



THE FIVE TO THRIVE GUIDE

OPTIMIZING WELLNESS THROUGHOUT
THE CANCER EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

Cancer is more than a diagnosis. It's a daunting attack that brings with it an outpouring of emotions. While everyone's experience is different, fear is often first and foremost. From there, feelings can spin through a cycle of shock, anger, denial, despair, anxiety, sadness, and loneliness. You may also experience grace, hope, and resilience. In fact, sometimes it can feel like you are bouncing back and forth between highs and lows, which creates a unique kind of exhaustion.

As cancer survivors, we can relate. And that's why we created this guide. Here you will find practical tools and tips on how to optimize your wellness no matter where you are on your cancer journey. But first, for this guide to be helpful, we believe that it must be built on a strong foundation of love.

Tapping into love, especially during the darker times, will be your superpower—your magic weapon against the distress of cancer. As the influential poet Maya Angelou said, “Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope.”

To nurture this superpower, start by identifying love in every nook and cranny of your life:

- ❖ the people you love
- ❖ the people who love you
- ❖ the activities you love to do
- ❖ four-legged furry or feathered friends
- ❖ art that inspires
- ❖ cherished photos and memories
- ❖ the sunrise and sunset
- ❖ prized possessions like books, musical instruments, antiques, and more
- ❖ the places in nature that you love

And the list goes on. Now might be a good time to pause and create your love list. Keep that list handy because it's your roadmap.

Cancer can take away your energy, mess with your mood, and cause physical, mental, and emotional pain but cancer cannot take away the love in your life. When you lean into love, surprising things happen. Antithetical emotions arise. Instead of fear, there is gratitude and instead of anger, there is optimism. You can turn cancer on its head. And when you do that, your chance of thriving beyond your diagnosis is enhanced tremendously.



As you read this guide, continually remind yourself of your strong foundation of love. The cancer journey is not easy but focusing on love will help.

No matter where you are along the cancer spectrum, one fact remains: in every day there are moments that can become opportunities to thrive. When you string those moments together, you no longer have a plan, you have a way of life. You will likely never forget your cancer or its impact, but our hope is the Five to Thrive Plan can help you transcend your diagnosis to fully embrace your new life as a **THRIVER**.

WHY FIVE?

To thrive through and beyond a cancer diagnosis, we focus on five key areas that have the most influence on recovery and reducing the risk of recurrence. These five areas are:

- 1 Nurture your **SPIRIT**
- 2 **MOVE** more often
- 3 Enrich your **DIET**
- 4 Detoxify your **ENVIRONMENT**
- 5 Practice **REJUVENATION**

Within each of these five core areas of wellness, we provide five key strategies to consider. Rest assured the strategies featured in this guide are evidence-based, effective, safe, practical, and sustainable. Let's begin your journey as a thriver with the important topic of spirit.





CHAPTER ONE

SPIRIT

To us, the word *spirit* is not confined to a religious practice or a specific spiritual inclination. Spirit, in the context of the Five to Thrive Plan, means creating a path to live life with awareness, genuine openness, and love. When we do this, we honor the life force that propels us closer to our purpose. Being attuned to our spirit requires us to be present, engaged, and connected. Connection, not only to ourselves but also to others, is what gives life meaning.

But how do we develop a connection to our spirit and others? As promised, we have five strategies to help you along your spiritual journey beginning with love.

① Practice loving kindness toward yourself and others. Self-compassion can be a powerful tool to enhance health. A 2022 study involving colon cancer survivors found that practicing self-compassion helped the survivors better deal with stress and also positively influenced their mental health.¹ Just creating the intention to be gentle and kind to yourself is an act of self-compassion. For example, try this...when you catch a glimpse of your reflection, smile and acknowledge yourself with love, even going as far as saying to yourself, “I love you” or “I am lovable.” As we reinforce these ways of thinking, our brains literally re-wire (a fascinating area of study called neuroplasticity), hard coding those feelings into our natural, default state.

