and family on the doorstep.

I was a bit naive before. You hear about somebody getting cancer and think it's terrible, but you carry on with your daily life and you don't realise what goes on with them day-to-day.

I was told I didn't need chemotherapy and was instantly relieved. One of the first questions I had, even before I knew my treatment plan, was, 'am I going to lose my hair?' You feel relief, but then immediately, you've got appointments, and you've got to have this trace put in. You've got to have a magnetic thing. You've got to have biopsies. You'll have radiotherapy. And I think the second burning question was 'will I need a mastectomy?' In the end, I had a WLE (wide local excision) rather than a mastectomy. I feel grateful now for not having such a rough treatment path.



But when they say ‘it’s breast cancer’, it’s the same for everybody, regardless of the treatment you go through. And everybody’s treatment is different – the surgery, if you have medication, and how it affects you long-term. But going forward, there’s also, the worry of it coming back. Recurrence is a big thing in my head now, which I know now is natural. It doesn’t matter what the treatment is, how old you are, where you live or anything else – cancer is cancer.

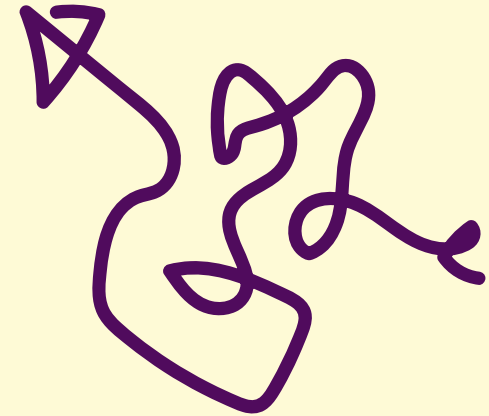
On my Moving Forward course there was a range of people. There was a lady that had had a double mastectomy and people just finishing chemotherapy, and all of our stories were valid. It’s just good to hear that other people are going through it too. And you’re not alone with the sleepless nights and the trauma that can come with a diagnosis of breast cancer.

I couldn’t say the word ‘cancer’ out loud to start with. But you need to talk, so don’t bottle it up. Connect with people who get it. I also called Breast Cancer Now’s Someone Like Me team and was matched with a lady a few years past her own diagnosis and treatment.

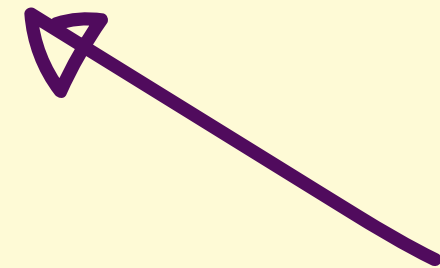
Since my treatment finished, it’s been important to me to look after my own health. I’ve made some lifestyle changes and do a lot of Yoga and Zumba. I’ve done a Zumbathon and Pink Ribbon Walk for Breast Cancer Now. I’ve got a dog, and that’s helped with my mental health. At Moving Forward, we set up a WhatsApp group, and me and another lady have started a local support group.

I can’t go back to the ‘old Ange,’ but I like the new me. I’m kinder to myself as well. I’m a quiet person, but, I don’t want to say ‘no’ to anything anymore. It feels strong – I’m powerful.”

