

flourish

A FREE creative magazine by and for the cancer community



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● How do you mind your mind? Our contributors answer

● Mind the gap: How creativity is breaking the silence around cancer and mental health

● The Power of Integrative Care in Cancer Recovery: Taking control of your mind

● The mind explored through poetry, painting, embroidery, photography and more

THE MIND 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 Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust.

We are excited that the next issue of Flourish Magazine will see a big change to the magazine's remit. We will be including submissions from all adults with mental and/or physical health challenges – alongside those from people impacted by cancer.

Head to the Artlift website to read more about it.

Artlift

artlift.org

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

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

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

Yes to Life

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.

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

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

Facebook [@Yes.To.Life.Official](https://www.facebook.com/Yes.To.Life.Official)

Thanks to The Cancer Hive for the inspiration.

The Mind Issue

Hello and welcome to the sixth 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, on the theme of 'Mind', follows our 'Body' issue – as of course the two are deeply intertwined. The distinction between the two – if there indeed is one – can feel particularly acute for those going through cancer.

Mind over matter is not a solution in the face of cancer, you cannot strong arm your way through it, you cannot change its course with your thoughts, and the fear it summons up can be all encompassing. All we can do is find ways to soothe the mind, ways to mind our mind, in the face of what is undeniably an overwhelming challenge.

Each issue features submissions received in an open call, which time and again yields the most dynamic, imaginative and moving creative works. The way in which our contributors have used creativity to both express and support their mental wellbeing will honestly blow your mind (pun intended). It's a complete honour to work with these brilliant contributions and

we're so excited to share them with you.

Alongside our submissions, this issue looks at how taking control of your healing journey can help cancer patients regain confidence and autonomy, alongside the impact of creative activities on helping to start conversations around cancer and mental health.

We always aim to show a diverse range of responses to the cancer experience and as such have included submissions with challenging themes. We have provided content warnings throughout so that readers can choose what they feel able to engage with. At the back of the magazine we also offer a range of resources that offer support, events and opportunities.

Also a quick note – we have exciting new plans for Flourish but need your help to make it happen! If we raise the required funds, the next issue would see us broadening the magazine's remit to accept submissions from adults facing mental and physical health challenges of all kinds. Scan the QR code on the back of the magazine to donate and head to the Artlift website to read more about it.

If you have a moment, please take the time to 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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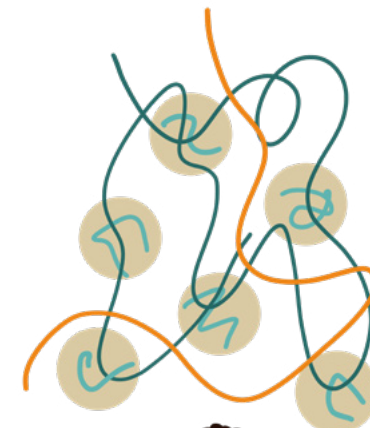
How do you mind your mind?

In each issue of Flourish we ask our contributors to anonymously answer a question surrounding the theme.

In this issue, exploring the Mind, this is how they answered...

"I escape into a jigsaw – usually an image of the artwork of one of my favourite artists – Charley Harper – scenes of nature in a graphic style, colour, joy, distraction from real life – a mindful, soul lifting diversion."

"By filling it with golden sunshine at every possible opportunity."



"By diverting my attention to nature when I feel my mood beginning to dip, I can redirect my focus to the work I am doing which prevents my mood from deteriorating any further."



"I always listen to music when I wake up and at other times, but in the morning it starts the day off well."

"I mind the mind by giving gratitude each morning I wake. Knowing I am still here enjoying life's beauty."

"How do I stop it? It races away, active always. Thinking of things in the middle of the night, writing them down to prevent me from forgetting them. My thoughts are in a vortex, like a whirlwind. I need to calm my mind, but how?"

"Rather than thinking of cancer as a battle or an enemy to be attacked I've found it more helpful to see it as a guide helping me to live better."

"The mind can be like a blue sky with bubbles."

"Creative flow awareness. Less is more."

"I try to remain grateful and to find joy in small things."



"By enjoying quiet moments to connect with nature and marvelling at our place in the web of life."

"I belong to a mindfulness group."

"You give it the love and attention it deserves."





By Philip Booth

Fear... we know the impact on our health is not good, but a cancer diagnosis often brings it in buckets. I'm very fortunate to live near some amazing woods. I know there is huge and growing research that shows how being in nature is good, not just for our physical but also our emotional and mental health.

A walk in the woods does wonders to help me rebalance. Capturing the stillness and beauty on my camera helps me slow down and find more peace. It helps create a space for me to imagine a future that I want to see, rather than the stories of fear.



By Heather Engel

As a survivor of Sarcoma, Breast Cancer and other life experiences, I have found that art and craft is more important than ever to me. It not only helps to direct my mind to a place of calm, but re-uses all sorts of items from my large collection of treasured scraps and sometimes my work even sells!



Upcycling is definitely at the heart of my creativity and these greetings cards were made by reusing and layering chocolate wrappers, various bits of trims and both natural and manmade found objects on top.

