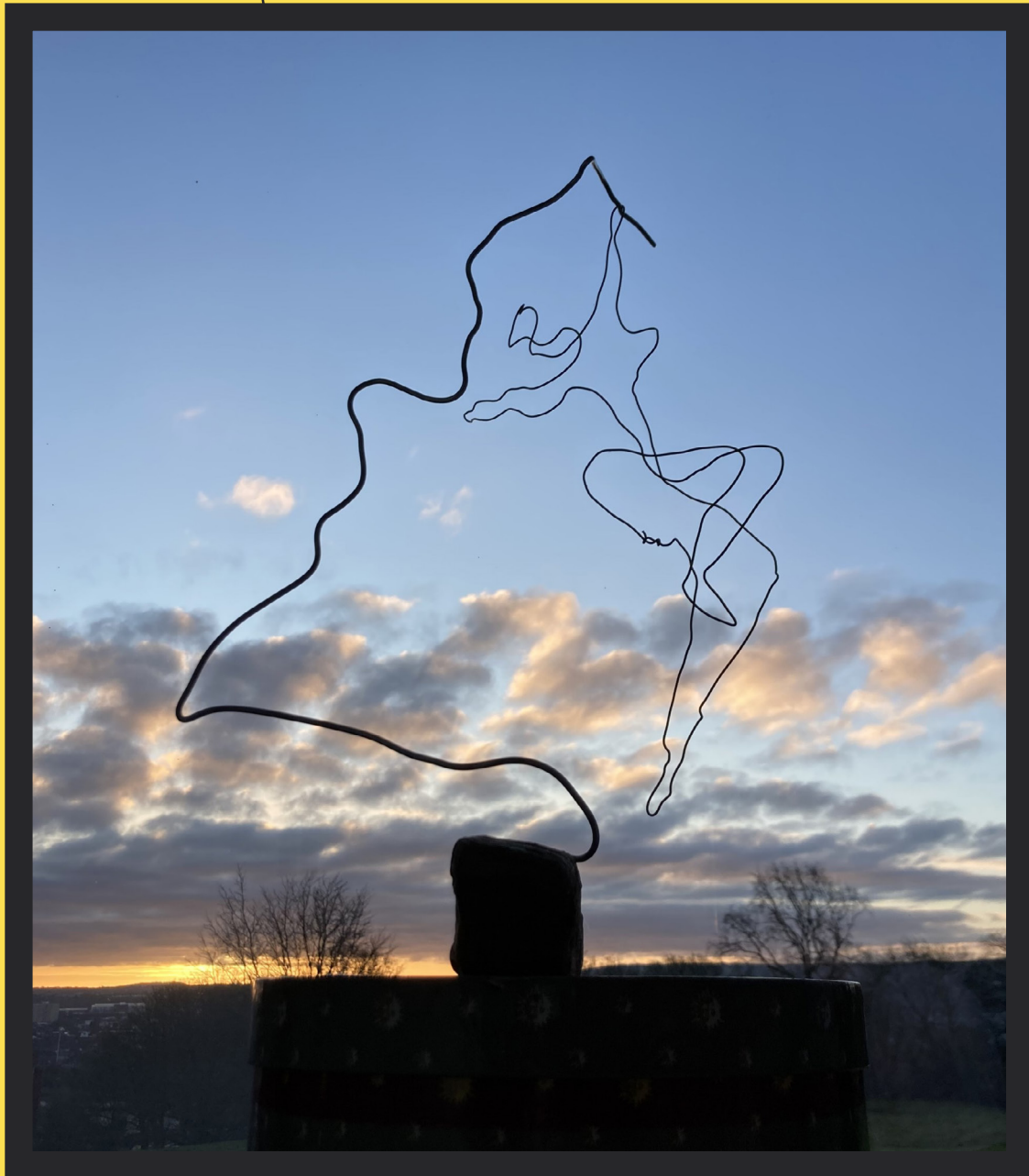


# flourish

A **FREE** creative magazine by and for the cancer community



● What balances you? Our contributors answer

● How creativity can help make sense of a cancer diagnosis and bring communities together

● A never-seen before piece by author Graham Joyce

● How an integrative approach to cancer can help us find balance

**THE BALANCE ISSUE**

# flourish

Flourish Magazine is a joint venture between integrative cancer care charity Yes to Life and creative health charity Artlift and funded by Arts Council England, aiming to explore the benefits of an integrative and creative approach to living with cancer.

The magazine is created with the support of a steering group that includes people living with cancer and partners Macmillan, Macmillan Next Steps and Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust.

It features a range of creative responses, expert information and interviews in each themed edition that offer support and represent the diversity of the cancer community.

## Artlift

[artlift.org](http://artlift.org)

Artlift is a Gloucestershire based specialist creative health charity co-producing projects and courses for people living with mental health challenges, long-term chronic pain and/or who are living with or moving on from cancer.