You can also practice loving kindness towards others by, in the moment, wishing them well or by thinking about people you want to send loving kindness to at the end of the day. This is especially powerful if you send loving kindness to someone you are in conflict with. Loving kindness involves creating the intention that you only want the best for that person. Your intention can also be more detailed wishing peace, love, good health, or happiness to the person. Typically, loving-kindness will begin by sending loving intentions to yourself, then loved ones, and eventually to all beings. Research shows that practicing loving-kindness is a powerful way to open your heart, create positive emotions, and enhance mental health.^{2,3}

② Seek out social support. Research demonstrates that isolation can be dangerous to health. According to the CDC, loneliness and social isolation can lead to serious health concerns with recent studies finding that it increases the risk of dementia by 50%, stroke by 32%, and heart disease by 29% and increases a person’s risk of premature death from all causes.⁴ The CDC concludes that social isolation can be just as dangerous to our health as smoking, obesity, and inactivity! Now that may sound

overwhelming and the idea of seeking out social support may seem daunting, but it illustrates the need to make this strategy a priority. Here are some ways to enhance your social support network:

- ❖ Be proactive about staying connected to family and friends who have a history of supporting you.
- ❖ Consider joining a cancer support group or a mutual-interest group like a book club, walking group, sports team, singing club, prayer group, or other social group.
- ❖ Take a class or consider volunteering for an organization that you are drawn to. By the way, the act of service has also been shown to enhance your health on many levels, so this tip has additional benefits.
- ❖ Cast a wide net by reaching out to new neighbors or using technology to get connected and stay connected to others.

One final word on social support: don't be afraid to re-evaluate your existing relationships and possibly even end ones that are negative or unsupportive. It's all about quality, not quantity.

③ Encourage laughter. Research shows that the simple act of laughter impacts us on a cellular level by turning on health-promoting genes and turning off harmful ones.⁵ Now that's powerful! According to a 2022 analysis of 45 different clinical trials, featuring people with physical and mental health issues, laughter-inducing interventions positively influenced mental, physiological, and physical health.⁶ To encourage laughter, hang out with funny friends, watch funny movies and TV shows, read humorous books, and even consider trying "laughter yoga," which involves practicing deliberate laughter exercises.

④ Consistently practice gratitude. Gratitude is one of those "muscles" that we need to exercise on an almost daily basis. And when we work that muscle, we reap the



benefits. Research shows that gratitude can help our mental and physical health. A 2021 study involving women diagnosed with breast cancer demonstrated that women who felt the most grateful had better overall well-being and were better able to cope with stress.⁷

A great tip provided by the CanHEAL resource includes starting a new gratitude ritual. For example, many people give thanks before a meal or count their blessings at the end of the day. What new gratitude ritual could you create to infuse into your daily routine? CanHEAL also recommends keeping a gratitude journal by writing down three things you are grateful for at the end of the day. We recommend you try to “bookend” your day by doing this in the morning and evening. Research shows that gratitude journals can enhance the quality of life and reduce psychological distress and suffering, specifically in people diagnosed with cancer.⁸

If a gratitude journal isn’t your thing, just try being more mindful of the little things you can appreciate throughout the day: a kind word, beautiful nature, a deep relaxing breath, a moment of bodily comfort, or any other time when you feel grateful.

⑤ Be authentic. Being authentic is being consistent with your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. That consistency is known as congruence and the opposite, incongruence, can be problematic.

How do you feel if you sense that a person is being inconsistent, and their actions are not matching their words? It makes many of us feel uneasy and untrusting. A good example of the dangers of incongruence is when the job and the person do not match. Research shows that this type of incongruence can lead to more burnout and physical symptoms such as headaches, chest pain, dizziness, feeling out of breath, and stiff/sore muscles.⁹ In other words, being congruent is better for your mental and physical health.

To be authentic is to be yourself without hiding behind facades. The best strategy to practice authenticity and congruence is by paying attention to your actions, words, thoughts, and feelings and “checking in” with yourself from time to time. Are you expressing what you are truly feeling? You can also talk to a loved one or close friend about your goal to be more authentic and periodically ask for gentle, honest feedback. Being authentic will not only enhance your health but will also be greatly appreciated by the people you love.

With these five strategies — loving kindness, social support, laughter, gratitude, and authenticity — you will move further along the path of living with love, awareness, and genuine openness. This will create profound changes in your health right down to the way your genes are expressed.