By Sarah Krynauw

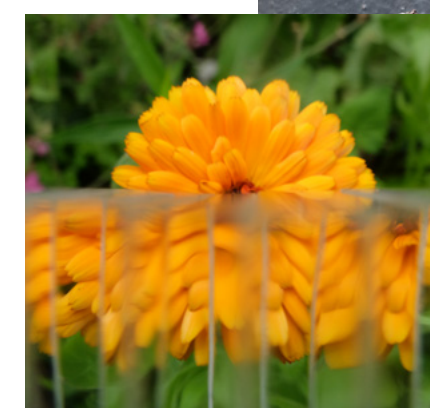
My photo was taken at sunrise on Cleethorpes beach. My husband and I went down to the beach to enjoy a few minutes of quiet before a busy day ahead of us.

Living with cancer is simple, but not easy! You have to look for the beauty in each day. For me that is being outside enjoying the sunshine and taking photos of flowers and nature.



By Carolyn Gemson

The mechanical photo is what I think you would find inside my ageing mind; cogs that are rusting and slow to turn together with lots of cobwebs. The other is a bit of messing with my mind: a marigold shot through a glass curtain pole finial.





Taking control of your mind: The Power of Integrative Care in Cancer Recovery

By Lucy J Turner

When I first heard the words, "It's cancer," everything stopped.

In that single moment, I felt like the world was spinning, and yet I was frozen in time, unable to absorb the reality of what was being said. I

remember sitting there, looking at my mum, then at the doctor, trying to make sense of the words. And then everything seemed blank, as if I had stepped outside of myself.

After my diagnosis, I was immediately thrown

into a whirlwind of medical terms, appointments, and treatment plans: Surgery? Chemotherapy? Radiation? What's next? How do I handle this?

My doctors laid out a plan, and reassured me of the statistics, success

rates – but no one prepared me for what was to come emotionally. As I reflect on that time, I realise one critical thing, while everyone asked me how I was physically doing, no one really addressed my mental health.

Things I Wish I Knew: The Mental Health Toll

I wish I had known when I received my cancer diagnosis was how mentally taxing the journey would be. I remember people constantly asking how I felt physically—how my treatment was going, how my energy levels were, how I was coping with the side effects, but there was never much of a conversation about how I was feeling emotionally.

It was only much later that I realised how essential it was to address the emotional and psychological impact of cancer. The confusion, anxiety, sadness and even grief of losing parts of yourself to the disease were overwhelming. It's something I think everyone should be prepared for when facing cancer.

The Importance of Integrative Care

As I navigated my recovery, it became clear to me that no single approach could address everything cancer had brought into my life. This is where integrative care can play a pivotal role, as it looks at the person as a

whole, body, mind and spirit.

Dr. Elizabeth Thompson, founder and CEO of The National Centre for Integrative Medicine, emphasises the importance of empowering patients to take charge of their own health. "When patient choice is limited, healing becomes passive... Integrative healthcare – giving the choice of nutrition, movement, art therapy, and nature connection – restores power to the individual, addressing not just symptoms but the whole person."

The Healing Power of Nature

I vividly remember my first instinct after receiving my diagnosis, I needed to get outside. Fortunately, my parents lived near beautiful fields and a river, which became my refuge. Sitting by the river, watching the water flow, I found moments of calm. Nature had a way of grounding me in a way nothing else could. Simply just being in nature, even for a short time, helped me to regain my breath and reset.

Gentle exercises outdoors provided a sense of relief without overexerting myself. Movement in nature not only released endorphins but also helped me feel more connected to my body, improving my mental wellbeing, even if it was only 10 minutes. The sunlight, too, became a lifeline, fueling my body with vitamin D and lifting my spirits. Whether it

was a short walk or simply sitting under a tree, those moments outside were moments of restoration.

Art Therapy and Creativity

As my treatment progressed, I began to feel an overwhelming need to express the emotions I couldn't articulate in words. It was during this time that I was introduced to art therapy and it became an incredibly therapeutic experience.

Whether I was writing, painting, or drawing, the process of creating allowed me to externalise feelings of fear, anger, and confusion and feel more in control of my life and my health. It was a form of self-care that empowered me to process my emotions without judgment, something that was crucial in helping me cope emotionally with my diagnosis and treatment.

A Holistic Approach to Support

Cancer charity Maggie's recognises the importance of mental health care alongside physical treatment, offering individuals at any stage of their cancer journey tailored psychological support. They understand that, sometimes, just being heard is an essential part of healing.

As a spokesperson from Maggie's stated, "Cancer might be a physiological disease, but we increasingly understand it has a significant psychological



impact too. A cancer diagnosis can turn someone's world upside down... It takes a toll on every aspect of life from friendships, finances, and fertility to career ambitions and caring responsibilities."

Where Do We Go From Here?

As I reflect on my experience, I realise how much I could have benefited from integrative care much earlier on in my cancer journey. Recovery isn't just about fighting the disease; it's about nurturing the whole person. Practices like art therapy, movement, and spending time in nature aren't just pleasant distractions, they are integral to the healing process.

By integrating holistic practices into your treatment plan, you empower yourself to heal from within. As Dr. Thompson so aptly puts it, "True healing begins when we nurture both [mind and body]."

It's time to recognise that healing doesn't just happen in the clinic, it happens in the heart, the mind, and in the space where nature and creativity meet.

Discover a list of integrative care resources, services and support in our Resources section at the back of the magazine.