Twitter [@ArtliftB](https://twitter.com/ArtliftB)

Instagram [@ArtsOnPrescription](https://www.instagram.com/ArtsOnPrescription)

Facebook [@ArtstoMakeYouFeelBetter](https://www.facebook.com/ArtstoMakeYouFeelBetter)

## Yes to Life

[yestolife.org.uk](http://yestolife.org.uk)

Yes to Life is the UK's integrative cancer care charity, which empowers people with cancer to make informed decisions about their care options. For well over a decade, we have provided evidence-based information to those in need.

Twitter [@YesToLife](https://twitter.com/YesToLife)

Instagram [@yestolifecharity](https://www.instagram.com/yestolifecharity)

Facebook [@YesToLifeCharity](https://www.facebook.com/YesToLifeCharity)

Thanks to Jason Conway, Editor of Steel Jackdaw for his support and to The Cancer Hive for the inspiration.

## The Balance Issue

**Hello and welcome to the fourth issue of Flourish Magazine, a magazine by and for the cancer community from integrative cancer care charity Yes to Life and creative health charity Artlift, who are based in Gloucestershire.**

This issue's theme is the ever-important, but ever-elusive, 'Balance'. The content featured in each issue of the magazine is received via an open call (see the inside of the back cover for how to submit to our next issue) and I always love seeing how the theme is interpreted by our contributors. The incredible artwork, photography, craft, essays and creative writing in this issue do a better job than I ever could of showing that balance means something different to all of us, and perhaps is not something we can ever fully grasp.

Balancing the personal and the professional, the mind and the body, the head and the heart – it's a challenge for us all – but throw a cancer diagnosis into the mix and it becomes an even bigger feat. When we're going through treatment, supporting someone with cancer, or coping with grief – is balance still possible?

The submissions in this issue show the ways in which creativity, nature, community and movement help to balance us, but also demonstrate how part of finding balance is allowing things to get a little unbalanced, to accept the inevitable tilt of the scales, even if just for a moment.

We always aim to show the breadth, diversity and truth of the cancer experience, meaning that some of the content we've featured is dark and challenging in tone. We have provided content warnings throughout, so that readers can choose what they feel able to engage with.

In this issue we were fortunate to run a creative workshop with women who have experienced cancer from different communities in the South West through health organisations Sirona and CAAFI. The workshop and accompanying resources are featured in a pull-out, so that we can offer translated versions of this feature and our resources to these communities, many of whom do not speak English as a first language.

If you have a moment, we'd love it if you could tell us what you thought of the magazine in our short survey by scanning the QR code on the back cover. Thank you for reading!

**Natalie Beech**  
Editor-in-Chief

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# What balances you?

We asked this issue's contributors what moves them in their daily lives.

Here's what they had to say...



"Water, time with myself, making art, freedom, being next to my loved ones, stepping out of my comfort zone, living."

"What balances me can be summed up in one word: 'DIVERSITY'. Diversity in food, exercise, friends, entertainment and volunteering."



"Spending time with myself balances me the most."

"Having a connection with the soil on my allotment where I am lucky enough to grow both food and flowers"



"I think the thing that balances me whenever I'm stressed is a long walk, either alone, just me and my dog Alice or with friends."

"Having a connection with the soil on my allotment where I am lucky enough to grow both food and flowers."

"I find balance in giving my time to others as well finding time for myself."

"I balance myself by writing everything down and weighing things up with poetry and lists of good / bad and advantages / disadvantages."

"Inspiration; deep, full senses fluidity, embodying nature's freedom, the compassion rose, connecting, joyfully letting go (mercifully) exhaling, sweetly half smile, cathartic creative calm, all wrapped in this melodious moment."

"My morning meditation and yoga practise are pretty important for balancing me."

"Self-care, where ME becomes the priority. It may be a home facial; getting a massage; cooking a nourishing meal for one; journaling; taking a walk in the woods or simply going to bed earlier."

"My husband balances me. When I am running on high and life is hectic, he grounds me and keeps my feet on the floor!"

"Creating a sense of 'spaciousness' in my life; whether that is mindful meditation, being in nature or sitting by the sea, snuggles in bed with my boys and hearing about their day, or just learning to be better at saying no to things."

"Being creative, with the support of wonderful like-minded friends who share their makes, inspirations and gently encourage each other, provides me with a distraction from the day to day of treatment and helps to balance me."





# Finding my way home

Artwork and Poetry by Baz Lotus

Finding my way home to me  
To me  
Why is it my heart's a mystery to me

I lost myself along the track  
Now I know I'm coming back to where I'm  
meant to be

I found strength somewhere inside  
To carry on this earthly ride  
And now I'm feeling free  
So free

**Listen to Barry's song Finding My Way Home on the Artlift ([www.artlift.org](http://www.artlift.org))  
and Yes to Life ([www.yestolife.org.uk](http://www.yestolife.org.uk)) websites.**

Finding the way home  
To me, to me  
I've found a better way  
NVC, NVC,

I lost myself along the track  
But now I know I'm coming back  
To where I'm meant to be

I found the strength somewhere inside  
Now I'm free no need to hide  
My heart is on my sleeve





Have you ever felt like you were hanging in the balance? Unsure where either side would take you? Get still. Listen to your gut. Trust what you hear. And take that first step.

