

I Got This!:
Coping with Fear of Cancer Recurrence

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What do you want out of our time together?

Bottom line:

You are not “crazy.”

There is help/treatment for worry.

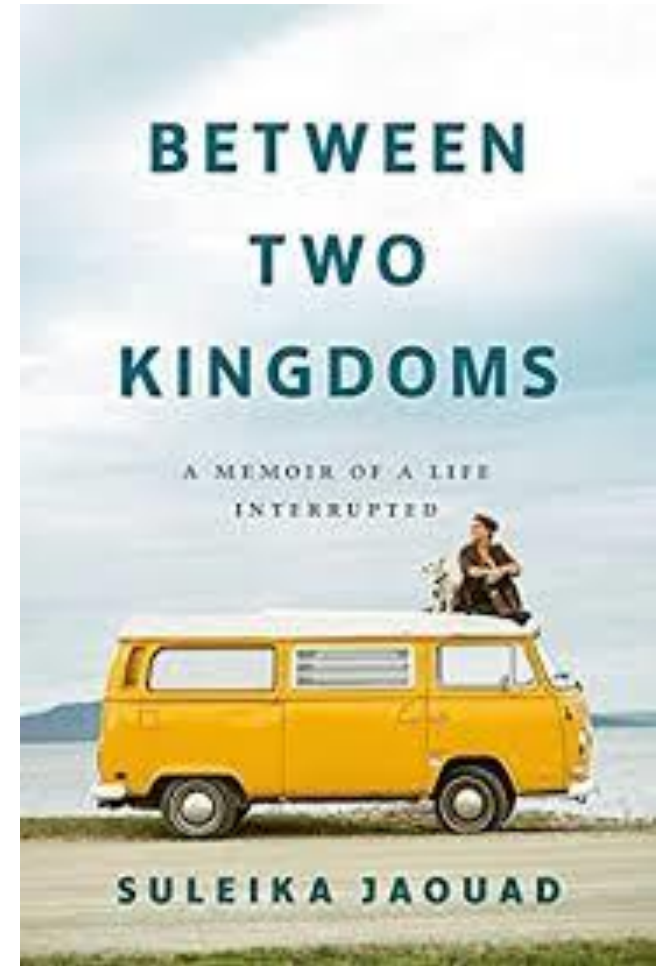
You do not have to do this alone.



Suleika Jaouad

“To learn to swim in the ocean of not-knowing – this is my constant work.”

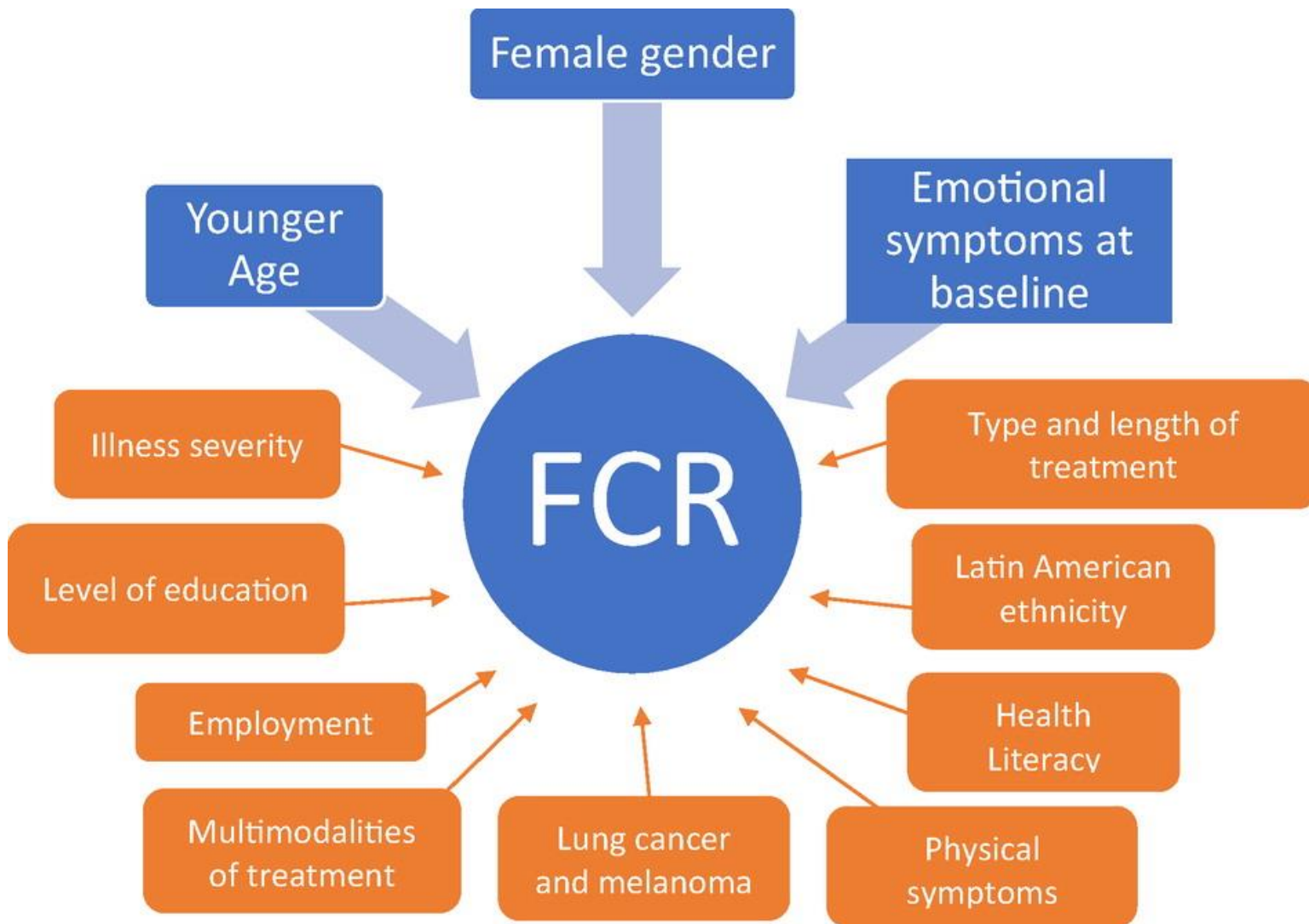
(p. 265)



