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MORTALS

LEARNING RESOURCE

My Friend Has Cancer

A STORY ABOUT THE HEALING POWERS OF FRIENDSHIP & PERSONALISED CARE

'My Friend Has Cancer' is a story about the healing powers of friendship and personalised care. In this audio story and resource, guided by the voices of people with lived experience, you will imagine you are the best friend of someone living with and through cancer. As you work through the story and resource, you will explore the important role personalised care can play in providing support and learn how to be a good friend to someone living with cancer.



Members of the 'My Friend Has Cancer' lived experience coproduction group

'My Friend Has Cancer' is a [Made By Mortals](#) production coproduced by Greater Manchester Cancer Patient Representatives and funded by The Personalised Care Programme and Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Programme. Everything in the audio story and resource, including the wonderful music, has been cocreated by 'real people' living with cancer. They have bravely shared their lived experience, imaginations, and creativity to help others. We hope it gives you strength, knowledge, and most of all hope.

Instructions for using this resource

This audio story and resource can be used independently or together with a larger group of people. The resource is split into sections, with each section containing clips from the audio story and some connected questions. For each section, you will listen to the audio clip and then ask, discuss and/or reflect on the questions. Some of the questions come with short audio insight pieces, recorded by a group of people with lived experience and health and care professionals. We suggest you play the audio insights to help you frame and inform your reflections or discussions for those sections.

To be clear, when listening to the audio story, you will be using your imagination, guided by the voices of people with lived experience, to play the part of the best friend of a character living with cancer.



CLICK TO PLAY SCENES 1, 2 & 3 (DURATION 7:44)

In these first three scenes, you and the character (your best friend) meet on two occasions, one in a café and a surprise visit to your home. You discover they have symptoms and then they tell you that they have cancer. Will you react in the way they want you to?

Discussion questions

- In the audio clip, what can we learn about how the character wants to be communicated with?



CLICK TO PLAY INSIGHT AUDIO (DURATION 2:07)

In the insight audio, the group highlight the importance of being listened to without judgement, the need for adaptability, and how humour can help.

- What are the issues that the character might bring up in a Holistic Needs Assessment (see glossary on final page) and how would you approach them with the character?



CLICK TO PLAY SCENES 4 & 5 (DURATION 2:16)

Your best friend meets their cancer care coordinator (see glossary on final page) for the first time and learns about what support is available to them.

Discussion questions

- The character is not convinced that they will be able to 'open up' in the Holistic Needs Assessment, what does the cancer care coordinator do to put the character at ease? What more/different can she do?
- The character does not think peer support is useful. What can/should the cancer care coordinator do to help the character make an informed decision about whether to access peer support?



CLICK TO PLAY INSIGHT AUDIO (DURATION 3:12)

In the insight audio, the group discuss the importance of building trust and respect, tailoring support to individual needs, and providing various accessibility options.



CLICK TO PLAY SCENES 6, 7, 8 & 9 (DURATION 7:25)

You take your best friend for their treatment. You make their breakfast, drive them in, and sit and wait with them. You tell them about a 'big day out' you have been planning for them.

Discussion questions

- What practical and physical challenges does the character experience in and around their treatment?
- In what ways does their Cancer Care Coordinator support them with those challenges? What more/different can she do?



CLICK TO PLAY SCENE 10 (DURATION 1:15)

You both go on a big day out.

Discussion question

- In this scene, the character says, "Today I'm not going to be a person living with cancer" and "Today I'm going to be the old me. The real me." In what ways can this way of thinking have an impact on the character?



CLICK TO PLAY INSIGHT AUDIO (DURATION 2:31)

In the insight audio, the group discuss adapting to a new normal, dealing with loss and grief, and identifying and overcoming personal barriers.



CLICK TO PLAY SCENES 11, 12 & 13 (DURATION 4:06)

Things do not go as planned with your best friend's treatment. You blame yourself.

Discussion question

- In what ways can the Cancer Care Coordinator, the friend, or the character's family support the character with concerns about death and delays?



CLICK TO PLAY SCENES 14 & 15 (DURATION 6:05)

You and your family visit your best friend and their family. Your best friend has not needed your support as much recently. How have they managed and how will they manage now their treatment has finished?

Discussion questions

- Beyond medicine and other clinical interventions, in what ways can we help patients like the character emotionally heal, both now and in the future?
- A year has now passed since we met the character. Knowing what you know about them, what might they discuss at their Cancer Care Review? (See glossary on final page)



CLICK TO PLAY INSIGHT AUDIO (DURATION 2:21)

In the insight audio, the group highlight the importance of the Cancer Care Review for reassessing support, addressing fears about recurrence, and adapting to long-term life changes.

The Importance of Personalised Care

People living with cancer understand that they can't fight cancer. Doctors fight cancer. Medicine fights cancer. Science fights cancer. People living with cancer live with it and through it. They navigate the side effects and focus on what they can control. Friends and family play an important role in this but they can't do or be everything. This is where personalised care can make such a difference to people's lives. For example, if people need support with practical things like finances, making a will, diet and exercise advice, fertility issues, faith needs or therapy. Personalised care can also make a difference when people living with cancer want help to connect with other people in a similar situation to them or to find community groups and clubs that support people with the emotional toll living with cancer brings.

We hope that the 'My Friend Has Cancer' audio story and resource will help you surround the people living with cancer, both personally and professionally, in your lives with healing and hope. Not just sit and wait hope, but smash down doors hope!

If you have been impacted by any of the themes discussed in the 'My Friend Has Cancer' learning resource & audio story, please visit the [Health & Wellbeing page](#) of NHS Greater Manchester Cancer Alliance's website for information to support you.

Glossary

Holistic Needs Assessment – Patients are offered an assessment of their needs with a clinical nurse specialist (CNS) or support worker. The assessment is called holistic because the patient can talk about any area of their life and how cancer affects them and their family and carers. The patient's needs might be physical, practical, emotional or social. It should help them think about and prioritise what matters to them, and what they need support with.

Cancer Care Coordinator – A Cancer Care Coordinator supports patients on their cancer journey, acting as a main point of contact to coordinate care, provide support, and connect patients with relevant services. They work closely with multidisciplinary healthcare teams to ensure timely appointments, improve care pathways, and enhance patient experiences.

Cancer Care Review – A cancer care review is a discussion with your primary care team about your cancer diagnosis. This can be someone based at your GP practice, either a GP, nurse or a specialist cancer care coordinator. It is patient led, meaning it is a discussion about things that are important to the patient, and may cover things like their understanding of the diagnosis and the treatment so far, any symptoms they have been struggling with either as an effect of the cancer or the treatment, what support they have or may need, and how best the primary care team can support them as they continue on their cancer journey. It is a holistic review, focusing not only on physical symptoms but on the psychological, social, financial, and other impacts of cancer.



[Made By Mortals](#) 'bring lived experience to life' through immersive audio stories, music, theatre, film and interactive workshops.

To book a project quote, email admin@madebymortals.org or telephone 0161 804 2078.