Find out more about Lucy and her work at lucyjturner.co.uk



Echoes of the unknown

Photography and text by Michelle Field

It is there.
This feeling of something else.
Something out of my control.

When I think about what the future may bring, I feel a deep, nervous sensation. I try not to let this sense of foreboding grow too strong. I do not want to feel fear unnecessarily, but sometimes there is an apprehension I cannot ignore.

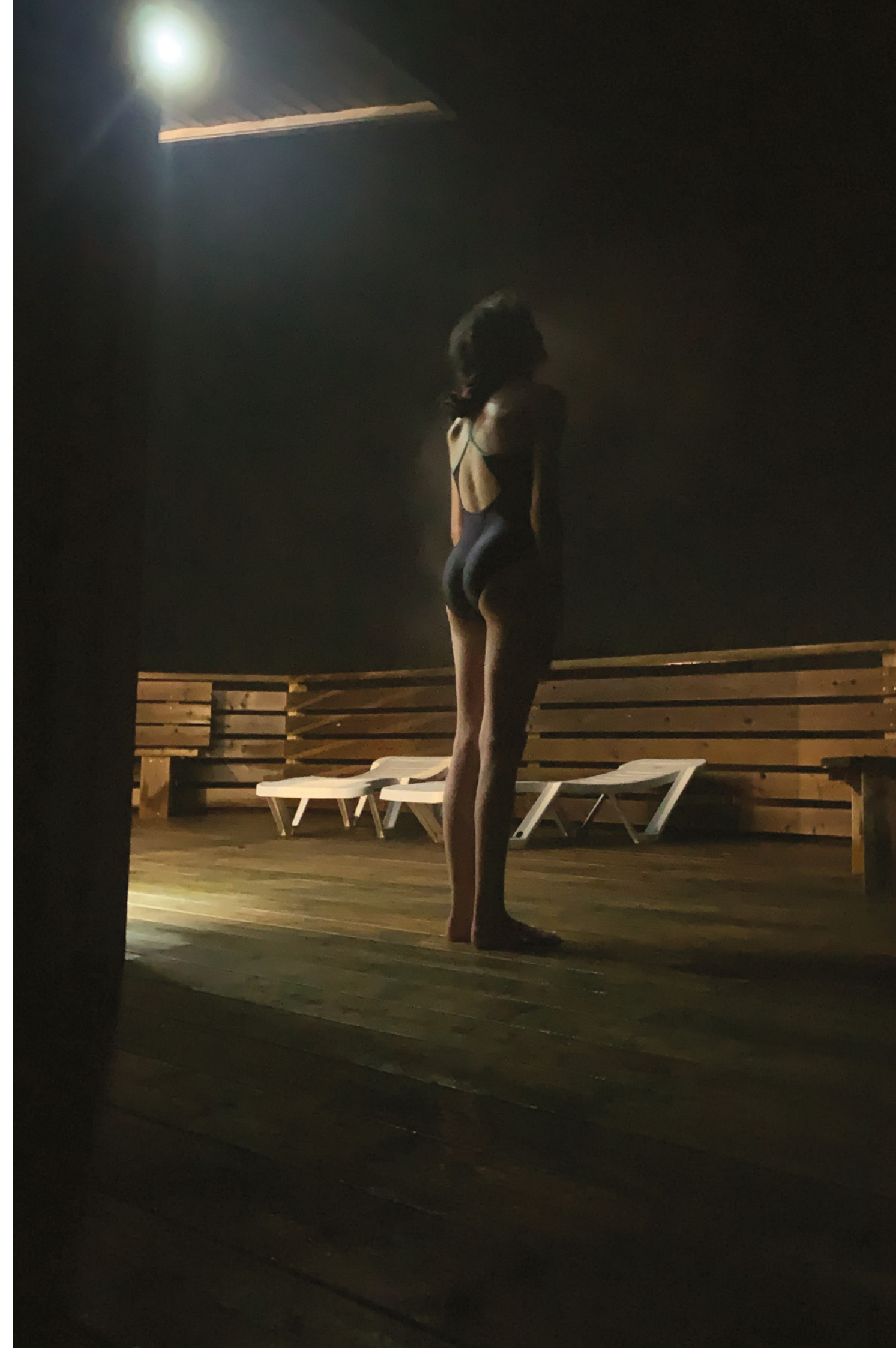
The mind is a tricky thing. At its best, we feel positive, hopeful, relieved – but after a diagnosis, there is a niggler. A small voice that sits in the shadows, reminding us that what we once felt was sure, unquestioned, and within reach – that seemingly certain future is now unknown. It is fragile and yet all the more precious.