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CHAPTER TWO

MOVEMENT

The most important way to reduce cancer risk, is to move your body. Research is clear that sitting too much throughout the day increases cancer risk, whereas being physically active before, during, and after a cancer diagnosis improves recovery and reduces the risk of recurrence.¹⁰ A study published in *JAMA Oncology* brings this point home further by reporting that replacing just 30 minutes of sitting with light-intensity physical activity will decrease the risk of dying of cancer by 8% and replacing that 30 minutes with moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity will lower cancer mortality by a whopping 31%.¹¹

So, here are some strategies to help you move throughout the day.

1 Muscle strengthening. Building muscle will not only give you more strength, but it may also help you lose weight. Every pound of muscle burns about six calories a day to sustain itself, while fat only burns about two calories a day. To build muscle you can work out with weights, walk purposefully, jog, hike, jump rope, climb stairs, practice yoga, or many other activities. Strengthening muscles requires repetition, so setting aside time several days each week for these activities is important.



2 Include aerobic activities. The purpose of aerobic exercise is to get the heart and lungs working harder than they do when you are resting. Well-known aerobic activities are bicycling, swimming, jumping rope, dancing, rowing, and running. You can also try brisk walking with bursts of jogging for a few minutes.

3 Enhance flexibility. Stretching daily is critical to keep joints limber and to improve balance, range of motion, and circulation. Remember, stretching should not be painful, it should be fluid and gentle with no bouncing or throwing your body into a stretch. Also, when stretching, breathe freely and deeply. Given the importance of mobility, especially as we age, aim to stretch daily or even a few times per day.

4 Move consistently and frequently. For us to get the most out of our movement plan, we need to make it a habit. Exercise timing is important. Research shows that exercising in the morning helps a person stick with it and contributes to better weight management.¹² Also, keep in mind that exercising late at night may disrupt your sleep.

5 Stay hydrated before, during, and after exercising. The Institute of Medicine has set a daily adequate intake of water for men at 13 cups (104 ounces) and women at 9 cups (72 ounces). Exercise, especially when the activity causes us to sweat, increases the body's need for water. Drinking water throughout the day is key. Don't wait until you're thirsty, because even marginal dehydration can begin long before we are thirsty.

**RESEARCH
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MANAGEMENT.**

The CanHEAL resource offers this additional advice when it comes to movement:

- ❖ Be aware of any physical limitations and talk to your doctor about those limitations.
- ❖ Build up slowly to avoid any potential injuries.
- ❖ Reduce sitting time by getting up even for a few minutes every 60 to 90 minutes to stand, stretch, dance, or shake.
- ❖ Choose a physical activity you like. There are many options including walking, gardening, movement classes (yoga, tai chi, Pilates, etc.), and traditional types of exercise like jogging, swimming, and going to the gym.

Your community may also have some movement programs specifically for cancer survivors like the Livestrong program at many YMCAs. Movement is an important way to create better health and the benefits of movement accumulate with regular, ideally daily, activities of strength building, aerobic activities, and stretching.



CHAPTER THREE

DIET

A healthy diet is foundational to reducing the risk of cancer and cancer recurrence. One way to think about diet is food as information. The metabolites formed from the digestion of food provide our cells with the building blocks to make energy but also contain molecules that influence gene expression. The dietary pattern that we endorse is a whole-food Mediterranean-style diet and here's why.

In 2022, for the fifth straight year, the Mediterranean diet was named the healthiest diet in the world by *US News & World Report*. With its focus on healthy fats, spices, and colorful fruits and vegetables, this diet is full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that have been shown to reduce cancer risk including the most common cancers such as breast, colon, prostate, and lung.¹³ A 2021 analysis of 44 different randomized, controlled trials concluded that adherence to the Mediterranean diet was correlated with a much lower risk of dying from many different types of cancer.¹⁴

Because the Mediterranean diet focuses on fresh, whole foods, it avoids processed foods, especially ultra-processed foods which are dangerous to health.