National
College *of*
Ireland

Fear of Cancer Recurrence (FCR)

- Defined as the “fear, worry, or concern relating to the possibility that cancer will come back or progress” (Lebel et al., 2016)
- After treatment, managing FCR = #1 unmet need of cancer survivors.
- Sadly, nearly half of cancer survivors report moderate to severe levels of FCR. (Simard et al., 2013)
- Carers reported higher FCR than patients.



Risk Factors Associated With Fear of Cancer Recurrence or Progression (FCR)

Blue box, strong evidence.

Orange box, moderate
evidence.

(Bergero et al., 2022)

Effects of FCR

- May continue a long time, if not addressed.
 - For a person, can lead to distress, poor functioning, lower quality of life.
 - For society, can lead to increased health care usage and costs.
- (Smith et al., 2020).

SUFFERING

How would you describe FCR or its effects on you?

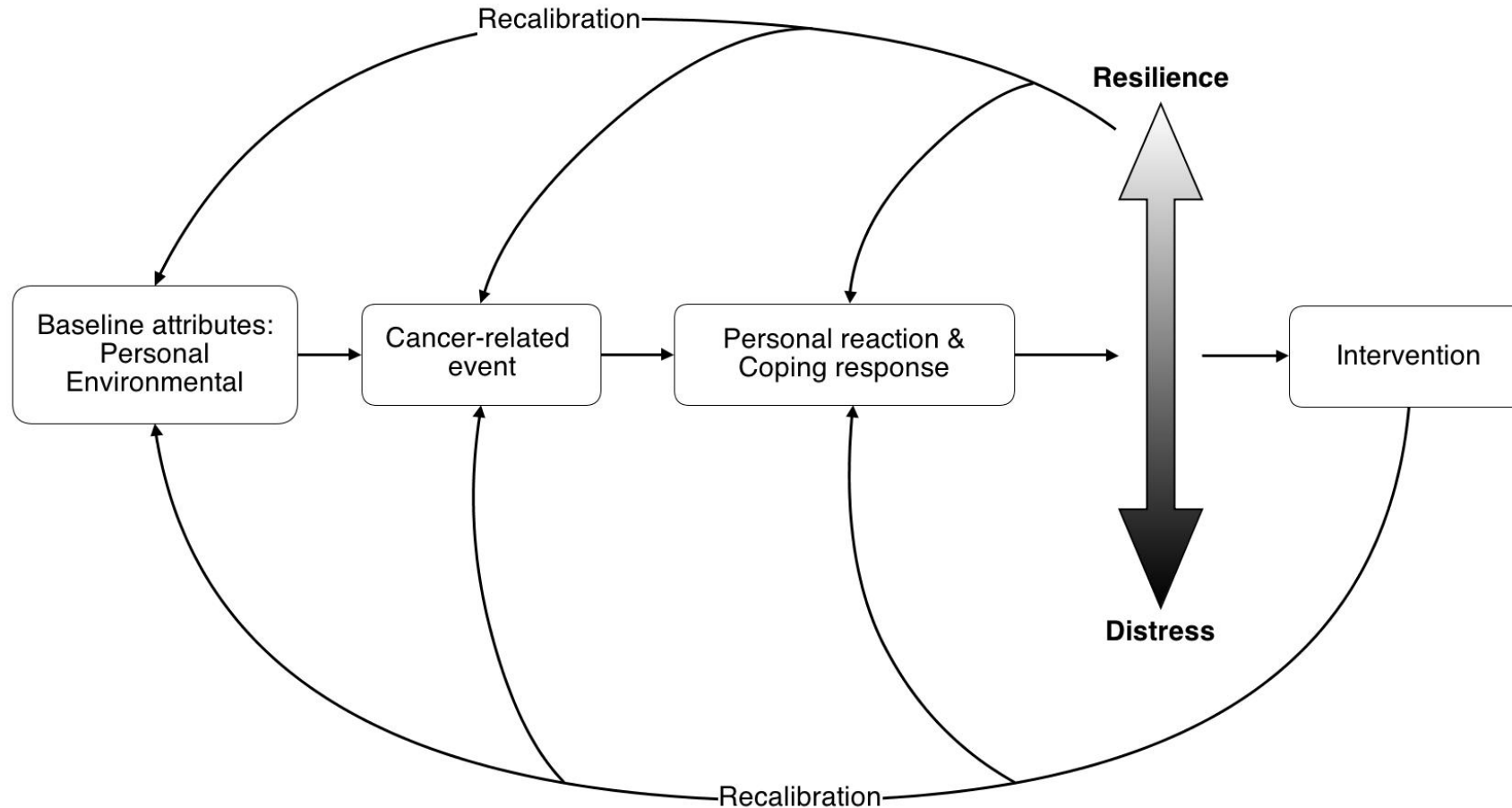


Suleika Jaouad

“...when the body betrays you again and again, it obliterates whatever nascent trust you’ve restored in the universe and your place in it. Each time, it becomes harder to recover your sense of safety. After you’ve had the ceiling cave in on you – whether through illness or some other catastrophe – you don’t assume structural stability. **You must learn to live on fault lines.**” (p. 273-274)



Resilience = ability to “bounce back”



Desields, T. L., Heiland, M. F., Kracen, A. C., & Dua, P. (2016). Resilience in adults with cancer: Development of a conceptual model. *Psycho-Oncology*, 25(1), 11-18. doi:10.1002/pon.3800