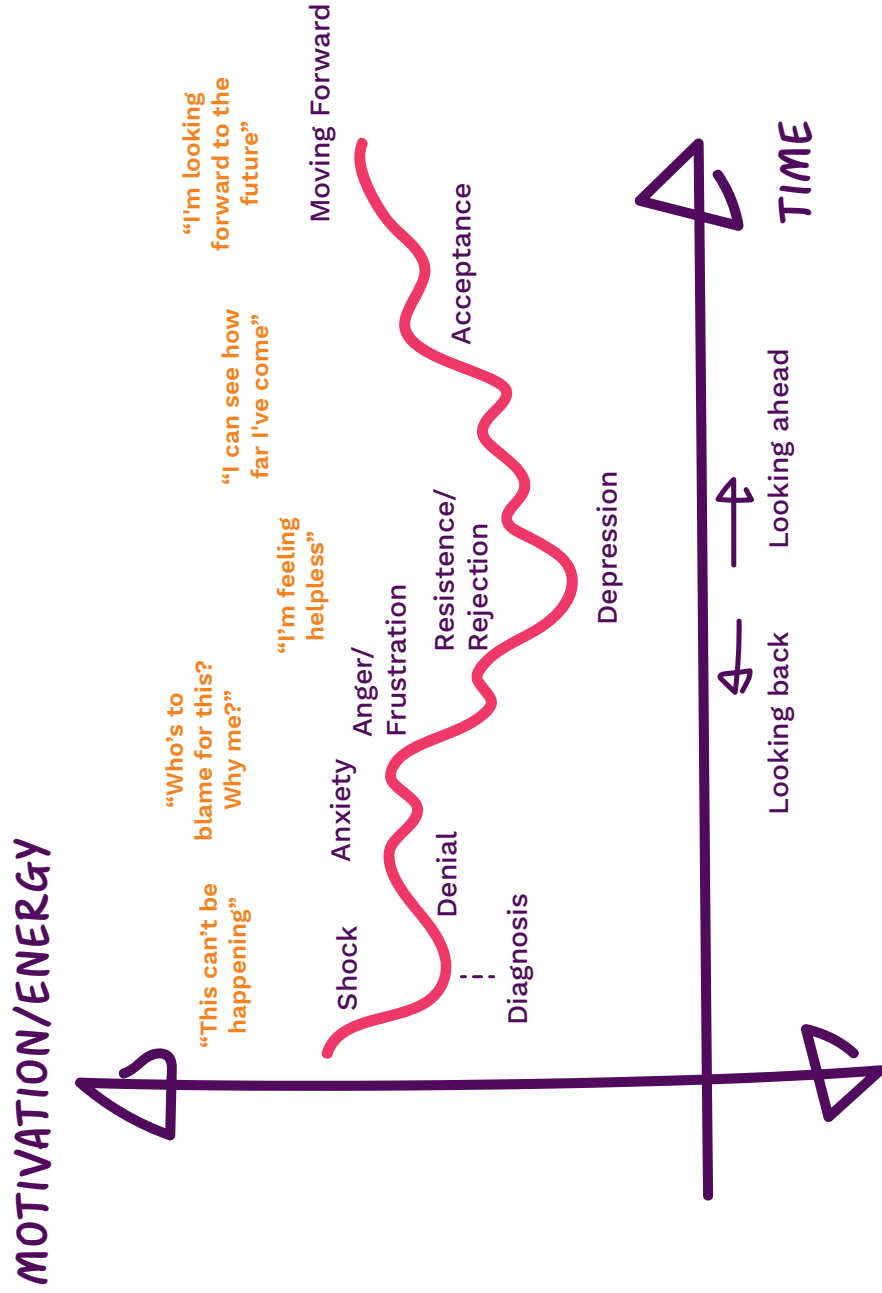
REALITY



EXPECTATIONS



KUBLER-ROSS CHANGE CURVE



This is the Kubler Ross change curve. It was developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a psychiatrist who studied cancer patients in the 1960s.

It's widely used to help explain our own and other people's emotional reaction to personal trauma and change, like being diagnosed with breast cancer. You might be familiar with it already, as it's often used to support people through change at work.

You might be able to relate to some or all of the feelings here. Although this shows a curve, you might not experience the emotions in this order, or for the same amount of time, and not necessarily one at a time. You might go backwards and forwards. Everyone's experience will be different. But over time, people usually feel able to look ahead and move forward.

- DOES THIS RESONATE WITH YOU?
- TRY PLOTTING WHERE YOU THINK YOU ARE ON THE CURVE TODAY
- YOU MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL TO COME BACK TO THIS AT A FUTURE DATE. YOU COULD MARK WHERE YOU ARE THEN, TO SEE HOW FAR YOU'VE COME AND THE EMOTIONS YOU'VE EXPERIENCED ALONG THE WAY

WHAT ARE YOU TAKING AWAY?

Use the space to write down one thing that you're taking away from the course today. It could be something you've learned, or something that you'd like to try. It's up to you!

"WHEN MY TREATMENT CAME TO AN END ABOUT A YEAR AFTER DIAGNOSIS, I LOOKED AND FELT LIKE A DIFFERENT PERSON. OF COURSE, I FELT RELIEVED IT WAS OVER, BUT THE HAPPINESS I EXPECTED TO FOLLOW JUST DID NOT ARRIVE. INSTEAD, I REMEMBER FEELING LOST, AFRAID, TIRED AND CONFUSED FOR WHAT TO DO NOW. '

Kirstie (diagnosed age 35)

PART 2
Reflection

Some people find that writing down how they feel can help them to move forward in their recovery. This part of the journal offers you the opportunity to do some reflection. To think about your experiences, thoughts, and feelings in new ways.

There's no right or wrong way to complete these activities, and it's up to you whether you do them. You won't be expected to share anything you do or write here at the Moving Forward course, but we hope you'll find something over the next few pages that's helpful for you.

ISABEL'S STORY

“At the age of 45, I was a wife, a mum of 2 boys and a cardiology nurse. I was shocked when I was diagnosed with grade 3, ER-positive breast cancer. Although both my mum and aunty had breast cancer, I still held out hope that it wouldn't happen to me.

After having a mastectomy and chemotherapy, I went on to take Tamoxifen. I was on it for 5 years, then opted to take it for another 2.

