

Sneak Peak



MODERN GUIDE TO CAREGIVING

A GUIDED JOURNAL FOR CARETAKERS

"Make Your Own Fun"

Changing the Conversation About Care

“

LIVE!
LIVE!
LIVE!

”

"Auntie Mame"

MAKE YOUR OWN FUN™

Our entire philosophy centers on making this awful process as painless as possible. Each journal segment provides ideas to make your life easier, less stressful and - yes - more fun.

The Take Care approach might seem counter-intuitive. Having cancer is not fun. Nothing about the treatment or diagnosis is joyful, let's be honest. Neither "C" word (cancer or caretaker) transforms you into a better, more noble person. A diagnosis does not turn us into a wise Yoda, as pop culture would lead us to believe. Nor does it make your relationships sepia-toned or the world a bit more precious. Caretaking and healing are both hard, frustrating jobs.

So why on earth are we telling you to make your own fun?

Because from the moment you find yourself on the cancer conveyor belt, most decisions are no longer your own. You find yourself propelled into a lock-step process with very, very high stakes. One of the only choices available is how you respond -- how you decide to experience the coming onslaught. Much is not in your control, but you can choose to set the tone during the "season of care." Deciding to have fun is a radical choice. One of the most powerful ways to "discharge pain" is to have fun.

"Make Your Own Fun" is a philosophy of resilience to help you bounce back from the challenges ahead. Fun is a place of peace and resistance -- a choice to determine the context of your life.

I chose to approach cancer from the vantage point of my literary hero, Auntie Mame. From day one, all decisions outside of treatments were about fun, comfort, and joy. If the coming months were our last together - or even a hard season - we would enjoy each moment surrounded by joy and beauty. Mame's most famous mantra is: "LIVE! LIVE! LIVE!". Quite the double-entendre when applied to cancer care.

We had fun. (We struggled mightily too!) But instead of being dour and leaning into the legitimate terror, we decided to lean into humor. (And it was a very conscious decision.) From the food we ate to the shows we watched, we were very intentional with our days. We listened to audiobooks that cheered us and calmed our nerves. We made chemo sessions little parties, with activities and celebratory foil peel-on tattoos. People thought we were crazy, no doubt. Yet each time, strangers joined in our antics, and the mood in our chemo-pod lightened.

Now, Mame Dennis might not be your style. The pages ahead give you space to reflect: what gives you and your 'patient' comfort? Peace and joy? A mindful approach to a scary situation is at the heart of Make Your Own Fun™. A guiding question for you: In what ways can this time be comforting and fun?

The prompts ahead will give you space to consider ways you can fill your life with: Comfort, Joy, Peace, Safety, Support

You will look at the many ways to bring fun into your life through your five senses: Sight, Sound, Taste, Smell, Touch.

WHY IS FUN IMPORTANT DURING CRISIS?

Why brainstorm an expansive list for comfort and fun right now? Because you, dear caregiver, cannot be the only source of comfort. Fun and comfort cannot all come from individuals - and certainly not only from the caretaker. The ideas you create will become the "comfort cavalry" -- ideas to return to again and again for a boost or a break. Consider a mix of activities that others can offer to your patient. And make sure to include activities that renew you.

Joy can be the buffer to protect relationships. Humor bears the burdens that inevitably arise. Comfort can serve as a balm to anxiety. Everyone involved in caretaking needs support and uplifting, comfort, and ease.

NOTES ON THE JOURNAL

Do not judge yourself if this mindset does not come instinctively or immediately. We are not primed to counter fear with purpose and intention. Expect some rough drafts. The prompts will guide you through the present, past, and future as a way to consider fun. This is a great time to ask friends and family for their input.

"Make Your Own Fun" is easier to sustain when the actions become routine. Consider what is accessible and repeatable. But what to do when illness changes the dynamic or limits options? Dancing may be off the list for now. Swap that out for dance videos on YouTube. Take the original idea and consider the core feeling. Modifications are necessary during the season of illness and caretaking. If that is the case for you, take a deep breath and let yourself expand and explore. As the illness or treatment progresses, the list will fluctuate. Expect that "fun" will shift. But you have the power to always make a positive and renewing choice.

The suggestions we offer throughout the journal are launching pads for personal discovery. The ideas are not prescriptive or a one-size solution. A cashmere hoodie might not be the epitome of comfort and security to you. Perhaps a quilted flannel shirt might be

more your speed. Our picks for "Convalescence Theater" might not align exactly with yours. That is OK! The suggestions offered are a framework. We want to share the concept of calming entertainment. Drives in the country may not be an option. A drive around a local park might be a better fit for you.

Our goal is to help you create a personalized version of a peaceful healing environment.

Make your OWN fun during this time. If that one suggestion is your only takeaway, our work here is done. There is no way to make this painless, stress-free, or not terrifying. We believe that, if you choose, this time can consist of many positive memories. Not in a "Beaches", tear-jerker, cliché way. As you Make Your Own Fun in a sustainable, authentic and intentional manner, you can fill each day with moments energy that bolsters your spirits and brings healing.