What are these interventions?

- Variety of coping strategies, but they all help enhance a sense of control and acceptance.
- No single menu of interventions.
- You need to find the “menu” that works well for you.

White House Breakfast Menu

Traditional Irish Breakfast

Giant Irish Breakfast
2 Egg, 2 Bacon, 2 Sausages, Black & White Pudding, Fried Potatoes, Mushrooms, Beans

Full Irish Breakfast
1 Egg, 2 Bacon, 2 Sausages, Black & White Pudding, Fried Potatoes

Small Breakfast
1 Egg, 1 Bacon, 1 Sausage, Fried Potatoes

Breakfast Roll
Fried egg, bacon, pudding & sausage

All breakfast is served with
Tea/Coffee & toast

Specialty Eggs

Classic Eggs Benedict
Poached Eggs topped with Hollandaise Sauce, served on a muffin

Egg Florentine
English Muffin, Smoked Salmon, Dill, Poached Eggs

French Toast
Poached Eggs, Spinach in creamy cheese sauce on toasted bread

Omelettes

Spanish Omelette
with potato & onion €8.95

French Omelette
Traditional Omelette cooked in butter €8.95
€9.50

Greek Omelette
with feta cheese & tomato

Extras

Beans €1.75
Mushrooms €1.75
Fried Onions €1.75
Grilled Tomato €1.50

Beverages

Tea/Coffee €2.50
Double Espresso €3.00
Cafe Americano €3.50
Cappuccino €3.50
Cafe Latte €2.50
Latte made with Almond milk
Fresh Orange Juice
Pint of Milk

Orla Crowe

“By its nature, cancer is an ambiguous, shocking, and frightening life experience...I had no control over the disease that was already inside my body...the only thing I had control over was my response to it.”

