

# Why journal?



'When you look at a person, any person, remember everyone has a story. Everyone has gone through something that has changed them.'

– Author unknown

**People often feel a range of strong emotions when they, or someone close to them, is diagnosed with a blood cancer or condition.**

**Everybody's experience is different. Feelings may range from confusion, disbelief, shock or loss of control, to fear, stress, anger or sadness. If you or someone you care for has been diagnosed with a blood cancer or condition, you may find it helpful to keep a journal.**

Writing or journaling can be a simple and effective way to help people cope with the emotional impact of a blood cancer/condition. There are many different ways of journaling, and the benefits are well reported, with studies showing improvements in both physical and psychological health.

You may like to write descriptively about your life, recording everyday experiences which can often serve as precious memories in the future. Another option is to write about your own, or your family members' diagnosis or treatment. This may

include writing about big events such as stem cells being returned on transplant day, but could include important day-to-day moments such as who was your nurse, or what pumps or tubes were in place.

All of this information can create a record of your journey through treatment. You may also choose to document practical information about medical treatment, which can help you feel more in control of your situation. This may include keeping a list of questions for your healthcare team or tracking blood results.

Some people find it useful to keep a symptom diary to keep a record of symptoms/side effects they experience (e.g. fatigue, pain, nausea etc.), and any changes to these. This can help to identify patterns, which may help people to cope better with symptoms, and can also be really helpful for the healthcare team.



## 'How are you feeling today?'

While commentary style writing is appropriate for some people, others may like to write more reflectively about how they are coping emotionally. Emotions can sometimes be frightening and difficult to deal with.

Taking time to write about reactions and feelings about diagnosis or treatment can help reduce stress and manage worries, fears and doubts. Seeing thoughts written down can validate them (even if you're the only one seeing them) and help put them into perspective. Writing can help people think more clearly and sort through uncomfortable thoughts or complex issues, and can assist with the decision making process if needed. It can also give people time to reflect on what a cancer diagnosis means to them and their families.

During difficult times, re-reading older journal entries can serve as a visual record of how you coped previously and perhaps give yourself strength and confidence. It may also allow you to identify patterns and triggers which can help manage stress. Writing about deepest thoughts and feelings may understandably make people feel more upset, and if this is the case, it is important to remember to seek support.

'For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment.'

– Viktor E. Frankl

Other suggestions of journaling may be to draw or scrapbook how you are feeling. Writing a story, poem, song or letter are also good ways to explore emotions.



Regular writing can be a great way to help manage the effects of 'chemo brain' which some people experience during treatment. It can also be beneficial for people who struggle to sleep.

Some people prefer to keep their journal private, while others may use theirs as a tool to share with their family and friends or assist with communicating with family or healthcare professionals.

## LBC journal and sticker diary

To encourage people to use writing as a way of coping with the impact of diagnosis or treatment, LBC has created a journal and sticker diary. The stickers can be used as a quick and easy way to record your or your family member's treatment journey.



For more information or to obtain a sticker diary please contact Support Services on 0800 15 10 15 or [supportservices@leukaemia.org.nz](mailto:supportservices@leukaemia.org.nz)

[leukaemia.org.nz](http://leukaemia.org.nz)