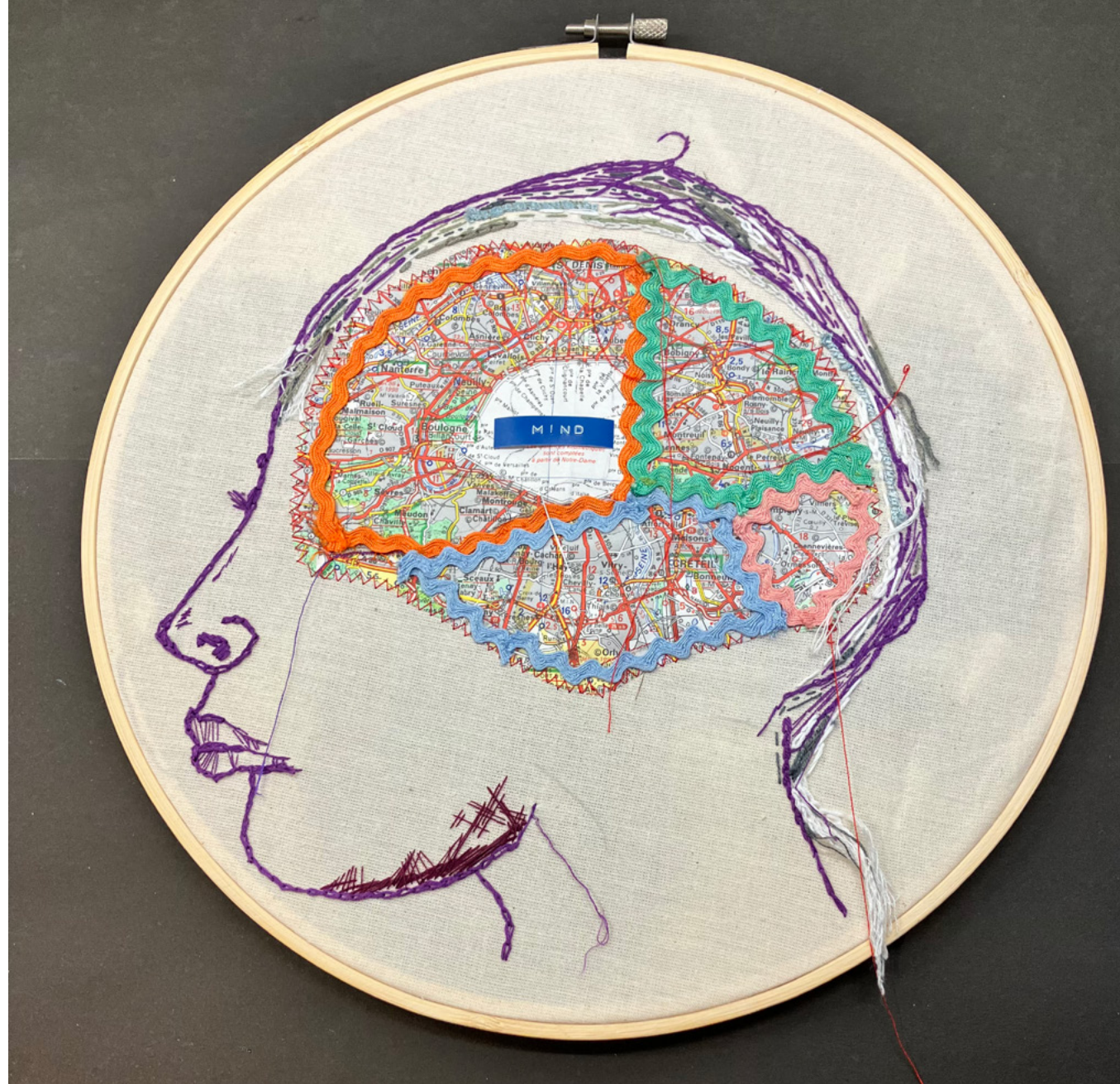
We know so little.
If only I could trust it.
To let it carry me.
Then I might feel lighter.

All we can really do is let go of the control we once thought we had. To surrender and to know that whatever comes next, we are ready for it.

To hope when we feel fear.
To let go when we are scared.
And to have trust, even though we cannot see.

We are ready because there is no other way to be.





Embroidery and text by Dareth Guthrie

Cancer is never far from our minds in our house

We rarely read anything about the cancer journey of the 'home support team' – a taboo subject perhaps. Juggling. Feet desperately paddling away beneath the surface, trying to present a veneer of normality every waking hour, just sometimes

carving out an escape from real life.

For me, this takes the form of a short burst of creativity to clear and reset the mind. Maybe half an hour with some inspiring music or a podcast in the background while working on a blossoming embroidery project or a section of jigsaw, or perhaps sorting

my collection of salvaged images for my next collage project, or maybe a few rows of crochet of that blanket, now morphing into a hot water bottle; a small sense of achievement at my own pace – self love – just for me – a calming peace of mind.



The Mind

By Dionne Hargreaves

The mind... does it ever stop? Even when we are asleep, the cogs keep turning. Visions come into being. People who you have met, never met or our long lost past comes into focus.

The mind... where does it begin? From the womb, in your mother's mind and thoughts, from birth, from the world around you.

The mind... how can it be more patient? Be rested. Be quiet. Breathe in and breathe out. Quiet the chatter and take a lesson from the heart.

The mind... how can it connect to the body? They say there are three brains ...in the gut, heart centre and the head. Realign them like stars in the sky.

The mind... how can it speak to others? Through words, music and intelligence. Maybe sixth sense. Knowing how and what others are feeling.

The mind, the body and the heart. We are one.



