

KNOWLEDGE CENTRAL

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B O O K S

Here for Now: Living Well With Cancer Through Mindfulness. *Elana Rosenbaum. Hardwick, MA: Satya House Publications, 2005, 200 pages, \$16.95. (An affiliated CD, Here for Now: Mindfulness Meditations, is 60 minutes long and available for \$17.95.)*

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Here for Now: Living Well With Cancer Through Mindfulness is a personal account and a self-help book that is filled with touching stories, practical and effective exercises, colorful images, and inspiring poems and affirmations—all which

enthus and instruct patients with cancer to live fully amidst the challenges and uncertainties of their disease. With authenticity, the author shares her journey with lymphoma and a stem cell transplant. Her experience is complemented by her insight as a talented psychotherapist and skill as a mindfulness meditation instructor who taught for 20 years in the renowned University of Massachusetts Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program.

At the heart of the book is the use of mindfulness as a tool for living well with cancer. What is mindfulness and how can it be helpful to patients with cancer? Mindfulness is the moment-by-moment awareness of sensations, emotions, and thoughts. It is about fully experiencing the present moment and not getting caught up in or clinging to past regrets, sad or happy memories, or worries about the future. Mindfulness encompasses the qualities of being nonjudgmental and gentle with oneself. Living with cancer or any serious, life-threatening illness is fraught with psychological unease from changes in body image and fear of recurrence or death, as well as physical symptoms, such as pain. Learning to be mindful means noticing and acknowledging thoughts and feelings but

not allowing the mind to fast-forward and jump to conclusions. For example, paying attention to the qualities of pain, such as throbbing, aching, or warmth, rather than its possible cause (e.g., cancer progressing), allows patients to notice that pain is not just one constant and dreaded entity. Instead, pain encompasses different sensations that change from one moment to the next. Recognizing this and not reacting with fear promote a sense of openness; consequently, tensions (e.g., mental, muscular) diminish.

Although the concepts of mindfulness are relatively simple, learning to be mindful is not easy and takes practice, patience, and guidance. At the end of each chapter, exercises are included so that readers can practice and learn the techniques.

The text's affiliated CD, *Here for Now: Mindfulness Meditations*, can be especially helpful. It has four guided mindfulness meditations (i.e., body scan, the sky, loving-kindness, and awareness of breathing) that range from 5–26 minutes in length. The book and CD are excellent resources that can be used together or separately.

One of the greatest strengths of the book is its practical how-to exercises that were designed by the author—an individual who has thrived despite devastating cancer treatments and recurrences and, even more compelling, who has enormous skill and credibility in the field of mindfulness. A limitation, however, is that the author's personal story can be distracting and detract from the focus of the book.

Here for Now is a valuable addition to the oncology lay literature. Although many self-help and personal account books are available for patients with cancer and even more books have been published about mindfulness, this book is unique because it is specifically about mindfulness and cancer. As research in the area of mindfulness for patients with cancer grows, so does the interest in using this behavioral intervention. Besides recommending the book and CD to patients, oncology nurses and other healthcare professionals can gain much from these resources. Countless pearls of wisdom are offered that will touch

you and enhance your clinical practice, even your own life.

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I'm a Superhero. *Daxton Wilde (and his mother, Sherry Wilde), illustrated by Daxton Wilde. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2005, 32 pages, \$9.95.*

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I'm a Superhero is a children's book that was written and illustrated by a four-year-old boy with a brain tumor (with the assistance of his mother).

The book is intended to help other children battling cancer know what to expect and conveys the importance of a positive attitude.

Some of the treatments that are described are geared specifically to children with brain tumors. As a result, some of the information may not be applicable to children with other types of cancer. Adults who read the book to children with other types of cancer should make sure to discuss any similarities and differences in treatment, which may be a limitation. However, the information about receiving chemotherapy or radiation treatments is generalized. Some of the content could cause confusion or even frighten children. For example, graphic statements, such as "they put a tube in my nose and food goes through the tube to my tummy," may need additional explanation to help children understand procedures, which may be another limitation.

In addition to being humorous, Daxton Wilde's illustrations portray his experiences very well. The illustrations may help children understand what they will experience even more than the book's narrative. The uniqueness of the book is that it is a first-person (child's) account. *I'm a Superhero* is a prime example of how patients can help others by telling their stories and experiences. For professionals, the book can be a resource for teaching and encouraging pediatric patients with cancer.

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| Ease of Reference and Usability | Content Level | Media Size |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 🕒 Quick, on-the-spot resource | ✓ Basic | 🧘 Pocket size |
| 🕒🕒 Moderate time requirement | ✓ ✓ Intermediate | 🧘🧘 Intermediate |
| 🕒🕒🕒 In-depth study | ✓ ✓ ✓ Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required | 🧘🧘🧘 Desk reference |

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