START HERE: SURVIVORSHIP ORIENTATION

A calm guide for the strange space after active treatment

Treatment can end before the experience of cancer does.

People may congratulate you. Appointments may become less frequent. The hospital rhythm may suddenly change. Everyone around you may expect relief.

And you may feel anything but finished.

You may still be tired. Your body may still hurt. Your concentration may be poor. You may feel anxious without quite knowing what you are anxious about. You may miss the strange security of regular treatment. You may feel grateful and angry at the same time.

None of that means you are doing survivorship badly.

WHAT SURVIVORSHIP CAN ACTUALLY FEEL LIKE

There is no single version of life after treatment.

For some people, recovery begins quickly. For others, the physical effects of treatment remain for months or years. Some people continue on long-term medication or maintenance treatment. Some live with cancer as an ongoing condition rather than something that sits neatly in the past.

This resource is not asking you to call yourself a survivor if that word does not fit. It is simply here to orient you to the period when the intensity of treatment changes and ordinary life is expected to resume.

FIVE THINGS THAT CAN FEEL STRANGE

1. Less contact can feel less safe

During treatment, there may have been a schedule. Bloods. Scans. Infusions. Appointments. People watching closely.

When that reduces, freedom can feel surprisingly similar to abandonment.

2. Your body may not get the memo

Treatment ending does not automatically mean fatigue, pain, digestive changes, sleep problems, brain fog, weakness, altered sensation or other treatment effects disappear immediately.

Recovery has its own timeline.

3. Other people may move on faster than you do

They may hear “treatment finished” and think “back to normal.” You may be living in a body and mind that still feel completely changed.

4. Fear can become louder when treatment becomes quieter

When you are actively doing something, there is a sense of motion. Afterwards there can be more empty space for thoughts about recurrence, scans, symptoms and the future.

5. You may not know who you are now

Cancer can interrupt work, relationships, confidence, sexuality, appearance, routines and plans. When the medical crisis eases, questions about identity can become more visible.

YOUR ORIENTATION CHECK-IN

You do not need to solve all of this. Just notice where you are today.

Physical:
What is my body still dealing with?

Emotional:
What feels harder now than I expected?

Practical:
What part of normal life still feels difficult?

Support:
Who can I speak honestly with without having to perform gratitude or positivity?

Follow-up:
What do I need clarified at my next appointment?

A FEW USEFUL QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CLINICAL TEAM

You might want to ask:

- What follow-up schedule should I expect?
- Who should I contact between appointments if I am concerned about something?
- Are there treatment effects that commonly take time to settle?
- Is there rehabilitation, physiotherapy, psychological support or another service that may be relevant to me?
- What symptoms or changes do you specifically want me to report?

You do not need to ask all of them. Take the ones that matter.

ONE THING TO REMEMBER

You are allowed to be relieved that treatment is over and still struggle with what came after it.

You are allowed to be grateful and changed.

You are allowed to recover slowly.

There is no prize for appearing “back to normal” before you are ready.

Between Appointments™ provides lived-experience support and practical orientation. It does not replace medical care or provide individual medical advice.