Ultra-processed foods such as soft drinks, chips, candy, ice cream, hotdogs, fries, sweetened breakfast cereals, etc., are highly manipulated and often contain added ingredients that are harmful such as sugar, fats, preservatives, and artificial colors.

According to a 2020 review of 43 studies, 37 of these studies found that eating ultra-processed foods was associated with at least one of these: cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, frailty, and all-cause mortality.¹⁵ One reason ultra-

processed foods are associated with so many different health issues is that these foods are highly inflammatory, which means these foods turn on genes that make inflammatory proteins. An inflammatory diet has been shown to lead to a variety of illnesses and can cause obesity, which is a key risk factor in cancer development.^{16,17}





Here are the five strategies we recommend when it comes to creating a healthy Mediterranean-style diet.

- ① Focus on eating whole and unprocessed foods.** We've made a great case as to why this is so important. One way to avoid processed foods is to avoid fast-food restaurants because they often feature highly processed and fried foods. Another great way is to shop at farmer's markets or focus on the perimeter of the grocery store where you'll find fresh, whole foods (i.e., vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seeds, and nuts).
- ② Add more color.** Another way to eat more whole foods is to eat more color. Those colorful foods contain powerful compounds that have potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity, which positively influence health. When menu planning and even before you lift your fork, look closely at your plate and evaluate its color content. Try to eat the colors of the rainbow at each meal.
- ③ Engage your senses and eat mindfully.** With this strategy, we remind ourselves that eating is not just about *what* we eat, it's also about *how* we eat. Eating should involve all of our senses: smell, sight, sound, touch, and taste. When we eat with our senses, we also slow down and can appreciate the eating experience, which is often referred to as eating mindfully. Research shows that mindful eating can help with depression, psychological well-being, pain management, and weight loss.¹⁸
- ④ Spice it up.** Spices not only add flavor to your favorite dishes, but they are also really good for your health. Research shows that the active compounds found in many common cooking spices have health-promoting activities including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and anticancer actions.¹⁹ Some of our favorite spices to consider adding to your meals include garlic, ginger, cinnamon, cumin, pepper, cayenne, and rosemary.
- ⑤ Eat organic when possible.** Organic foods have less pesticide residue and organic farming is better for the environment. Another important advantage is that they are often more nutritious. For example, a meta-analysis that included 343 studies concluded that organically grown crops were higher in antioxidants and had less cadmium, which is a heavy metal linked to cancer risk.²⁰ A 2020 analysis concluded that urinary pesticide content was lower in people eating organic foods and that there are “demonstrable health benefits” when we consistently eat organic foods.²¹

Our dietary pattern is a repetitive flow of information to our cells and, importantly to our genes. A healthy diet can help us move toward health and away from disease. A whole food, Mediterranean-style, mostly organic diet, replete with spices will engage our senses and build our health.



CHAPTER FOUR

ENVIRONMENT

When we talk about the environment as it relates to the Five to Thrive Plan, we mean both your internal and external environment. From an internal standpoint, we want to support the body's ability to detoxify harmful substances. And from an external perspective, we want to reduce exposure to toxins. And here's why.

Presently there are more than 350,000 different synthetic chemicals in the environment and the United States alone produces an average of 1,500 **new** synthetic chemicals per year all adding up to about 220 billion tons of chemicals released into the environment annually.²² All of these chemicals are in the air we breathe, the foods we eat, the water we drink, and the products we use daily. They are also absorbed through the largest organ in the human body, the skin. And we know this onslaught can alter gene expression and harm our health.

A 2016 study found that air pollution exposure significantly increased the risk of dying of cancer, and not just lung cancer.²³ A 2020 analysis found that air pollution resulted in an increased risk specifically of gastrointestinal and liver cancer and potentially colon cancer.²⁴

Yes, we live in a toxic world but fortunately, there are ways to reduce exposure and enhance detoxification. Here are some strategies to consider.