**Image and Words by Jill Goehringer**  
Follow Jill on Instagram at [@illbag](#)



I made this sculpture of the Billy Goats Gruff for our local Community Larder.

So balance? Both my lovely troll, balancing the bridge on her muscly arms and the Larder working alongside supermarkets to improve the balance of usable food not ending up as landfill. And you know the best bit? When I'd finished creating it, I ate it for my tea!

**Image and Words by Carolyn Gemson**

# New Year

By Beth Kellie

We sit here doing nothing on the precipice of a new year. Although constantly niggling at my thoughts, there is no motivation to share grand statements or videos, no words to publicly frame the last year and no clever inspirational memes to spring us into January.

Every one of those seconds of 2023 bought us to here, through an abundance of love, a deeper understanding and appreciation of each of us and many moments of joy and adventure. But the challenges were fierce, destructive, annihilating and at times almost consumed us. Yet we are still here, ending the year on a note of quiet awareness and gratitude.

Our therapists, family and friends continue to be the props that keep our heads above water, they help us to dodge the puddles of life that threaten to soak us. We cling on to the glimmers of hope that there is sunshine to come in the Spring. Please let 2024 be the year that lets us recover and move on from childhood cancer.



These were my creative makes for 2023 – it's how I find my balance – creativity.

**Artwork and text by Beth Kellie**

**Beth lives in Cheltenham with her nine year old son, who has been on treatment for Leukaemia for three years.**

Content warning: this piece contains references to surgery and mental health that some readers may find difficult.

If you are going through surgery or mental health difficulties and need support, please see the resources in the pull-out in this magazine.

# From Burnout to Balance

A personal journey of insight and enlightenment  
By Nina Bhirangi-Bishop

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2018. At the time my beautiful boys were just six and nine years old. To say it was a shock for me and my family is somewhat of an understatement. I underwent a skin-sparing mastectomy and reconstructive surgery, and have continued with hormone therapy medication since then.

It has taken me until now, with the loving support and understanding of those closest to me, to fully understand that for me, having lived experience of cancer is both a blessing and a curse. It woke me up to what I needed in my life; balance, passion, purpose and to be able to find my power again.

'Burnout' has been recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and has been defined as

"a state of physical and emotional exhaustion which can occur when you experience long-term stress". On reflection, I think I was spiralling into burnout long before my cancer diagnosis. With a young family and an emotionally demanding job helping to support vulnerable young people, I put myself and my own needs behind that of others. My fast-paced lifestyle, my toxic need for productivity and



perfectionism, together with low self-esteem, left me feeling stressed, anxious, overwhelmed and exhausted.

The cancer diagnosis forced me to press pause on my life and jump off the hamster wheel that I felt so compelled to be on. With the impact of the hormone therapy, my anxiety levels became debilitating. I was lucky enough to be in a position to take a mid-career break, so I decided to invest in myself and take some time for reflection and healing. I realised I had focused so hard on recovering from cancer and getting back to normal, that I hadn't really processed the pain of my experience. A moment came almost a year ago when I broke down to close friends and family, in a state of complete self-inefficiency. I realised I was really not okay.

I began to consider my legacy and had a powerfully motivating urge to find and share my voice and experiences. In a bid to try and embrace my uniqueness, I committed to

exploring my creative self again, something which I had long put to bed. I started writing, and was lucky enough to have some poetry published. I began therapy, I took part in a local community theatre production, I painted, took pottery lessons, and I danced. I also volunteered at a local theatre, to upskill and challenge myself. I did anything I could to find joy again, and to remember what actually lit me up and inspired me.

The road to finding balance has been far from linear. In the last few years, I have felt consumed by anxiety. I have been worrying about the cancer coming back, and managing intrusive thoughts about dying, but I realised within all of this experience, I had forgotten how to truly live.

The most meaningful insights for me have been genuine acceptance and authentic self-love. What I mean by this is the fierce and loyal self-compassion, needed to consciously

create the life I want to lead. I am learning to listen to my body, quiet my mind with kindness and love and do what makes me happy. I feel more empowered to step away from things that don't lift me up, or no longer serve me. It is still a journey to find out what those things truly are and enjoy my guilty pleasures, with a little less of the guilt!

Accepting myself for where I am now and not where I think I should be, has been challenging, particularly in managing the anxiety and its impact.

Now, I try to think about what anxiety is waking me up to. I seek support and reassurance when needed and even if I don't always have the motivation or self-belief, I try to take small steps of positive forward action to keep going with my goals and aspirations.