A year after finishing treatment, I went on a Moving Forward course. For the first year, I convinced myself I didn't need it. ‘I'll be fine’, I told myself. But then, after struggling with my anxiety, I realised I needed something else. I'm really glad I went on the Moving Forward course.

The anxiety that came after finishing treatment was tough. I felt ‘safer’ during chemotherapy because the drugs were going in every 3 weeks and killing any cancer cells that might still exist. Then suddenly, I finished chemotherapy, and I'm thinking of all the ‘what ifs’. I hadn't appreciated the impact it was going to have when I went back to work. My confidence was through the floor. I put on my uniform and just didn't look like ‘Isabel the nurse’ anymore. It had a massive impact on my identity too, because I lost that bit of my life. My work had been my safe space, a distraction. But I was determined that I wasn't going to stop working, because breast cancer wasn't going to take that from me.



The first step was getting help through therapy. Through this, I started to learn what I can do to help myself. Every little bit helps when it comes to mental health. Whether it's anxiety or depression, there's usually not one solution. I also found medication helpful, as well as talking to the people around me about how I felt.

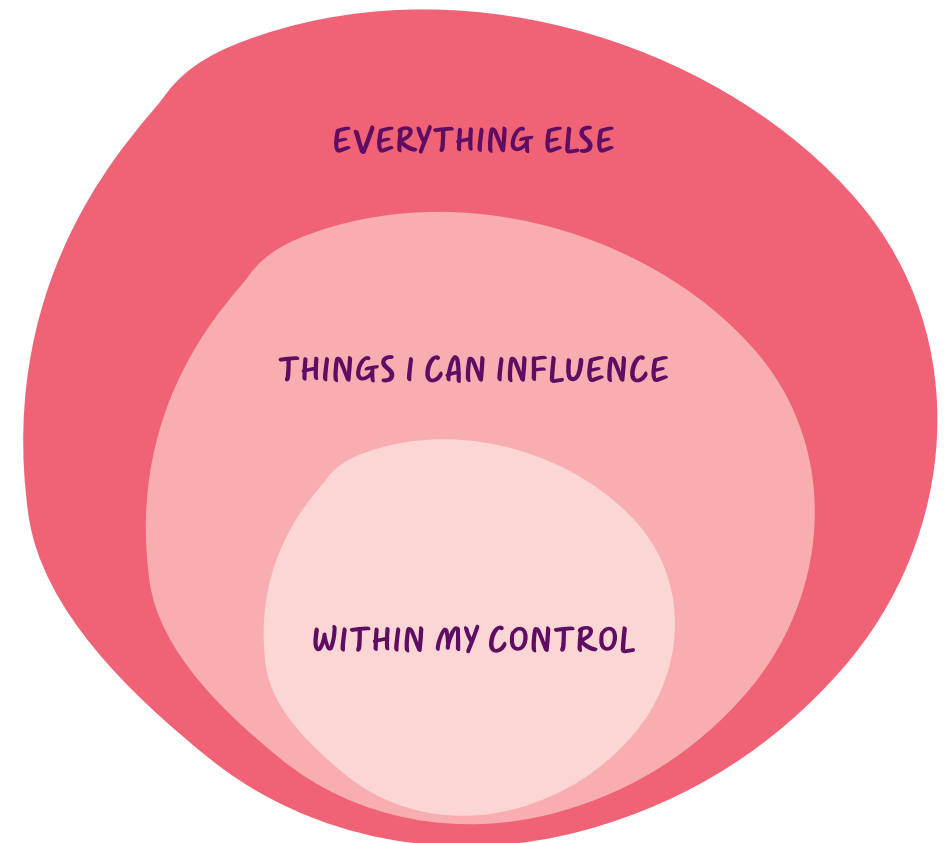
Exercise has been helpful for me, especially walking as it gets me outside. But it's difficult, isn't it, to put time aside for ourselves, especially as women and mothers. A lot of the time we put our own needs second, but there's a lot of information now about 'exercise snacking'. This is where you do bite size exercises, even just for 5 minutes.

Now, if I start to feel anxious because of something going on in my life or I've had a health scare, I do a bit of mindfulness, a body scan or some yoga. I've also learnt that when I get a new pain, instead of automatically panicking that my cancer's spread, I note it down in my diary to check in 2 or 3 weeks' time. Then if it's still there, I do something about it. Therefore, I'm not constantly thinking about it, which probably makes it worse. And 9 times out of 10, it's gone within a week because it's just a normal ache or pain that anybody can get.

It's been a long process, and I think initially a lot of those things were hard to do because I was so anxious. There's no magic bullet. As with everything, it just takes time, doing those little things and remembering that every little helps.

I have an existing chronic health condition, which has been tricky to deal with alongside cancer. After leaving work due to my ulcerative colitis, I was looking for something else to do without too much commitment, so I decided to become a Moving Forward volunteer. It's been part of getting my identity back. I like feeling that I can make a difference."