- 1 Support internal detoxification.** The good news is that the human body has an entire system set up to help us detoxify toxic chemicals. For example, the lungs



detoxify by removing gases, the skin detoxifies by sweating, digestion eliminates toxins through urine and stool, and the liver changes toxic compounds into nontoxic compounds that can be more easily eliminated. Additionally, the bacteria that reside in our intestines, our microbiome, make an important contribution to detoxification. You can support this entire system by eating a healthy whole foods diet that contains organic foods when possible (more about that with strategy #4), exercising because sweat enhances detoxification, and getting enough sleep. Sleep is really important because that's when we repair and replenish the major systems of the body, especially the brain. When we sleep, the lymphatic system kicks into high gear and begins a slow methodical cleansing of harmful proteins that can otherwise build up in the brain.²⁵

And speaking of the brain, research shows that increasing omega-3 fatty acid levels in the diet or through dietary supplements can help protect the brain from air pollution damage.²⁶ Glutathione is another nutrient that is important to detoxification because it helps facilitate the elimination of toxins and supports liver function as it relates to detoxification.²⁷ Foods that increase glutathione levels are avocados, asparagus, brassica vegetables (Brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, cabbage), strawberries, oranges, kiwis, meat, and dairy products. Glutathione is also available as a dietary supplement. Fiber is also an important nutrient for detoxification as research shows it supports the gut microbiome and the major organs involved in detoxification including the intestines, liver, and kidneys.²⁸ Great sources of fiber include almonds, avocados, chickpeas, kidney beans, split peas, lentils, and oats, and it is also available as a dietary supplement.

Please note: if you are presently undergoing cancer treatment, talk to your doctor before taking any dietary supplements as some supplements can interfere with treatment.

- 2 Utilize nontoxic body care and cleaning products whenever possible.** This is important because remember, your skin absorbs what it comes into contact with. For example, phthalates (pronounced tha*lates) are a group of chemicals used to make plastics stronger and

they are also in numerous products including personal care (soaps, shampoos, hair sprays, etc.), lubricating oils, packaging, vinyl flooring, and many others. A 2022 analysis involving menopausal women showed that exposure to phthalates is associated with obesity,



hormone disruption, and metabolic syndrome, which is a condition that increases the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other illnesses.²⁹

We recommend using non-toxic body care products whenever possible. In addition to eliminating toxic substances, oftentimes, nontoxic body care products contain healing ingredients such as essential oils, herbs, and nutrients. For example, topical oils such as argan, avocado, and sunflower have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects when applied to the skin, which can offer up additional protection from our environment including UV radiation from the sun.³⁰ Another example is the use of Calendula extract used topically to help protect the skin from cancer radiation treatment.³¹ Also, choose products that contain organic ingredients when possible.

When it comes to nontoxic body care products, the choices have expanded. Look for products that are specifically for people diagnosed with cancer that are non-toxic, European Union-compliant, and oncology-approved.

**TOPICAL OILS
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APPLIED TO
THE SKIN.**

- 3 Purify air and water.** The best way to do this is with a HEPA air filter and water filters. Of course, filters can't remove all toxins from the air and water, but they do a great job at removing most toxins, so we feel they are worth the investment.

Regarding water filters, be sure to get one that is NSF-certified, and take some time to consider how the filter will best fit your budget and lifestyle.

Some additional advice from CanHEAL to improve air quality in your home is to avoid using air fresheners, scented candles, mothballs, and dryer sheets as these items contain harmful chemicals. Also, never smoke tobacco in your home, and identify and mitigate radon, asbestos, or mold issues.

- 4 Reduce exposure to food toxins.** The foods we eat can contain toxic compounds such as antibiotics, pesticides, and bisphenol A (BPA). We've already discussed the importance of eating organic foods when possible, but this topic is so important to our internal environment that we wanted to emphasize it further. The Environmental Working Group publishes a "dirty dozen" list each year, which are foods that have the highest pesticide content, so they should be eaten as organic when possible. The 2022 list included strawberries, spinach, kale/collard greens/mustard greens, nectarines, apples, grapes, bell and hot peppers, cherries, peaches, pears, celery, and tomatoes. To avoid antibiotics and other unwanted chemicals in foods higher up the food chain such as meat and dairy, choose organic versions of those foods when possible.