MAKE YOUR OWN FUN *ToolKit*

1

LIBRARY CARD

Get on board with the library! The perfect sources for bottomless, free audio books! An audiobook can entertain for 3x as many hours as reading.

2

MAP OF LOCAL PARKS

You'll need safe places that aren't your house or hospital. Plot out the places you can visit nature, take a peaceful post-treatment nap, or host a car picnic. When health permits, you'll know the best places for a stroll.

3

STREAMING SUBSCRIPTIONS

We subscribed to two streamers at a time. When that content was complete, we'd move to another pairing. Sometimes fun is a movie marathon!

4

PICNIC BOX

Always having a bit of food on hand is incredibly helpful while making your own fun! Knowing you won't get hungry allows for more adventure and confidence to go further afield.

5

BUBBLE LOCATIONS

Bubble locations are events that you can attend and stay in your car. You'll get creative finding parades, holiday lights, hometown football games and other ways of engaging from a safe distance.

6

LOCAL SCENIC DRIVES

sometimes you just have to get out of the house! Where to go varies depending on your location, but if you have a car, consider mapping routes that offer nature and novelty.

7

SENSE OF HUMOR

Aim for laughter, openness and finding the humor in what comes your way. Laugh when you can.

8

COMMITMENT TO FUN

Make your own fun isn't easy. You must be the driver of ease and enjoyment, during a really hard time. You are more likely to MYOF if you make a personal agreement to find fun, novelty, humor, and joy every way possible.

9

YOUR OWN CURIOSITY

Allowing your curiosity to drive your fun makes the experience all the more enjoyable - for you and your patient. Allow yourself to be open to options that intrigue, excite or even relieve you. Your experience is vital in making your own fun!

MAKE YOUR OWN *Fun*

But how do you make your own fun during when facing a health crisis? How can you make fun a priority when also balancing a new role? We've broken down the processes to help you identify opportunities for "fun" and to expand your definition and relationship to the idea of having a good time. Keep in mind, "fun" changes over time and stages of life. We are here to help you recalibrate and fine-tune for your season of care.

THIS IS A GREAT CONVERSATION TO HAVE *WITH* YOUR PATIENT & SUPPORT TEAM.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE.



IDENTIFY AND FOCUS ON

WHAT MAKES YOU & YOUR PATIENT:

COMFORTED

PEACEFUL

JOYFUL

SAFE & SECURE

SUPPORTED



CONTEMPLATING.. *Your "Fun"*

Use this opportunity to brainstorm what gives you (and your 'patient') comfort, joy, and peace. The building blocks of our motto, "Make Your Own Fun" are comfort, peace, joy, and novelty. Why? Because during treatment, everyone involved will need support and uplifting, comfort, and ease. Especially you and your 'patient.' Making space for joy during a traumatic episode doesn't come instinctively. We must create space intentionally. Here, we use a new lens that centers around fun and play. The perspective allows you space for self-renewal. Below, brainstorm activities, locations, actions, entertainment, and even people who elicit positive feelings. If there are other feelings you'd like to add, please do so!

Pro-Tip: Consider accessible, repeatable options.

COMFORT

PEACE

JOY

SAFETY

SUPPORT

CONTEMPLATING.. *Your "Fun"*

Engaging your senses is a well-established technique to reduce stress and find a centered feeling of well-being. Incorporating your five senses into "making fun" is a fantastic springboard for ideas you may not have considered. Fun times during a "season of care" will look very different from days of perfect health. But there is no reason these activities can't be as meaningful and fulfilling as your previous definition of "fun." Let's find ways to engage!

SIGHT

SOUND

SMELL

TASTE

TOUCH

CONTEMPLATING..

Your "Fun"

Meaningful activities give us all a deeper sense of purpose. This is especially important during a scary and uncertain period, like treatment. A powerful counter-balance to fear is purpose. Use the prompts below to consider what gives you (and your 'patient') positive feelings. Organizing your day-to-day around these concepts can help provide normalcy during chaos. Another benefit? These activities will most likely release "feel good" hormones, like dopamine and oxytocin.

NOVELTY

BEAUTY

PURPOSE

LAUGHTER

INTEREST

STRENGTH IN *past joys*

Looking forward and backward can be scary, especially during treatment. But scanning our personal timeline can inspire how you cultivate "fun." The concept of "fun" is different given the circumstances -- but no less vital. Use this space to consider what "fun" has meant in the past. Those memories can be a launching pad for new ways you want to add fun to your life during the "season of care."

WHAT HAS BROUGHT JOY IN THE PAST?

HOW CAN I ADAPT PAST JOY(S) TO THE PRESENT?

HOW CAN THEY BE ADDED IN BIG & SMALL WAYS?

STRENGTH IN *the future*

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WHAT MEMORIES DO I WANT FROM THIS TIME?

HOW CAN THIS SEASON BRING GOOD CHANGES?

HOW CAN THIS TIME BE A CELEBRATION?

CONTEMPLATING.. *Your "Fun"*

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WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR ME, AS A CARETAKER?

WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR MY PATIENT?

HOW CAN THIS BE ADDED IN BIG & SMALL WAYS?