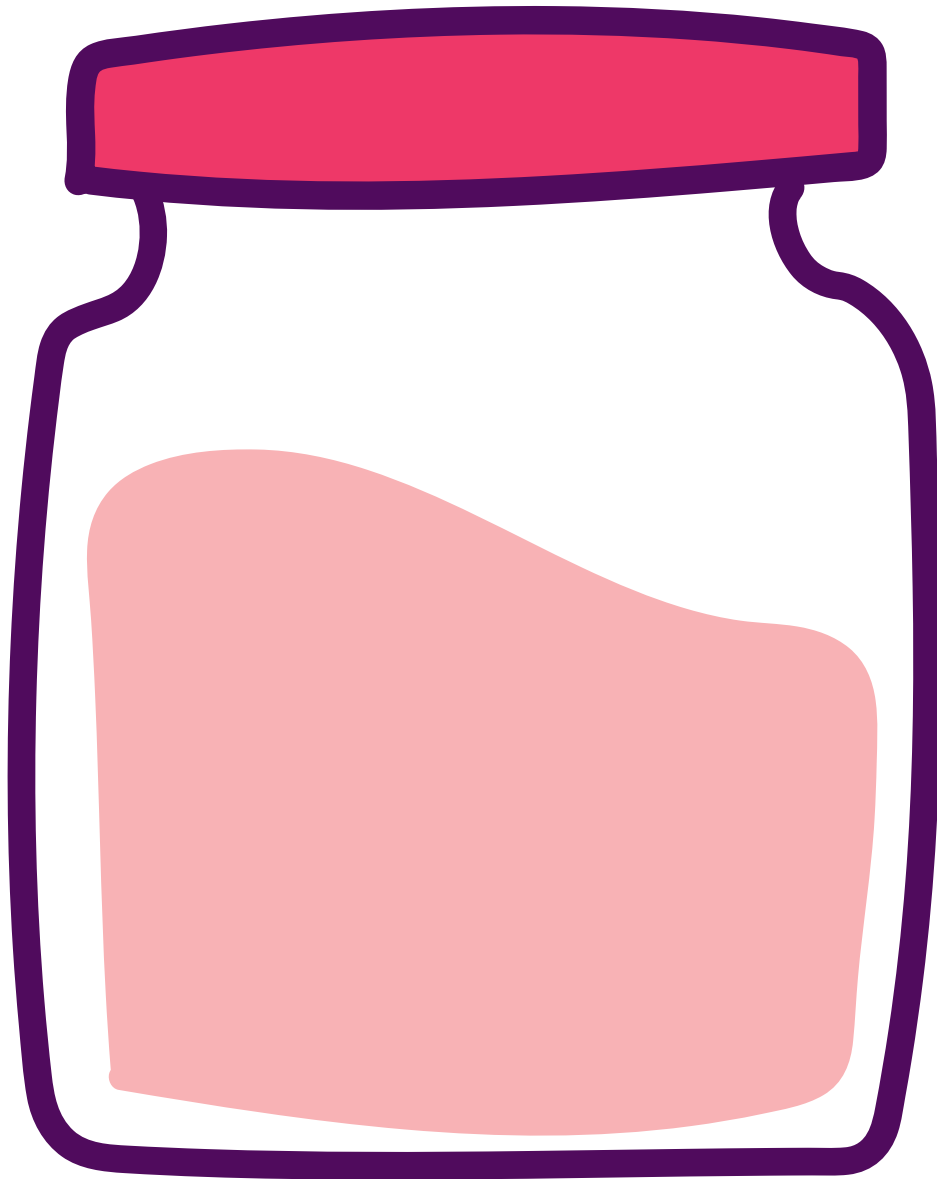
CIRCLE OF CONTROL AND WORRY



Where do you spend your time? For lots of us, it can be worrying about things that we have no control over. Think about a current fear or problem that is in your mind. Is it in your control? Can you affect the situation in any way (is it in your 'circle of influence')? Worrying about something constantly, that you can't do anything about is called rumination.

What would be a more useful way of spending your time and energy? Are there any changes you want to make?

THOUGHTS JAR



This jar is a space where you can write down any thoughts, feelings or hopes that might be harder to acknowledge or say. Writing can be a good way to process and accept your feelings, especially if you feel you can't say them out loud.

If you find you've got lots to put in your jar, you could think about starting a diary or journal, so that you can regularly give yourself time to reflect and process.

The practice of 'gratitude' can also make a big difference to your wellbeing. Gratuities are the little things that happen in a day that bring us joy. It doesn't diminish what you are going through, but instead turns your focus onto the positive.

Try thinking of 3 things you're grateful for each day, and write them here, in a journal, or put them in a jar. You can look at them again when you need a reminder of some of the things that make you happy.

CREATIVE WRITING

Fran was diagnosed with cancer in 2016 when she was 64. She used poetry to help her move forward after treatment.