For me in the quest to discover balance, I hope to find resilience, for all that life throws at me, and to have the hope and courage to live a life I love.





Content warning:  
This piece contains  
references to grief

that some readers may  
find difficult. If you are  
grieving and in need of  
support, please see the  
resources in the pull-out  
in this magazine.

# Wild Geese Stems

Poetry, Photo & Sculpture by Joss James

You have flown home my love  
Gone, gone, gone beyond  
and I shall join you there someday  
You will never hold or kiss me again  
And yet we sit, still together  
in the sublime notes of Mozart.

Tell me how to survive my grief  
How to be patient and tender as you were  
I found, you'd found  
"I can't go on, I go on"  
And wept with love and recognition.  
This being human can be so hard.

Meanwhile waves continue to  
crash onto the shore  
Flowers, songs and dances bloom and fade,  
Meanwhile hearts continue to break,  
tapestries unravel, fabric unweaves  
Space opens, revealing raw  
wounds and hidden places  
Whoever can invite a sweet  
healing in, may taste new joys  
As here, ragged and raw at the crossroads,  
new possibilities are born.

Inspired by 'Wild Geese' by Mary Oliver



Content warning:  
This piece contains  
references to  
chemotherapy that some  
readers may find difficult. If  
you are receiving treatment  
and in need of support,  
please see the resources  
in the pull-out in this  
magazine.



# Pessimism and Optimism

By Graham Joyce

Sharp scratch. That phrase you hear over and over. It means a multitude of things. You have a blood test and they say, "sharp scratch". You get canulated and they say the same. Though there's a world of difference in how much it hurts. If you're going to be like that about it and make it mean different things, well, cancer is a sharp scratch.

Sharp scratch. I'm having a sharp scratch on the Day Ward at the infirmary. I'm having a blood transfusion and they have to get the stuff in somehow, so it's sharp scratch time. Some of the nurses have such a gentle manner with getting the needle in that I want to kiss them. Others have the touch of a Rugby prop-forward.

If you've ever taken cancer rather personally, you just have to take stock of the hundreds of people receiving treatment to realise it's all just part of the

human condition.

On the Day Ward we are all pretty crammed in. We occupy chairs and it reminds me of those old-fashioned ladies hairdressing salons, where they all read magazines while having their hair fried, boiled or permed under the sinister domes of drying machines.

On one side of me is a sweet, talkative lady and on the other side is a grumpy man in his seventies. Were these two carefully placed either side of me – by the nurses, or by some supernatural power – to listen and learn? One is what you might call a gloomy pessimist; the other is his living, breathing passionate opposite.

"Oh I hate this," he says. "All this."

"Do you?" she says sweetly and with a gentle smile. "You know it's not so bad and think of it this way: it's better than what would happen if you didn't have the treatment."

"But you're so tied down, I hate it."

"Well you can read a book, listen to the radio, have a conversation with those around you, take a nice little nap, think of all your nice memories. There's lots you can do."

"I hate the place."

"It's become home-from-home for me. And the nurses and doctors are so nice."

"You think so?"

"Oh yes. And they're so

busy but they stay kind."

"The food is awful."

"It could be better but look at it like this: someone cooked it for you and you don't have to do any washing up!"

On and on it goes. For every complaint Pessimism comes up with, Optimism has a reply. She's suffering from aggressive cancer, just like he is, and she's not giving an inch. She's not letting him get away with it. After a while of this, Pessimism concedes defeat by closing his eyes. He's either pretending to sleep having been talked into silence or he's now having a "nice little nap".

The lady turns to me with a sparkle in her eye. "What type of cancer do you have?" she asks.

**Graham William Joyce was a British writer of speculative fiction and the recipient of numerous awards, including the O. Henry Award and the World Fantasy Award, for both his novels and short stories.**

**Joyce sadly passed away in 2014. He had been diagnosed with lymphoma in 2013 and wrote many pieces on his experience of cancer. This piece has been kindly shared by his wife Sue Joyce and is published for the first time in Flourish Magazine. We'd like to thank Sue for sharing his work with us.**



Content warning:  
These pieces  
contain references  
to death and grief that some  
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you are in need of support,  
please see the resources in  
the pull-out in this magazine.

# Staying Alive: A Book of Hope

Poetry by Women Living with Advanced Cancer

I'm Rachel Woods, 54 years old and living with Secondary Breast Cancer, HER2+, for nearly five years.

Two years ago I answered an advert at my local hospice St David's to join a writing group that was held on zoom. Seren Haf, a dramatherapist living with Secondary Breast Cancer, led the group. Each month we'd look at a poem, song, picture and these prompted our writings. I thoroughly enjoyed our meetings and was amazed by the profound writing our group created. We were a group of five, with one thing in common: secondary cancer. Seren collated our writings and we printed our book, *Staying Alive: A Book Of Hope - Poetry by women living with advanced cancer*.