A brush with vitality

Artwork and text by Tim Bond

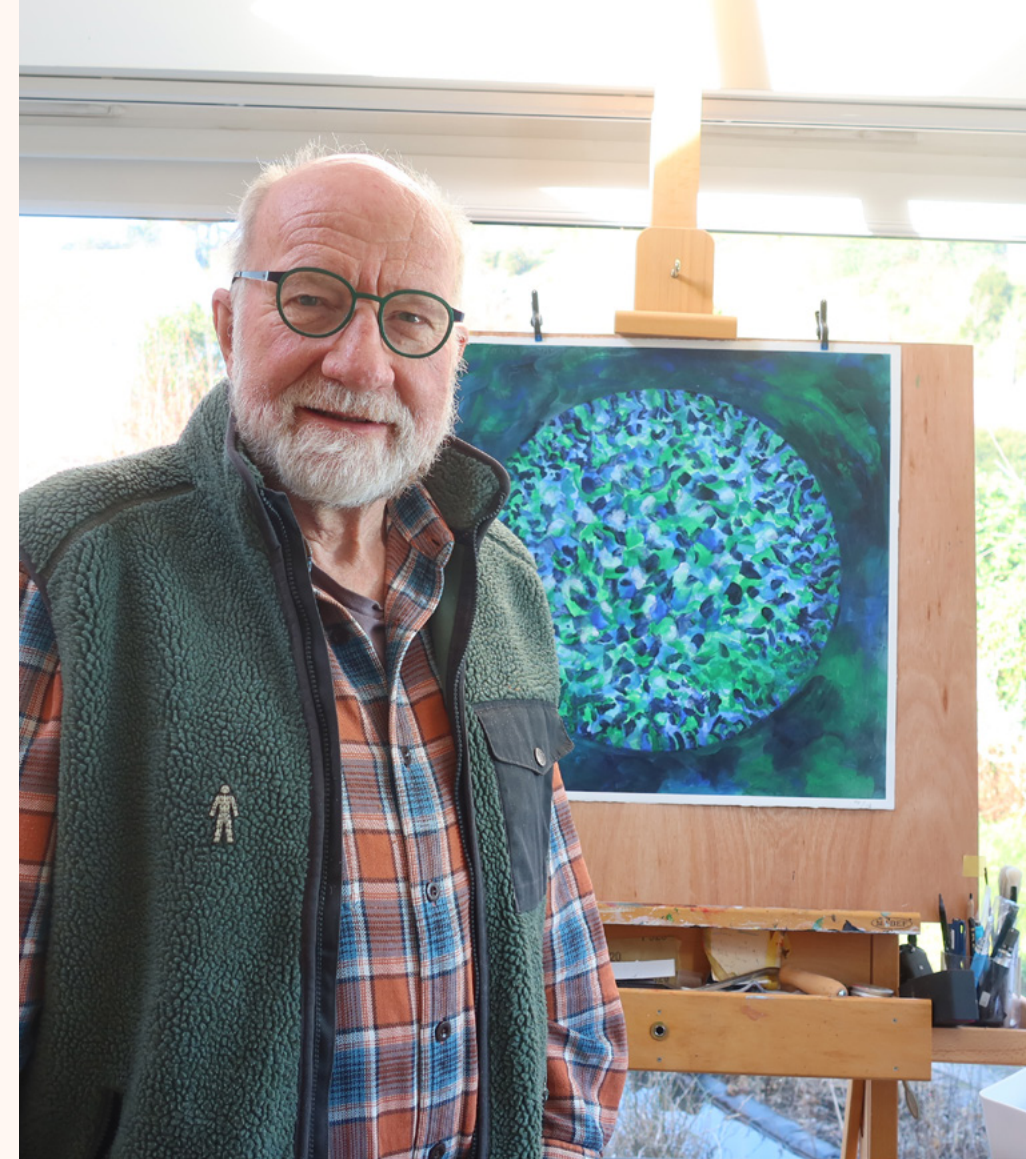
Any cancer diagnosis is traumatic. We cross several taboos at once. Cancer, mortality, sexuality, are all chopped and spun together in the shock of diagnosis. It is as if they are all thrown into a food processor with a heavy hand on the ON button. Our precious relationships are challenged. Some grow in significance. Others get left behind and recede into life before cancer. Life is turbulent with change. There is lots of uncertainty about how life will continue, cease or be changed.

This was reflected in my art at that time – landscapes with stormy skies or trees that have endured the challenges of storms and pestilence. This turbulence passes if treatment is successful. What next? How to find our resilience, creativity and place in the world when everything feels so changed?

After treatment, my interest in the natural world took on a new dimension. We are living at a time of new discovery of both the smallest particles at a quantum level and the vastness of space at an astronomical level.

Scientific photographs taken from the space stations and telescopes that circle over our heads give us a sense of the unimaginable vastness of space. Their sense of scale communicates our minuteness as individuals in the flow of time and space – smaller than specs of dust. Yet our consciousness places us – albeit temporarily, as cancer reminds us – at the centre of our own universe.

Art grapples with the paradox between our cosmic insignificance and deeply personal significance. I want to communicate something of this paradox within which we live our lives. What started as a simple project of taking a circle and enlivening it with my sense of cosmic awe grew into ten paintings that I think of as a series of 'cosmic curiosity'. Barely



noticed as I worked on this project, something changed in me.

I started out struggling with the necessary losses of treatment, especially changes to my sexuality and sense of me as male. At some unnoticed moment in the creative process, I began to distinguish between my sexuality and my vitality and their different contributions to my creativity. I realised my struggles with cancer had released a new sense of vitality. As I write this, I am pleasantly surprised how the act of artistic creativity and cosmic curiosity has transformed my perspective on life. I have found a joy that

I hope is communicated in my art.