BPA, which is found in plastic bottles, packaging, printer receipts, toiletries, and many other products is another biggie. Because BPA is a chemical that can disrupt the endocrine system, increased exposure to BPA is linked to hormone-associated cancers including breast, ovarian, and prostate.³² BPA is also found in canned foods and plastic food containers so try to choose BPA-free food packaging whenever you can. We realize it's nearly impossible to avoid BPA, so the key is to reduce exposure as much as possible.

5 More houseplants, please. OK, it's time to discuss a really fun strategy—house plants! We can thank NASA for the discovery back in 1989 that certain houseplants can absorb harmful toxins in the air that include chemicals from carpets, flooring, ovens, cleaning solutions, and more. Since that time, fascinating research has confirmed that plants help clear the air by decreasing carbon dioxide and increasing oxygen.³³ The best air-purifying plants are tulsi basil, aloe vera, peace lily, devils ivy, snake plant, orchids, lady palm, rubber plant, areca palm, and English ivy. Even if you don't have a green thumb, these plants are widely available already planted, and just need some sunlight and consistent watering.

**PLANTS IN
THE HOSPITAL
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FOLLOWING
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What's more, plants are also good for your health. One of our favorite studies shows that plants in the hospital room following surgery resulted in less pain, anxiety, and fatigue, as well as a shorter hospital stay and overall more positive feelings and higher satisfaction.³⁴ Now that's some powerful medicine! Adding plants to your environment is certainly a strategy worth considering.

Using these strategies to minimize the toxicity of our external environment while maximizing our detoxification systems will support the health of our internal environment.





CHAPTER FIVE

REJUVENATION

Rejuvenation is the stress management part of the Five to Thrive Plan.

This is a topic that can be overwhelming because sometimes we can't control the amount of stress in our lives. Fortunately, there are many ways to help support the body's ability to deal with stress, so stress isn't as harmful to health, which is the key.

There was a time when conventional medicine believed there was no link between chronic stress and cancer development but all of that has changed. Chronic stress promotes cancer development by activating powerful growth-promoting hormones, reducing immunity, and increasing inflammation.³⁵ That's why it's important to find ways to calm that stress response. To do this, we created the 5 Rs of Rejuvenation, which are designed to generate greater calm even when things become chaotic. We begin with rest because that involves getting enough sleep, which is critical to cancer prevention and achieving optimal rejuvenation. In fact, reduced sleep duration has been linked to 7 of the top 15 leading causes of death including cancer.³⁶

**CHRONIC STRESS
REDUCES
IMMUNITY AND
INCREASES
INFLAMMATION.**

- 1 Rest.** The CDC recommends that adults get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night and yet many people are not getting that amount. We recommend you ask yourself these questions to help encourage both quantity and quality sleep:
- ❖ Do you have unresolved stress from the day and if you do, how can you put that stress to “bed” before you go to bed?
 - ❖ Is your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet to encourage a comfortable night's sleep?
 - ❖ Did you exercise today?
 - ❖ Did you eat protein at dinner time? You can also eat a handful of nuts about an hour before bedtime to help encourage sleep.
 - ❖ Have you had too much alcohol before bedtime?

Some dietary supplements such as L-theanine, chamomile, lavender, or melatonin can help naturally encourage sleep. And again, if you are presently going through active cancer treatment, remember to talk to your doctor before taking supplements.

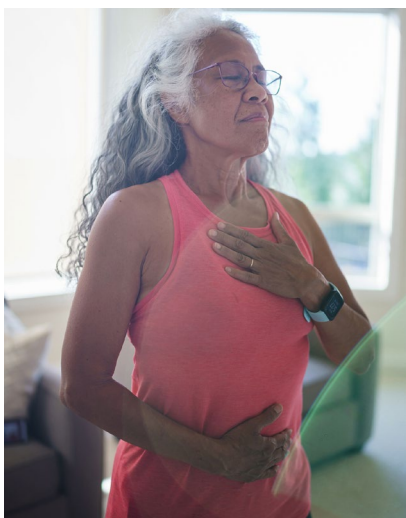
A hot bath, calming essential oils, and relaxing music before bed may also help you rest well.