“At first, I worried that everything I wrote was awful. But I shared it with friends who were so supportive, and eventually published a book of poetry about my experience to raise money for the hospital where I was treated.

It can be so hard to open up. But it's important to do so for every aspect of our lives, especially the more demanding times.”

LETTER TO YOURSELF

Think about writing a letter or a message to yourself, as something to look back on in the future. There aren't any restrictions on how far in the future you read it – it's up to you. It could include a quote or motto that resonates with you, a reminder of something important and valuable to you, or praise for reaching the goal you intend to achieve.

IDENTITY. HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

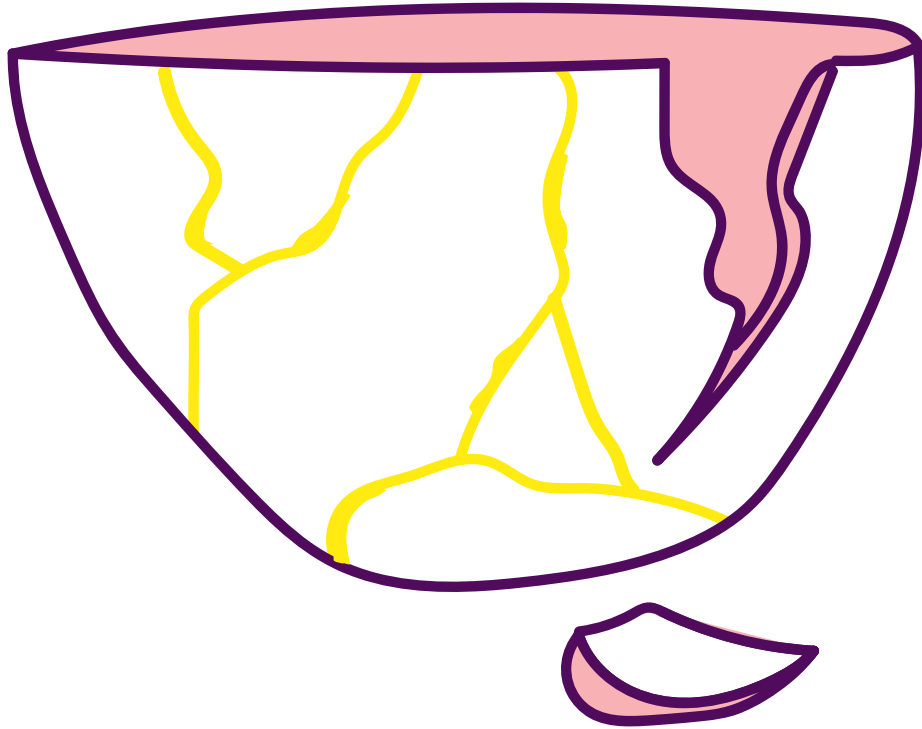
Our identity, how we see ourselves and our bodies after breast cancer can feel difficult. Isabel talks about how she struggled with her identity returning to work, in her case study on pages 13 and 14.

- HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF NOW?
- WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR BODY, IS IT IN WORDS, IMAGES OR SOMETHING ELSE?
- YOU CAN USE THE SPACE AT THE BACK OF YOUR JOURNAL TO DESCRIBE HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR BODY OR MIND USING DRAWINGS, PHOTOS OR WORDS

“I'M QUITE DIFFERENT TO HOW I USED TO BE, SO I'D SAY I'M ON MY WAY TO BECOMING A 'NEW NORMAL'. I NOW HAVE A GREATER RESPECT FOR THE FRAGILITY OF LIFE.”

Emma 31, Moving Forward volunteer
(diagnosed age 29)

KINTSUGI



In Japan, broken pottery is repaired with gold paint. This artform is known as kintsugi, which translates as “golden joinery”.

The cracks are part of the history of the piece and add to its beauty. They don't signify brokenness. They allow the pottery to be seen in a new light and to find new purpose.

- **DO YOU HAVE SCARS FROM TREATMENT?**
- **ARE THEY PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL?**
- **WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO YOU?**
- **DOES THINKING ABOUT KINTSUGI ALLOW YOU TO SEE YOUR SCARS IN A DIFFERENT WAY?**

Taking time to focus on your physical and mental health can have a significant impact on your overall wellbeing. The final part of your journal offers you the opportunity to explore topics that support your recovery and improve wellbeing.

LUCY'S STORY

“Before my diagnosis, I was a relatively fit and sporty mother of 2, wife and colleague. At age 43, I was told I had triple negative breast cancer. I remember that my nurse told me not to Google it, and I soon realised why. All I found was negative stories. At the time, I felt alone and sad.

When I first finished treatment, I was very concerned about what the long-term future held. I couldn't really see beyond a few months ahead. I felt quite alone and unsupported. What I hadn't appreciated is that I just got on with the treatment, after initially feeling terrified. You've got a plan, and you can just focus on that.