Painting has been a lifelong interest and became central to Tim Bond's life after retirement from the University of Bristol as a professor and Head of Department. He paints most days. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2015 and when the cancer turned aggressive treated with a radical prostatectomy in 2018. He is Chairman of Prospect Bristol and District Prostate Cancer Support Group that holds regular meetings in Bristol and Bath. prostatecancerbristol.org.uk



Mind the gap How creativity is breaking the silence around cancer and mental health

By Natalie Beech

At the start of 2025, Artlift came together with Inclusion Gloucestershire – an organisation set up to facilitate inclusion for people who face disabling barriers – to run three of their regular Women’s Wellbeing Workshops at The Friendship Cafe in Barton and Tredworth.

With Gloucestershire Community Foundation support, the workshops were aimed at starting a conversation about cancer within a community where, due to cultural barriers, the topic is still very much a taboo.

The purpose of the Women’s Wellbeing Group is to provide a weekly space where all women are welcome, regardless of background or abilities, to come together and take part in activities that improve their wellbeing. This series of workshops exploring cancer were facilitated by Zareen Ahmed, Inclusion Hub Coordinator; Sana Piperdy (Inclusion Expert by Experience), Probjoth Singh, Peer Support Lead at GHC NHS Community Mental Health Transformation, Natalia Bartolome Diez, Insights Manager at NHS Gloucestershire, supporting the health and wellbeing of underserved communities across the county; and Artlift Facilitator Susie Walker, who led the activities.

“What we tackle especially is things they may not know about, or may not want to talk about. That’s how I see my role, it’s to try and overcome those sort of barriers,” Zareen, who runs the weekly sessions, explained. “What I can tell you is that the model used by Artlift really worked.”

The model? Arts and crafts! The women all had the opportunity to take part in clay imprinting and foil embossing, where patterns, shapes and colors are indented into clay and foil. “Having something that they’re doing at the time is an indirect way of taking part in a conversation, gaining information and learning something,”



Probjoth said.

The majority of women in the group are Gujarati Muslim women, many of whom know one another outside of these sessions, meaning there’s a reluctance to discuss private matters – such as your health. Yet in this silence, fear is bred and myths and misinformation can prevail. Through creative workshops not specifically focused on cancer, the topic could be gently introduced.

“People weren’t having to have a conversation if they didn’t want to. People could dip in and out of conversations,” Zareen said. “I was watching everyone and I saw people with their heads down, listening, thinking I’m not going to say anything – then put their tools down and they would join in.”

After the first session, Natalia opened up about

her own lived experience of cancer. At just 20 years old, she received a cancer diagnosis, going through six months of treatment before going into remission.

“In the second session, Probjoth asked if anyone had experience of cancer,” Natalia explained. “So I said, ‘I’ve had cancer! I’m very happy to answer any questions you have.’”

Having attended previous sessions through her work, Natalia had built relationships with the women in the group, a foundation of trust that allowed them to open up with her.

“It resulted in one lady revealing she’d also gone through a cancer experience, which felt like a breakthrough moment – that she felt comfortable enough in that group to reveal that she’d gone



through a diagnosis and treatment, and that she was okay now, because it is so stigmatised."

For the third session, local woman and artist Halima Malek, already known to the women within the community, was also invited to come and speak about her experiences.

"If you had come to me before and asked me, will any of your women want to speak about cancer? I'd have said I really don't know – I'm doubtful. They wouldn't have. It's because Natalia broke the ice, and because we had Halima, who could

relate to her own experience as well as them – that was the key – and now they're open to discuss it," said Zareen.

Beyond cancer, the group appears to have opened up to opening up in general because of these workshops – including discussing their mental health.

In each of the Women's Wellbeing regular sessions, an activity is introduced, alongside what topic will be discussed that day. The workshops have provided a kind of gateway to approaching tough subjects, which in the past

have included suicide, grief, mental illness and psychosis. "It's a great way for people to talk about those topics that are difficult through activities, and mental health is one of them, by doing something with your hands, you're focused."

"There are women whose only time away from their duties and responsibilities is this workshop," Zareen explains. The fact that the workshops are what these women choose to do with their very little free time is incredibly telling. "Some of the women are still living with PTSD, trauma, some are carers who have carers guilt, carers fatigue, some of them can't get appropriate services or care, and so they're coming for distraction and respite."

For Zareen, the difference the workshops have made to this community's attitudes is astounding. The women are not only keen to do more creative sessions; the workshops themselves giving them an opportunity to express themselves and create something they can take away and be proud of, but they want to know more about cancer. "They've asked for Natalia to bring in the NHS teams, so the Breast Cancer Awareness team are coming in. All of a sudden, they're saying 'tell us more!'"

To find out more about the Women's Wellbeing Sessions, go to inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk



All in the mind

By Josephine Smith

I look in the mirror
And who do I see?
A cute, little girl,
So pretty, carefree.

I look in the mirror
And who is there?
A girl full of hope,
With lovely, long hair.

I look in the mirror
Who can it be?
A mother, so fraught,
With children around me.

I look in the mirror
And who is she?
A middle aged lady,
So fancy free.