The book was launched in Spring 2023 and I have

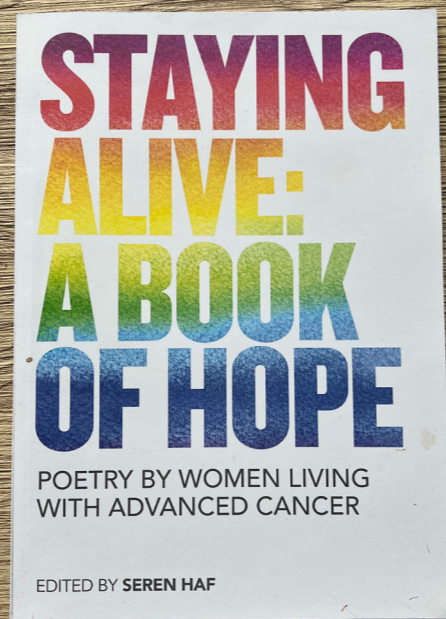
been blown away by its success. Our book raises money for three charities, Velindre Cancer Centre, St Davids Hospice and Make2ndsCount. We are hoping the book will raise awareness of living with secondary cancer, and as three of us have SBC, we wanted to fund a charity that directly supports advanced breast cancer and ongoing research. We are fundraising for Make2ndsCount, as we felt it not only offers a range of support services for those of us living with this disease, but runs the innovative patient trials scheme, a crucial service for any of us looking at treatment options.

This project has not only given me the opportunity to become an author (and tick that off the many things I want to achieve in my life) but has enabled me to express deeply painful emotions surrounding my prognosis,

clarifying the confusion and bewilderment I initially felt. I have made wonderful friendships who continue to offer me love and support.

We dedicated our book to Charlene, who unfortunately died whilst we were still writing. Lorraine died eight weeks after we published, my greatest memory is of us all at the book launch reading our poems to over sixty people. Lorraine and I held hands under the table, to try and help my nerves. It has been an honour to create our book with my wonderful friends, Seren, Jill, Lorraine and Charlene.

**If you'd like to support the project by buying a book, please email Rachel on [lovepeaceandponies@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lovepeaceandponies@hotmail.co.uk)**



# De novo Metastatic

By Rachel Woods

So, I joined the train too late and bypassed the ticket booth, the platform, ticket collection and sped full speed to my 1st class carriage, destination final,

destruction being my unfortunate fate,

The end is my end, the vicious medicine contains it, prolongs it, it will not stop it, its terminal, its incurable, its advanced, racing through my veins, unstoppable, yet treatable

My Cancer Train

"Doesn't everything die at last and too soon?"

Tell me what it is you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

The Reaper, grimly, with his scythe has stalked me, casting shadows on my shoulder, is this since

I've learnt the cancer resides in my body or has he always been there, whilst I've remained blissfully unaware that, "doesn't everything die at last and too soon"?

The urge to ensure and experience the very best of me, I throw myself into each moment, immerse myself into plans and schemes, abandon myself to the now,

rather than dwell in the uncertainty of my incurable cancer situation,

The urgency of my panicking mind, the what is, the what ifs, the what might, what has, what did, what didn't, what could, what may, what was, I leave my mind rattling on, I'm exhausted with it,

As Autumn lets go and releases, Her song begins, as the Oak sheds her golden leaves, that languidly spiral to the woodland floor, I behold the beauty in this moment's dawn and casually tree-like let everything else slip away

Living, whilst Leaving

my perfect, wild and precious life, my beautiful self

**From 'Staying Alive: A Book of Hope - Poetry by Women Living with Advanced Cancer'.**

Content warning:  
This piece contains references to grief that some readers may find difficult. If you are grieving and in need of support, please see the resources in the pull-out in this magazine.



# Balance and grief

By Phillipa Anders

I always thought I knew what it meant to have 'a balanced life'. I had a fulfilling job, a loving husband, two wonderful children, time together,

time apart, adventures near and far... Yet, since losing my husband very suddenly to a brain tumour three years ago, I have come to learn

so much more about balance: what it really is, how hard it can be, how precious it is, and how much it contributes to a healthy and fulfilled life.

Balance for me aligns closely with priorities. I realise now that my priorities were upside down. They were unhealthy weighted towards my job. The job was at the top, I was at the bottom and my husband and children were somewhere in the middle. I had no time to really focus on what I wanted, to make good choices about my life, the kind of life I wanted for me and for my family.

It seems that wisdom can come from loss. We become aware of the fragility of life, the value of each day, that tomorrow isn't promised. 'Memento Mori' provides a stark reminder of our mortality – "remember that you must die" – a reminder to live our best lives. To live a life every day that we would be proud of if it turned out to be our last.