2 Rhythm. Rhythm relates to sleep because it involves getting in sync with your internal clock known as the circadian system. Our daily rhythms correspond to the change from day to night. One disrupter of circadian rhythm is artificial and blue lights from computers, mobile devices, and television. This means that turning off those artificial and blue lights about an hour before bedtime and keeping those lights out of the bedroom will help enhance circadian rhythm.

Establishing and/or embracing rituals is another way to encourage a daily balanced rhythm. Research shows that ritual behavior is associated with better emotional, social, and physical health.³⁷ You can infuse your day with healthy rituals beginning in the morning with prayer/contemplation/reading, adding a mealtime ritual, being in nature, or the evening by listening to relaxing music. Take some time to think about the rituals you already have and how you can create even more health-promoting rituals.

3 Relax. Here we have a simple question: how do you relax? Is it playing with your dog? Going for a walk? Doing needlepoint or woodworking? Now is the time to figure out how you recharge your battery.

As with all our strategies, consistency is key. But with this one, it's paramount. We must find times in our day to relax even when our day is especially hectic. One quick trick you can use to encourage a sense of relaxation even when you are under a lot of stress is with deep breathing. We recommend 4-7-8 breathing, which was made popular by Dr. Andrew Weil, founder of The University of Arizona Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine. What we love most about 4-7-8 breathing is that it is simple, quick, and amazingly effective. Here's how you do it and it is recommended that you do this for four cycles if you have time (4 cycles take about 1 minute):



- ❖ Start by exhaling completely through your mouth while you make a “whoosh” sound.
- ❖ Close your mouth and inhale deeply through your nose while mentally counting to four.
- ❖ Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- ❖ Exhale completely through your mouth to a count of eight, once again making that “whoosh” sound.

Repeat the process with your next inhalation to a count of four. One cycle includes inhalation, breath hold, and exhalation.

- 4 Replenish.** On one level, to replenish is to eat a healthy diet as we discussed earlier because those fresh, wholesome foods replenish the body nutritionally on a deep cellular level. But replenishment also means nurturing and getting in touch with other important aspects of our lives such as creativity, connection, playfulness, and enjoyment.



One of our favorite poets, Mary Oliver, once said, “If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don’t hesitate. Give in to it...joy is not made to be a crumb.” None of us should settle for crumbs when it comes to joy, happiness, and a sense of exuberance.

How do you replenish yourself daily? Perhaps the next time you walk by that park, you will take some time to swing on the swing. Or how about getting replenished by taking the longer, but more scenic way home from work. Or how about signing up for a cooking class with friends. The key is to find your joy and then find it again, and again, and again.

- 5 Remediate.** To remediate is to make right. Remediation involves taking stock of our lives and asking ourselves some key questions that may produce some tough answers. For example, are there areas of your life that are destructive or unhealthy? Do you have toxic relationships that need to be ended or transformed? Do you have old wounds that need to be healed?

Remediation may also require you to take responsibility for the role you played in a relationship or situation you are trying to remediate. Be kind but own it. Being transparent is also a great way to remediate a relationship because that requires you to lead with authenticity, which will enhance feelings of trust.

Finally, a central part of remediation is forgiveness of yourself and others. Forgiveness can also play an important role in improving mental and physical health.³⁸ One misconception about forgiveness is that it lets the person off the hook who hurt you. Forgiveness is done for you, not others. Forgiveness frees you of negativity and it breaks the bond that holds you to the person who hurt you. Self-forgiveness is equally important. Through forgiveness, we accept our humanity and the humanity of others.

Rejuvenation helps us to manage our stress. The five R’s of rejuvenation — rest, rhythm, relax, replenish, and remediate — help us find deeper and more enduring inner calm regardless of the stresses that we face.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Be gentle with yourself and the people around you as you create your new normal. Thriving is a journey, not a destination. On those days when you don't feel like a Thriver, practice self-compassion, and when you are ready, remind yourself that the Thriver is there. Gently coax out your Thriver and begin your journey once again.

You can do this Thriver!

We will close with another favorite quote from Mary Oliver, which is perhaps one of the most important questions you can ask yourself as you embark on your new journey as a Thriver:

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



Please note: You can find additional strategies in our book *The Definitive Guide to Thriving After Cancer* and in CanHEAL, a free website resource published by the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine – University of Arizona.

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