Then when you finish treatment, it's like 'off you go, you're fixed now, out into the big wide world'. I wasn't expecting to come crashing down quite so hard. I was worried about whether I was implementing lifestyle choices enough, whether I was doing enough, whether it was going to come back.

And then I went on the Moving Forward course. Listening to other people's stories, including the volunteers who had their own diagnosis years ago, helped me to normalise the way I was feeling.



And although I was probably the youngest on the course, the support from the other ladies in the group was incredible. I found them more supportive than many of my friends, because in the room there's empathy. I felt listened to and understood. They knew the right things to say.

Cancer used to be everything. It was overwhelming, just there all of the time. And for quite a long time, even probably until a year ago or less, it was still my everything. However, it's now a very small part of my day.

It's important to find some quiet time between the course and afterwards to think about what you want to focus on in your life, the changes that you want to make, and what you value. I looked through the book again recently, and it was a good reminder that I need to go back and pay attention to some of the things I wrote down.

Being a mum to young kids and working full time, my self-care disappeared. I'm now really focused on making sure that I take some time for myself. I prioritise a bit of downtime with a book or get a coffee, which I never did before.

I make sure that I prioritise time to exercise, because that just makes you feel good. Breast cancer has really made me think about my lifestyle and what I can do better to look after myself. In turn, that makes me a happier mum for my kids.

Regardless of the diagnosis and the trauma it brings, there can be positives that come out of having cancer. Looking back, it's made me re-evaluate everything and just focus on what's important."

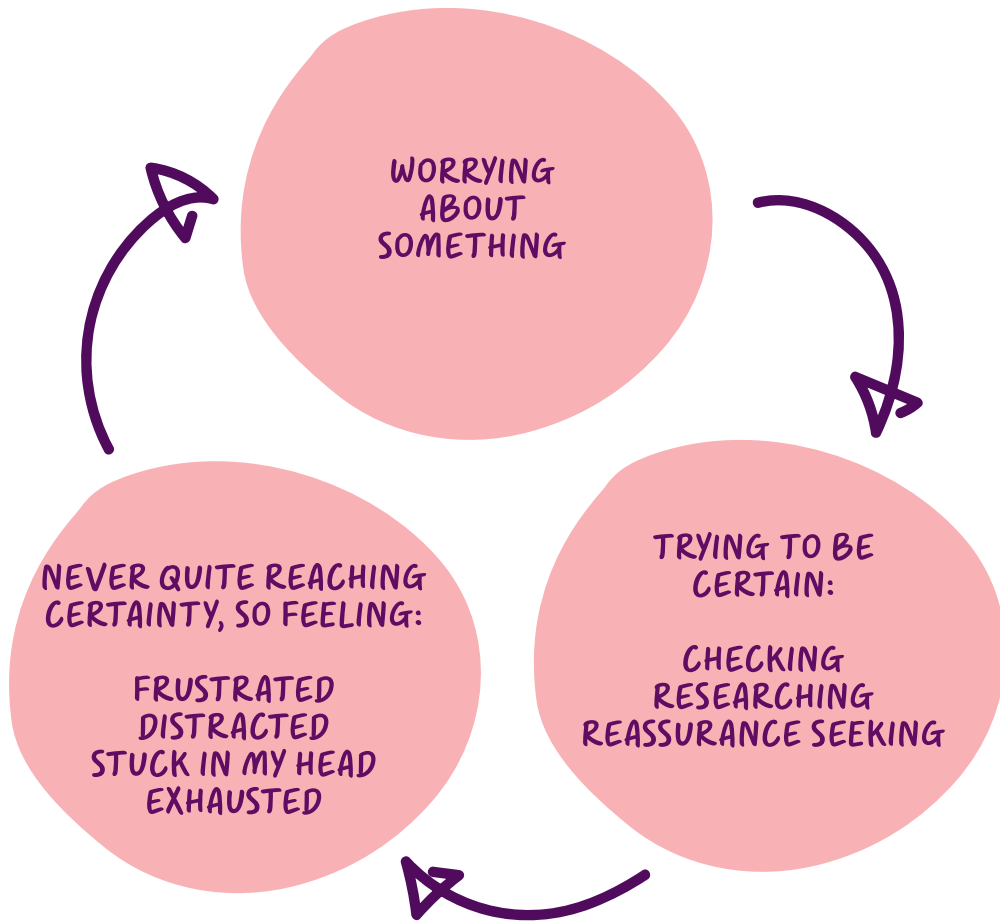
GROWTH AFTER DIAGNOSIS



Dr Lois Tonkin (writer and counsellor) came up with a model for loss and grief in 1996. It's a different way of looking at the shock and loss people can feel after a cancer diagnosis. It can be helpful to make sense of overwhelming feelings and to treat yourself with compassion.