These are the ways in which I am actively working on this by choosing to find balance in my life, in a very different way from before:

## Thrive or survive

Grabbing opportunities when they come. Balancing crushing low-confidence and anxiety with finding



the strength to go after life. Feeling the fear but doing it anyway! Feeling the joy from new experiences, and wanting to honour those we have lost by living our best life.

## The firsts

Moving forward into a new chapter of my life and the first time I do something familiar without my husband. The first time I do something totally new. The balance of old traditions versus building new ones. The balance of staying connected to the past whilst looking ahead to the future. The balance of keeping precious memories close, whilst being brave enough to build new ones.

## A healthy work/life balance

Realising that a job doesn't define who we are, but it is instead just part of what we do. Realising that success at work doesn't necessarily make us fulfilled. Understanding that a large salary doesn't equal happiness. Realising that it can be the simple things in life that can bring us joy.

## Cherishing our time

Acknowledging that one of the most important gifts in life is time – time for others, time for ourselves, time to make choices, time to have adventures, time to find the positives, time to be grateful, time to notice.

Of course, there are challenges every day. I'm learning to live with and

balance complex emotions. I'm learning how to balance the support I need to give my children whilst also ensuring I support myself.

I'm striving every day to live a life that balances the values my husband lived through – courage and kindness – no matter how hard it feels. As values, these are both individually impactful and when they are combined, they become supercharged! We become the kind of person that says the difficult things, stands up for what they believe in, isn't a push over, speaks out when there is injustice. We become the kind of person that you want as a friend – someone who is there for you no matter what, who isn't scared to say the difficult stuff, who has your back, but holds you to account.

How do we balance courage and kindness in how we treat ourselves, in how we treat others, in how we treat the world around us? Does it take a loss to finally learn these lessons? Would it have happened anyway? Who knows – but it's a journey I'm on, whether I like it or not.

Ultimately, I draw strength from remembering the balance of love and grief: the deeper we love, the deeper we grieve. The deeper we grieve, the more determined we become to honour our loved ones by living our best lives.

**Find out more about Phillipa and her work at [www.phillipaanders.com](http://www.phillipaanders.com)**



**By Alexia Dobre**

My name is Alexia Dobre and I'm a Romanian fine artist and designer based in Bristol. Nine years ago my aunt, who was also one of my best friends, was diagnosed with cancer. After a long fight (of which I was unaware because I was a child) she passed away at just 30 years old.

It's odd how time works. There are days when I feel like it was just yesterday, but that also means I sometimes feel like it was just yesterday that I was having an amazing adventure with her. The light that she brought into my life will never fade

away. She was an example to me of courage, curiosity, perseverance, passion and power. She inspired me so much!

Many of my artworks are inspired by what she meant to me and what she taught me. I usually paint landscapes and natural elements, the beautiful nature of this world, where I can still feel her presence after all this time. I'd love to have the chance to thank her for everything.

**See more of Alexia's work on Instagram at @alexia27\_arts**

**Content warning:** This piece contains references to grief that some readers may find difficult. If you are grieving and in need of support, please see the resources in the pull-out in this magazine.

# Balancing the Colours of Life

**By Josephine Smith**

The linear colours,  
Stretching, a haze.  
Red ochre, shimmering,  
Fluorescent, ablaze.

I lift my face,  
To the waning sun,  
Feel nature in colour,  
And feel at one.

Red sky at night,  
The delight of the shepherd,  
Herding his sheep,  
To the sound of his word.

The sun drops down,  
Losing radical red,  
Dark descends,  
And we go home to bed.

# Ripples

By Zoë Life

A drop in the ocean  
A drop in the sea  
A drop of foresight  
Within thee

A moment of calm  
at the height of a storm  
All covered in cobwebs  
Lost and forlorn

A minute of kindness  
A flash of right now  
Realisation of the oneness we share  
Somehow

One second here and one second there  
Practice that leads to more and more care

For even when overthinking  
or cursing aloud,  
When mind it is racing and  
barking and blown  
Awareness is there (.)  
(right here)  
to carry me home



By Lex Lee

I am an artist and illustrator who has recently moved to the UK, born and raised in Hong Kong.

I have a large family back home and some of my relatives have lived with cancer. I believe different people approach balance in completely different ways, and there is never one right way to go about it.

More than that, I believe an imbalance in life is normal and inevitable. It's about embracing it.