(Living with Cancer, p. 2)



Managing stress: Physical coping

- Work towards a healthy diet
- Increase movement / exercise***
- Get adequate sleep
- Reduce alcohol
- Minimize caffeine (it makes people feel more anxious!)
- Practice relaxation

Practice relaxation

- Deep breathing (“belly breathing”) – want longer outbreath
- Visualization / imagery
- Progressive muscle relaxation

- Listen to relaxation scripts on phone, computer, CD
- Can learn techniques from books, online, therapist
- Requires practice to get full benefits

Managing stress: Emotional coping

- Seek support from variety of other people.
- Share your feelings, including sadness, fears, anger.
- Express your emotions – journaling or arts.
- Prioritise humor – cat videos, etc.
- Find/schedule small things you enjoy each day.
- Get outside your home, especially in nature.
- Spend time with pets or children.

Managing stress: Psychological coping

- Learn about stress and how it affects your body.
- Connect with a fellow survivor for peer support.
- Focus on things you CAN change instead of those you can't.
- For things you can't change, practice acceptance. Tolerate uncertainty.
- Stay present, in the moment. Practice mindfulness meditation.
- Be aware of self-talk, focus on being realistic.
- Consider evidence-based therapy (e.g., CBT, ACT, MBCT).

Managing stress: Spiritual coping

- Pray or meditate.
- Read spiritual writings.
- Attend services.
- Listen to spiritual music.
- Ask for support from faith community.
- Spend time in nature.



Poor/Unhealthy Coping?

- Isolating
 - Avoiding medical treatment
 - Starting arguments
 - Using drugs or alcohol
 - Taking risks (i.e., driving too fast)
 - Thinking about suicide
- Excessive
 - Eating
 - Watching TV
 - Internet/phone use
 - Working
 - Shopping

How other survivors say they cope...

- Get my nails done
- Watch the planes at the airport
- Built a birdhouse with my grandson
- Watch a lot of movies
- Spend time in the park
- Go to worship services
- Do crossword puzzles
- People watch at the mall
- Build model airplanes
- Volunteer
- Go fishing
- Do the things I enjoy
- Listen to music or relaxation tapes
- Plant flowerpots
- Talk about feelings with friends and family
- Knit or crochet
- Bird watch from my porch

Ref: NIH Publication 08-0856

When might you need more support?

- 2-week rule of thumb:
 - You are isolating.
 - Challenging thoughts or emotions persist.
 - Sleep is disrupted.
 - You are seeking information repetitively (e.g., test results, online info).
 - Worry is debilitating, stops you from engaging in life.
- Urgently: Thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- You are suffering OR you want to build your resources/resiliency.

My Menu

Three (new) strategies I will try:

1. _____

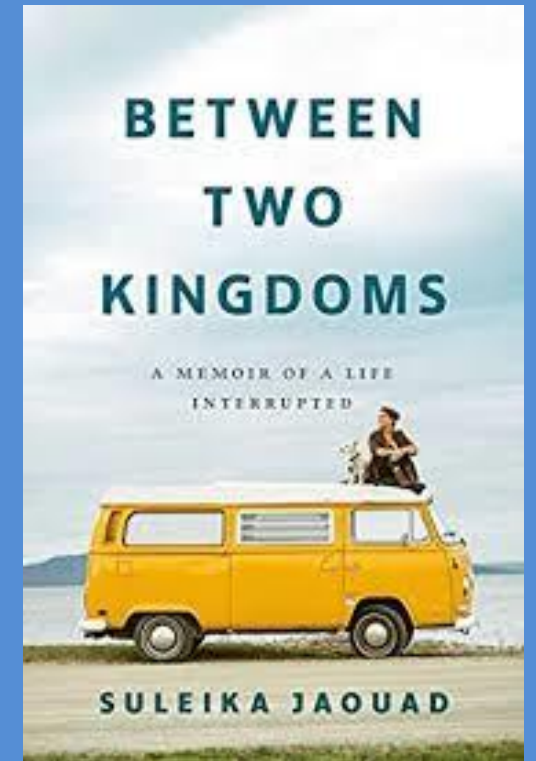
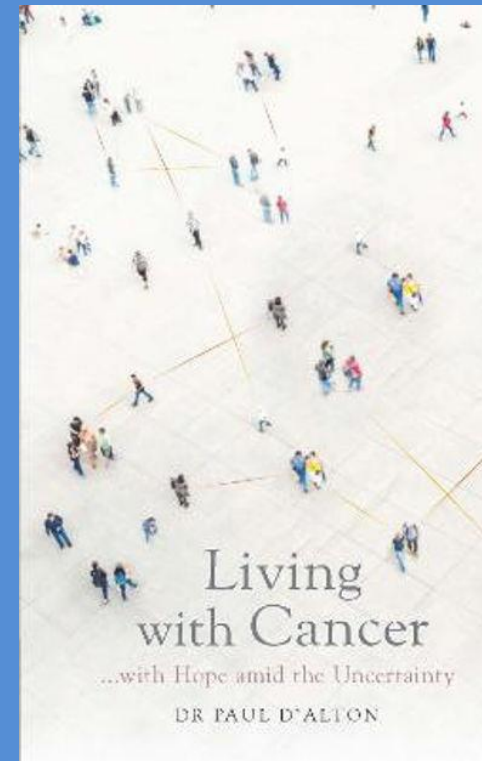
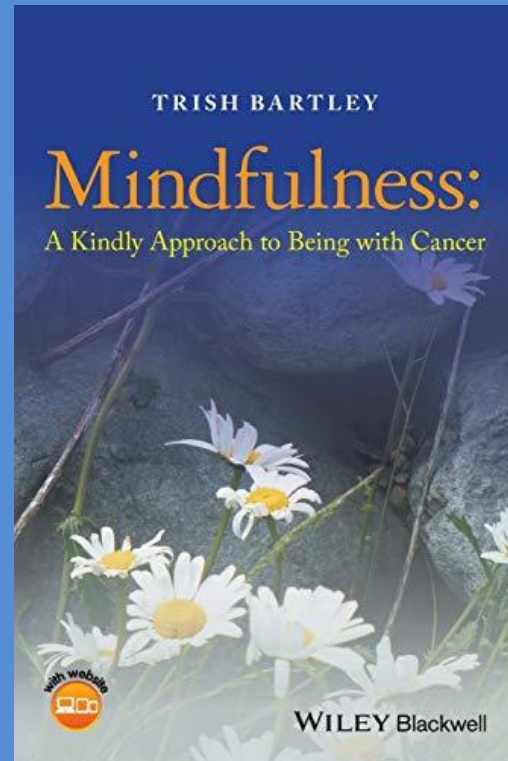
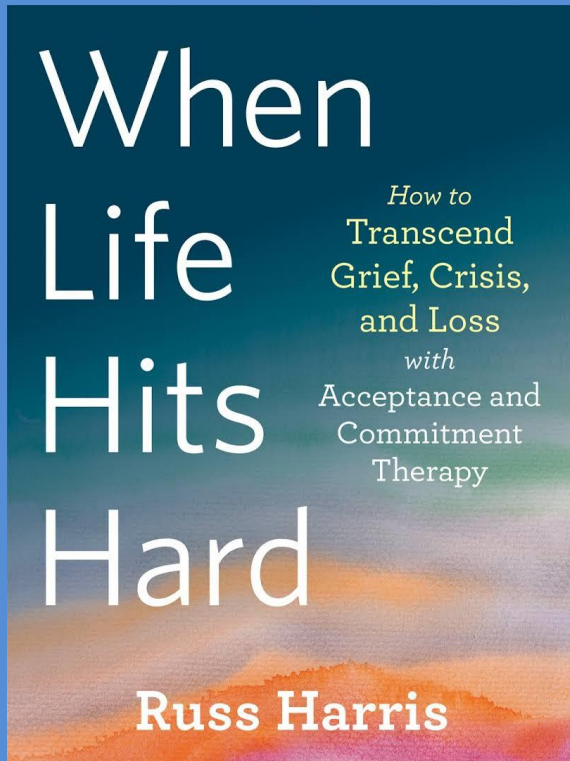
2. _____

3. _____

Where to get help?

- Your oncology team
- Your GP
- Your local cancer support centre
- Irish Cancer Society cancer.ie / 1800 200 700

Good Resources



PODCAST: <https://www.cancercare.org/canceroutloud>

Thank you.

Questions?

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