All of these faces,
Flash past my eyes,
My persona is, frankly, just a
disguise.
The years that have gone, I
cannot rescind,
My identity, my life, has
gone like the wind!

**'A Troubled Mind'
Artwork by
Josephine Smith**



Mind

By Joy Beak

I hear you, Mind, there's no need to shout
I know I should listen to you,
and I do try, but somehow
my thoughts get in the way
They take over my thinking,
they are strong, powerful
and forceful.

I hear you, Mind.
I don't know I have a
problem, until I know I have a
problem, until I am told.
It all makes sense in theory
I think to myself: "Yes, I can
do that"
But when I try, my thoughts
won't listen.

I hear you, Mind.
But my thoughts are a
defence mechanism
If they can sort out all the
possible scenarios, I feel
prepared and ready for the
outcome, whatever it may be.

I hear you, Mind
You're right, these scenarios
never become real
So I waste my brain power
for nothing.
I wonder if other people
have a problem with their
thoughts? Or is it just me?
I wish thoughts had an on/
off button.
Mind keeps telling me:
"Thoughts are not real, it is
just a thought."

I hear you, Mind.
I worry about the smallest of
things
Though to me, they're not
small.
My thoughts worry in case
things are my fault
Or should I have done this,
or that, or if only!

I hear you, Mind.
You say to me: "So, now do
you feel better for worrying,
has it changed anything?"
I know, I know
You are right as always,
Mind, but try telling my
thoughts that.

You know, Mind, you don't
get paid extra for working
overtime.
But perhaps you could have
a quiet word to my thoughts
for me?
Thank you, Mind.
I hear you, Mind.





**Artwork and text by
Michael Clements**

My mother was diagnosed with cancer 20 plus years ago. After hearing this news we all were devastated. My mother never smoked, was a healthy walker, and ate well, so it was very confusing to us all. But the cancer soon took hold of her and ended up in her bone marrow. At this time, I used to love to paint,

and what could be a more personal gift than to paint for her, to hopefully give her hope this cancer would be beaten. I wanted to paint an inner cell of light in the darkness of the cancerous cells attacking her body. So this was my inspiration: an Inner Light cell.



Content warning:
This piece contains
references

to chemotherapy,
immunotherapy and
surgery that some
readers may find difficult.
If you're in need of
support, please see the
resources section at the
back of the magazine.

Cancer and Mental Health

By Caroline Bance

I was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer in June 2024, and I had metastasis to my spine, pelvis and knee.

From then on, everything was a whirlwind. I was rushed into hospital to have my leg operated on, to remove the tumour and get a knee and partial femur replacement so that I could walk again, as it had eaten at my femur bone.

Two weeks later, I found myself having chemotherapy and immunotherapy. I felt like my feet never touched the ground. I had numerous stays in hospital after the first two chemotherapies and never

really saw my family.

As a result of this I never fully processed the extent of my diagnosis until months later. This took a toll on my mental health and I started to feel the scariness of my diagnosis. That I was going to die at some point. That I might only have a year or less to live. Anything after that was a bonus.

It was then I realised I was starting to grieve for the day death might come.

This took a big toll on my mental state. I have always been a positive person and try to take each day at a time, practicing gratitude and feeling blessed for

every day that I wake up.

I sought counselling, and now try and look at each day as a gift. Despite being in pain and having more bad news: that my metastasis in my spine has grown, I try to live hour by hour, day by day.

I have found that meditation and being kind to myself helps me to cope. Crucially, having friends and family around to visit has been a huge comfort, and helped to lift my spirits.

To anyone going through cancer, my advice would be not to do it alone. Reach out to people and speak about it.



Mind palace

Artwork and poem by Zoë Life



Mind the gap,
mind your manners
Find the solution
Never mind the banners

Mind warp
Mind weft
Mind depleted
mind bereft

Mind left all alone
Anxious
Fractious
Less muscle.
Less bone,

Mindful on occasion
Mind full, more than less
Strategising
Empathising
Working out what's best?

ADHD
Well, you know me?

Mind Palace
Who the f**k is Alice?

Mind drained
Like a locomotive train
Gone off the track
Derailed
Give me a snack!

Overmedicated
Under meditated
Feeling less me
Than I'd like to be

Needing to pause
Needing applause
For being here
Right here
Right now.
Never mind the score
The scores settled or not
I don't give a jot

I need to stop
To appreciate
To levitate
my mood
Dopamine fuelled

Natures cool
pure & bright
Twinkling in the darkest night Experience the
balance light & dark With awareness giving
more respite
than remarks.....

My mind like a spring if you listen carefully...
Watch see me hear me feel me
as I
Un -w
i
n
d

slinky like
B..o...l...n.G ...
B...o..i..n..G.....
B...o...l...n.g

safe mother earths sweet embrace

The Cobra defanged...
My mind unfurled
Like a tenderised steak
Soft and beaten...
Ready and waiting for digestion
For resurrection

For acceptance
For reassurance
That among the endurance
The harsh realities
Of medical- ease

There is kindness there
Empathy, compassion inter woven Into the
broken record technique
Of fear and fight
Making room for delight
and joy in the little things

and joy

in the little things



Mind over matter

By Denise Stevenson

'Mind over Matter'. How many times have people used that phrase to encourage you? The science is there to support our 'minds' having much more control over our physical 'matter' than we've given them credit for.