See more of Lex's work on Instagram at [@lexlee2302](https://www.instagram.com/lexlee2302)

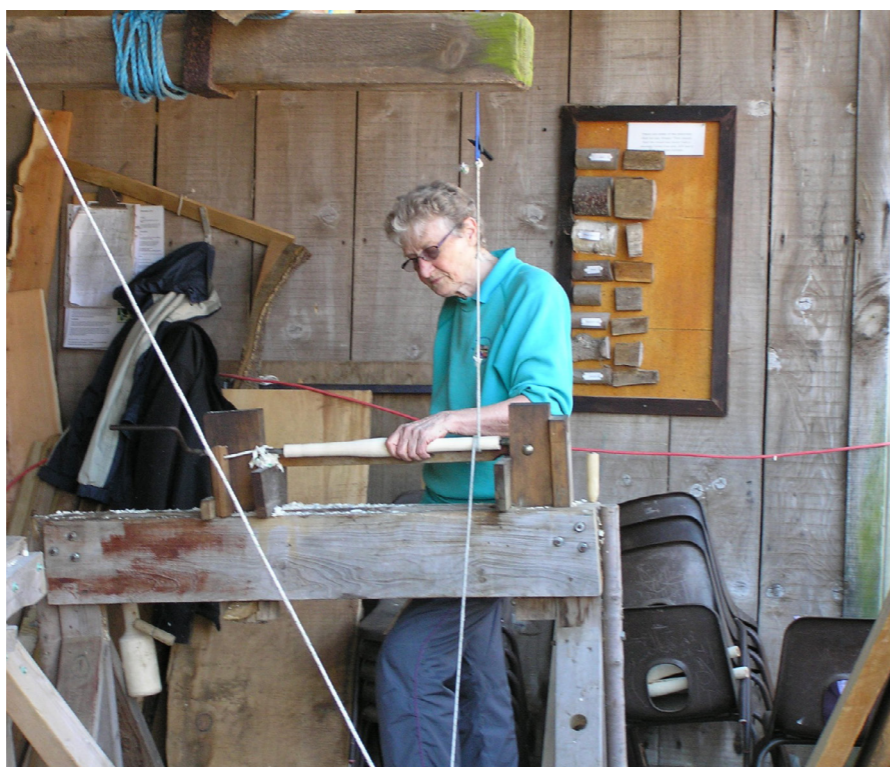
# Flourish by balancing

By Marion Reid

I balanced my bankbook and my music but rarely thought about balancing my life – that has been a consequence of my experience with 'the big C'.

To say the least, it was a shock to my system to be diagnosed with rectal cancer – let alone surviving chemotherapy, radiation and radical surgery. The combination of these three took my body way out of balance! Indeed, when I was discharged from the hospital, I lacked the ability and energy to walk across the street.

To regain strength, I used a variety of modalities, including a balanced diet, exercise, rest and relaxation, mindfulness, homeopathy and – above all – PATIENCE (with myself)! I did not dwell on where I was nor how far I had to go but simply focused on experiencing small (yes, very small) incremental achievements: 'now I can walk 50 steps'; 'now I can walk to the end of the path'; 'now I can walk the path and climb two steps'; and so on. I learnt to accept help from others: shopping, cooking, cleaning,



Marion using a pole lathe. It is important to balance the sharp chisel!

acupuncture, reflexology, reiki, and so on.

Today, my life is very different. I am 16 years post-surgery, retired and an octogenarian. I walk daily (sometimes six miles), frequent green spaces, bodge, play table tennis, practice qi gong and functional breathing, visit the gym, dine out, enjoy theatre, read books for discussion at a book club and volunteer for a handful of charities.

I discovered Dr Thompson at the National Centre for Integrative Medicine, who has helped me continue on my path of using integrative approaches to achieve balanced health and wellbeing – no longer for recovery from cancer, but for living joyfully. I have

learnt that being in balance is not static but requires continual adjustments.

As Albert Einstein said, "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

My advice for balance:

- Bedtime for getting enough sleep
- Accept slow progress; Amble, then walk
- Love life
- Assist others, including volunteering
- Nourish body and mind; Nature
- Care – receive from others and give to others
- Exercise body and mind

**Find out more about NCIM and other similar organisations in the Yes to Life Directory at [yestolife.org.uk/life-directory](http://yestolife.org.uk/life-directory).**

# Balance the pressure

By Pam Peters

I'm all mixed up  
Am I happy or sad?  
I am still here  
And for that I am glad

It's all of a jumble  
My life is a crumble  
I'm all so confused  
While others bemused

I can't make a decision  
I can't see a vision  
Of where to go next  
I'm doing my best  
Am I OK as I am?  
Anyone else going through what I am?

Like a slaughtered lamb  
What is their plan?  
It all feels like a sham  
It's not ying, it's not yang!

I'm so out of place  
Want to hide my face  
I want to know more  
But am I so sure?

It all feels so muddled  
My senses are doubled  
I can't hide my pain  
Can't see through the rain

Can't eat, can't sleep  
This mountain's too steep  
I've lost all control  
Please help my lost soul

Do I stick to my guns  
Or go down that path  
Do what I believe in  
Or take it all on the chin

Condemned if I do  
Condemned if I don't  
So, why take that chance?  
Let go, relax, look forward  
And dance!