A cancer diagnosis is a big thing. Trying to pretend it isn't, or that it doesn't impact your life is really hard work. So, as you finish your treatment and start to move forward, the idea is that you grow and develop, making your cancer diagnosis start to feel smaller and more manageable.

WORRY CYCLE



“Anxiety and worry are natural and normal, but we can find ourselves trapped in a cycle of overthinking. Noticing the cycle can help us break out of it.” – **Ted Bradshaw @cbtted**, ‘Where’s the Tiger?’

RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

How can we feel more resilient, more able to cope? Everyone is different, and the toolkit suggests different areas for you to look at. It’s helpful to have a think about what works for you. Try and add one or two things in each section. It’s then there when you need it. You can find out more information in our Emotional Wellbeing resource (information hub) and throughout the Moving Forward course.



5 WAYS TO WELLBEING



Evidence suggests that there are 5 steps people can take to improve their mental health, and that trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

The 5 steps are written below. You can use this space to note down anything you're already doing, or ideas that you want to try.

 **BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE. IT CAN CAUSE CHEMICAL CHANGES IN YOUR BRAIN THAT LIFT YOUR MOOD.**

 **GIVE TO OTHERS. ACTS OF KINDNESS CREATE POSITIVE FEELINGS AND A SENSE OF REWARD.**



LEARN NEW SKILLS. IT CAN BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE AND BUILD A SENSE OF PURPOSE.

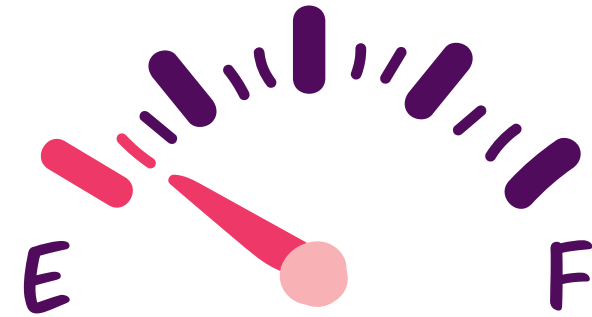


CONNECT WITH OTHERS. GOOD RELATIONSHIPS CAN GIVE YOU A SENSE OF BELONGING AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.



TAKE NOTICE. PAYING ATTENTION TO THE PRESENT MOMENT CAN HELP YOU FEEL LESS ANXIOUS.

ENERGY LEVELS AFTER TREATMENT



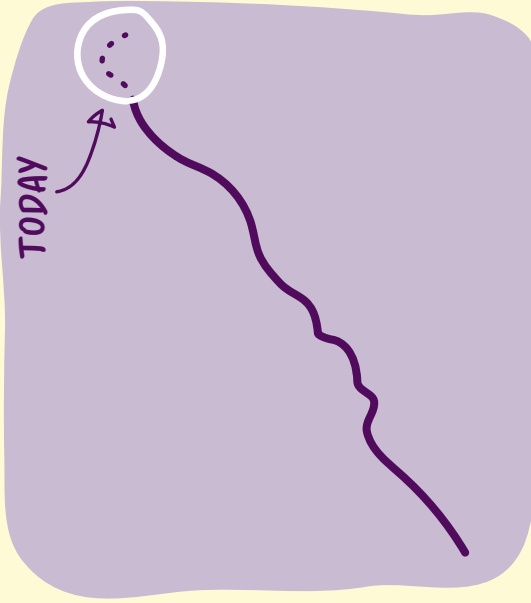
Everyone knows what it's like to feel worn out. But when you're recovering from breast cancer, fatigue and other physical and emotional side effects can really impact your wellbeing.

Sometimes it can feel like you have “nothing left in the tank”. This may be physically, if you're suffering from fatigue for example. Or it could be mentally, if you're experiencing low moods, anxiety or feeling overwhelmed. Often they affect each other – our physical and mental wellbeing go hand in hand.

The fuel gauge is a useful tool to help you stop and reflect on how you're feeling. Think about how you are today. Is your fuel gauge near the top, or perhaps hovering on empty? Or somewhere in between?

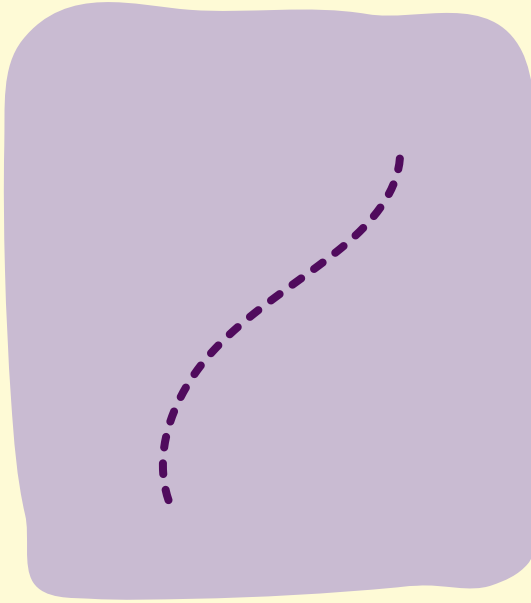
Other resources in this journal can help you explore this further: **What does a good day look like for you?** and **Ways to wellbeing**. If you struggle with fatigue, keeping a fatigue diary can help you to spot activities that are draining, so that you can plan your time and build in rest.

- IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO TOP UP YOUR TANK?
- WHAT USES UP MOST FUEL?



TODAY

DISTRACT YOU FROM
THE PROGRESS
YOU'VE MADE




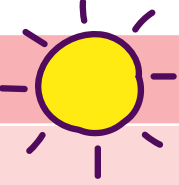
DON'T LET A BAD DAY

@lizandmollie

WHAT DOES A GOOD DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

Use the template to help you think about what good days and bad days look like for you.

What steps can you take that lead to more better days and fewer bad days?

BAD DAY 	GOOD DAY 



WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO HAVE MORE GOOD DAYS AND FEWER BAD DAYS?

SET YOUR INTENTIONS

When the Moving Forward course comes to an end, we'd like to invite you to think about how you'll use the tools and information that the course has given you, so you can keep moving forward positively.

Setting an intention means stating what you intend to achieve through your actions. It's something you plan and want to do, or a process you go through. Your goal, purpose, or aim is your intention.

Perhaps you intend to start paying attention to the present moment more, to help you feel less anxious. How might you do this? How will you know when you've succeeded?

Perhaps you want to connect more with friends or family. What support do you need to do that? What does connection mean to you?

Perhaps you want to become more active, but you're struggling at the moment - you might set a goal of walking to the end of the road. Once you've achieved that you can set a new goal to walk around the block, then to the local park.

If you decide to set yourself a goal, be sure to make it realistic. Small goals in the short term can be a step towards achieving bigger goals later on, and it all depends where you're starting from.

HOW I'LL KNOW I'VE SUCCEEDED	
WHAT SUPPORT I NEED	
MY INTENTION	

WHAT'S NEXT?

We hope that you've enjoyed the Moving Forward course. If you've found it helpful to reflect on and share your experiences, you might like to keep going. There are lots of different ways to journal. It's up to you what your journal looks like and what's inside. You could:

- **WRITE YOUR OWN STORY, LIKE ANGELA, ISABEL AND LUCY**
- **KEEP A DIARY ABOUT YOUR DREAMS**
- **KEEP A RECORD OF HOBBIES AND ACTIVITIES, LIKE BOOKS YOU'VE READ OR PLACES YOU'VE TRAVELLED TO**
- **NOTE DOWN THINGS YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR AT THE END OF EACH DAY**

You could also reflect how you're feeling through art, poetry or music.

And don't forget, even though the Moving Forward course has ended, Breast Cancer Now's support doesn't end here. Your course facilitator will tell you more, and you can always find us online or on the phone.

BREASTCANCERNOW.ORG **HELPLINE: 0808 800 6000**

"DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF AND EXPECT YOURSELF TO BOUNCE BACK TOO QUICKLY. YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH AND ALTHOUGH IT'S A CLICHÉ, TIME MOST CERTAINLY IS A HEALER."

**Dawn 45, Moving Forward volunteer
(diagnosed age 43)**

VOLUNTEERING, ZAHIDA'S STORY

Some people that attend the Moving Forward course later go on to become one of our volunteers, sharing their experience and supporting others. If you'd like to know more about volunteering with us, have a chat with the volunteers at your course or go to

breastcancernow.org/volunteer-us

Zahida was 36 when she was diagnosed.

"When you get diagnosed with something – be it cancer or something else – you tend to gravitate towards people that are like you. When I was told I had cancer, I couldn't find anyone else. This is because there's a taboo surrounding cancer in BAME communities.

As I couldn't reach out to my family support network, even though we're usually very close, cancer was the loneliest period in my life. Had I not stumbled across the Someone Like Me service, I don't know how I would've got through it.

I was able to speak to Gillian, a lovely lady from a BAME background with exactly the same diagnosis as me. I can't begin to tell you the impact that first call had on me. I went from thinking, 'How am I going to get through this?' to 'If Gillian can do this, so can I.'

I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off me. I was empowered. I never looked back from that moment.



WITH THANKS TO

Claudia Knowles

Zahida Ramzan-Asghar

Isabel Blackburn

Lucy Burton

Angela Murphy

and the many volunteers, facilitators, staff
and attendees whose shared experience has
helped shape this resource.

Contact our
breast care nurses
0808 800 6000

**BREAST
CANCER
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BCN257