Dr Bruce Lipton is a leader in bridging science and spirit, whose best-selling book 'The Biology of Belief' has featured on our Healthy Mind resource since day one. He has shown that inflammatory gene activity can change in less than eight hours – a powerful tool for us to use when healing from cancer.

Our minds can hop over to the dark side though, a very natural reaction when our health and sometimes even life itself, is at threat. The flight or flight response is controlled by our sympathetic nervous system; an innate response when we experience fear, but there's a third strand to that response: freeze. It's in those moments that we can change our response to the fear that's presenting itself.

We can freeze and whilst we cannot change the fear, we have some power over changing our response to it.

'Hive minds' is a new term to me, perhaps to you too, here's how the journal MDPI explains the meaning behind it: "Hive minds have existed in nature since the very dawn of life on earth. Bees, ants, termites and even migratory birds display characteristics of a hive mind where the entire group behaves as if they are controlled by a single mind and work collectively towards achieving a goal." When you have cancer, or are supporting someone with cancer, your 'team' is crucial. It's a lonely road, made a little less so by a team of like-minded people supporting you.

Managing our minds is hard and is made a whole lot harder when you are faced with a cancer diagnosis. It can be your best ally and your worst enemy. It can be overwhelming, or disjointed in its thoughts. It can be all of these things within minutes, but no one can doubt that harnessing its power will be a positive

factor in your cancer journey. At times we want/ need to 'zone out', to escape our thoughts. Relaxation, prayer, meditation, deep breathing, reading, sport, music – we each have our way of finding peace with our thoughts and minds. It's more important than ever when healing, guiding us to a state where our parasympathetic nervous system controls our body's response.

Anyone who has/had cancer, or is supporting someone who has/had it, knows what a defining time it is in our lives. Our minds play a powerful part in the outcome. We cannot change our diagnoses. Our prognoses, well, let's harness the power of our minds in the most positive way we can!

Read more by Denise at double-zero.org



Edge Common

Artwork & text by Louise Spira

I was diagnosed with breast cancer 14 years ago, and had all the treatment to combat it. Chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and herceptin. Whilst of course I was grateful to be given medication and treatment, it took some time and was a battering experience.

Cancer continues to lurk in the back of my mind. At the same time, I try to forget about cancer and get on with my life. I'm working again, although part time, and find ways to appreciate my life. Walking out in the countryside is one of these ways.

Taking regular walks in favourite places nearby brings me both exercise and peace of mind. Becoming familiar with the lay of the land, then appreciating the differences with the changing seasons, and the weather of the day.

It is a treat to walk at Edge Common – we call it the quarry – to see the trees, breathe the air, look at the views. To admire the colour of the leaves as they turn in the autumn, how the light catches the bare branches in the winter, the movement of the branches in the wind, the spring flowers including wild orchids. If you are lucky, you'll catch a glimpse of the kestrel, and other birds such as the red wings in the winter, flitting about from tree to tree in their groups. Sometimes I take my paint up there to capture the view.

Resources

Below is a list of additional resources and organisations to those featured in the magazine, which we've compiled to help support you through cancer, from national organisations to Gloucestershire and Bristol based ones for those living in the area.

CAAFI Health caafihealth.com

Caafi Health is a grassroots organisation that works to improve the health and wellbeing of the diverse populations in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Charlie's charlies.org.uk

Community cancer support and therapy centre based in Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Cancer Exercise gloscancerexercise.org.uk

Exercise sessions for those living with and beyond cancer in Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Carers Club gloucestershirecarershut.co.uk

Gloucestershire Carers Hub supports unpaid Carers throughout the county of Gloucestershire with a range of activities, social events, support and discounts.

LGBT+ Experiences of Cancer lgbcancer.wordpress.com livethroughthis.co.uk

Personal stories and helpful resources about living with or beyond cancer.

Macmillan Cancer Support: In Your Area macmillan.org.uk/in-your-area/choose-location.html

An online directory aiming to help you find practical help, self-help and support groups and centres in your area.

Macmillan Helpline macmillan.org.uk

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00.

Macmillan Next Steps Gloucestershire ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/macmillan

A NHS rehabilitation service providing services and courses that support anyone living in Gloucestershire diagnosed with breast, prostate, lung, head, neck colorectal, gynaecology, haematological or upper gastrointestinal cancer.

Maggie's maggies.org

Charity that provides free cancer support and information across the UK and online.

National Centre for Integrative Medicine ncim.org.uk

Champions a transformation in healthcare – one which takes a whole-person approach, puts patients back in charge of their health, and helps them to feel more informed about their care.

Penny Brohn UK pennybrohn.org.uk

UK Charity providing free, integrative care to those living with cancer.

The Friendship Cafe thefriendshipcafe.com

TFC provides community-based activities, groups and services for those in Gloucestershire.

Wigwam and Yes to Life yestolife.org.uk/cancer-support-groups

Yes to Life's online and Gloucestershire-based cancer support groups, plus links to other resources.

Yes to Life Directory yestolife.org.uk/life-directory

Created to help cancer patients and their families and friends find additional therapies and treatments that are available to support before, during and after medical treatment.



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.



If you enjoyed this Mind edition of Flourish Magazine, please consider making a donation using this QR code . You will be helping us to inspire a wider diversity of people with challenging health conditions to live positively through creative and integrative approaches.

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