# An Integrative Approach to Cancer: Creating Balance

By Sara Spinks

When diagnosed with cancer, we might consider taking an Integrative Approach to our care and treatment, with evidence from the field of Integrative Oncology now showing how it can support outcomes, treatment tolerance and quality of life.

An integrative approach typically uses a combination of the following

- **Conventional medicine** including standard of care treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, immunotherapy and other targeted therapies.
- **Complementary therapies** such as yoga, mindfulness, acupuncture, breathwork, nutritional support and other additional modalities etc.
- **Lifestyle and behavioural approaches** including sleep, exercise and movement, healthy eating, reducing toxin exposure, stress management, emotional regulation, finding meaning and purpose and living in accordance with our intrinsic

values and strengths.

In my work as a Holistic Health & Functional Medicine Certified Health Coach, Cancer Coach and the Cancer Support Group Co-ordinator for the Integrative Cancer Charity, Yes to Life, we regularly talk about balance.

We often cite the concept of 'Balance' with regards to creating:

- A balanced approach to health including conventional, complementary, lifestyle, and behavioural methods
- Homeostasis – balance in body & mind via the optimal functioning of all systems of the body
- A balanced diet
- Balance in rest vs activity
- Work-life balance
- Balance in time spent alone vs with others or socially
- A 'w'holistic balance in body, mind & spirit.

But how do we know when we have found it? How can the concept of 'Balance' hold us back from achieving it? Typically, we aim for a feeling or result and it can cause us more stress when we don't feel or achieve what we hope for. We may feel that we're not 'doing it right' or 'doing enough'.

So how can we use the concept to create optimal health?

The concept of 'balance' wouldn't exist if we didn't get out of balance, which is quite 'normal' for our human experience.



Image: Alex Ngheim

'Balance' is a delicate dance of multiple influencing variables, right for us, creating a synergistic sweet spot. All that nourishes and nurtures our mind, body and spirit. A combination of Integrative Approaches, unique to us, that have a beneficial impact on our health, wellbeing and cancer experience.

'Balance' is iterative, not linear.

With support, knowledge, self-awareness and commitment, we learn how to adjust and evolve with change and challenge and create our own perfectly imperfect sense of 'Balance'.

**Find out more about the Integrative Approach to Cancer on the Yes to Life website at [yestolife.org.uk](http://yestolife.org.uk)**

## Call-out for submissions for Issue 5 on the theme of 'Body'

Do you like making art, crafting, taking photographs, writing poetry, stories or blogs? Interested in getting creative? We're looking for those with lived experience of cancer to submit to our magazine!

### Eligibility

We are looking for artwork, photography, creative or personal writing, craft, pottery, or anything creative for Issue 5 of Flourish Magazine, a free print and digital magazine by and for the cancer community, around the theme of 'Body'.

We are looking for contributions from those:

- living with or beyond cancer.
- living in relation to it, i.e. a friend or family member of someone who has experienced cancer.
- working with people with cancer, such as carers or healthcare professionals.

**You do not need to have any experience of art or done anything creative before.**

We are particularly interested in submissions from Global Majority communities, d/Deaf and disabled communities, the LGBTQ+ community, as well as those living in or around Bristol, South Gloucestershire or Gloucestershire – so please feel free to identify this in our submission if you're comfortable to do so.

**All contributions must be sent to [flourish.mag@artlift.org](mailto:flourish.mag@artlift.org) by 10pm, Monday 1st July 2024.**

### Theme: 'Body'

We are open to any and all interpretations on the theme and nothing is taboo or off limits – but here are some questions to get you thinking:

- How do you connect and relate to your body? Is it a soothing or scary prospect?
- How do things like sexuality, intimacy,

spirituality and movement impact your ideas or feelings about the body?

- How has your experience of cancer impacted your ideas or feelings about the body?
- How do our bodies empower or limit us?
- What about the body politic? Or collective bodies? (Bodies of work, government bodies, etc.)
- Is there a 'body of (art)work' you'd like to share elements of, or write about?

### Submission criteria

- Writing submissions should not be more than 700 words.
- Submissions of artwork or photography should be high-resolution.
- Photographs of craft, pottery, etc. should be high-resolution.
- Please ensure you own the copyright to any work submitted.

We look at everything that is sent to us, but cannot guarantee your work will be selected for the magazine. If you have questions about our selection process, please get in touch on [flourish.mag@artlift.org](mailto:flourish.mag@artlift.org).

If you are a health or care professional, nutritionist or therapist and would like to be featured or interviewed for the magazine, please contact Editor Natalie Beech on [flourish.mag@artlift.org](mailto:flourish.mag@artlift.org). We'll let you know if your work has been selected for the magazine by **Friday 12th July 2024**.

**Important:** This is a volunteer and unpaid opportunity. If your work is included in the magazine, we'll send you a copy of the issue and you will be credited.

We would love to hear your thoughts on this issue of Flourish Magazine! Scan this QR code to take our quick survey and let us know your feedback.



**flourish**



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