A COMPANION TO THE BOOK

RISE

LIVING LIFE OVER CANCER

READER & BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE



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Real Stories • Real Tools • Real Hope

An invitation to reflect, connect, and explore what it means to live fully through uncertainty.

WELCOME

Let the conversation begin

Thank you for choosing RISE: Living Life Over Cancer. Whether you are gathering around a table, meeting in a library or support group, or reading on your own, this guide offers a welcoming place to reflect.

RISE blends Betty Jean Aucoin's lived experience of breast cancer with practical reflections on family, grief, self-care, integrative approaches, mindfulness, and finding one's voice. While cancer is part of the story, its questions extend to how any of us care for ourselves and each other.

A GUIDING THOUGHT Hope need not erase fear, and gratitude need not erase grief. There is space for both.

An invitation, not a test

Choose the questions that resonate. You do not need to answer every prompt or agree on every idea. Readers are welcome to listen quietly, pass on a question, or step away.

The five cornerstones

Integrative care • Self-care • Support networks • Mindset • Advocacy. These ideas run throughout the book and connect the thematic conversations in this guide.

A note of care

The book discusses diagnosis, treatment, recurrence, and loss. Offer a content note before the conversation and avoid unsolicited medical advice. The guide supports discussion and does not replace individual medical guidance.

FOR HOSTS

A flexible format for your group

Choose one gathering or build a short series. Use the chapter signposts as invitations to read, not strict assignments.

One gathering | 90 minutes

Welcome and group agreements (10 min) • Opening passage (10 min) • Theme-based discussion (55 min) • Closing reflection (15 min)

Three gatherings | 60–75 minutes each

Session 1: Introduction and Chapter 1, diagnosis, foundations, and the five cornerstones.

Session 2: Chapters 2–4, support, nourishment, and self-care.

Session 3: Chapters 5–7 and appendix, advocacy, mindfulness, and moving forward.

Chapter signposts

- Introduction & Chapter 1 | Creating Your Foundation
- Chapter 2 | Family, Friends, and Cheerleaders
- Chapter 3 | Healthy Eating
- Chapter 4 | Self-Care: The New Health Care
- Chapter 5 | Navigating Your Information Highway
- Chapter 6 | Mindfulness
- Chapter 7 & Appendix | Moving Forward

01 / HOPE & RESILIENCE

Living fully with uncertainty

Hope is not a promise that every outcome will be easy. In RISE, it is a practice of noticing what remains possible, even alongside loss and uncertainty.

CONNECTED CORNERSTONE Mindset

Questions for conversation

01 Which moment in the book most changed or deepened your understanding of hope?

02 How does Betty Jean distinguish resilience from being fearless or constantly positive?

03 What does it mean to live fully when the future cannot be controlled?

04 Where have you seen hope and grief exist together in your own life or community?

Reflection to take home

What is one possibility I can choose to notice today?

My thoughts: _____

_____

02 / SELF-CARE

Self-Care Is the New Health Care

Self-care in RISE is more than a list of habits. It asks us to notice our needs, protect our energy, and recognize that tending to ourselves is an essential part of a meaningful life.

CONNECTED CORNERSTONE Self-care

Questions for conversation

01 Why can caring for ourselves feel harder than caring for others?

02 Which boundary, ritual, or restorative practice described in RISE stayed with you?

03 What is the difference between self-care as a responsibility and self-care as another source of pressure?

04 What could a realistic, compassionate act of self-care look like this week?

Reflection to take home

Pause and ask: What do I need today?

My thoughts: _____

_____

03 / RELATIONSHIPS

Family, friends & sustainable support

Receiving support can be as challenging as offering it. The book explores the comfort of family and community, alongside the need for honest boundaries and support that can be sustained over time.

CONNECTED CORNERSTONE Support networks

Questions for conversation

01 What did you notice about how family and friends responded to Betty Jean's diagnoses?

02 Why can asking for help be difficult, especially for people accustomed to being the helper?

03 How can we offer practical assistance without assuming what another person needs?

04 What makes a circle of care sustainable for everyone involved?

Reflection to take home

Who is part of my circle, and what kind of support can we give one another?

My thoughts: _____

_____

04 / NOURISHMENT & MOVEMENT

Small choices, everyday agency

RISE invites readers to explore nourishment, movement, and rest without perfectionism or blame. The aim is not control over illness, but caring for body and spirit within everyday realities.

CONNECTED CORNERSTONE Integrative care and self-care

Questions for conversation

01 How did the book shape your thinking about food, movement, or everyday routines?

02 Which practices seem approachable and sustainable in your own circumstances?

03 How can discussions of wellness avoid shame or the suggestion that illness is a personal failure?

04 What does an integrative approach mean to you when medical treatment remains central?

Reflection to take home

Choose one nourishing action that fits my needs and circumstances.

My thoughts: _____

_____

05 / MINDFULNESS

Finding steadiness in the present

Mindful breathing, reflection, and movement are recurring tools in Betty Jean's story. These practices offer ways to return attention to the present without denying difficult emotions.

CONNECTED CORNERSTONE Mindset and self-care

Questions for conversation

01 What role did breathing and mindfulness play in Betty Jean's experience?

02 What brings you back to the present when your mind moves toward worry or regret?

03 How might a brief pause change the way you respond to a difficult day?

04 How can a group make room for different comfort levels with mindfulness practices?

Reflection to take home

Try two minutes of easy, unforced breathing or quiet reflection.

My thoughts: _____

_____

06 / ADVOCACY

Finding and using your voice

Navigating information, asking questions, and building respectful relationships with healthcare professionals are central to RISE. Advocacy is also a wider invitation to recognize that our voices matter.

CONNECTED CORNERSTONE Advocacy

Questions for conversation

01 What did you learn about preparing for important medical conversations?

02 How can readers distinguish information that empowers from information that overwhelms?

03 What does mutual respect look like between a patient and a care team?

04 Where else in life might you need to ask a harder question or speak up for your needs?

Reflection to take home

Write down one question you want to ask and identify a trusted person who could help.

My thoughts: _____

_____

FROM THE AUTHOR

A personal conversation with Betty Jean

Short reflections adapted from the author Q&A in the original reader guide.

What has recurrence taught you about resilience?

“It does not mean being fearless or constantly positive. It means returning to yourself again and again, even when everything around you shifts.”

Which cornerstone has been the hardest to embrace?

“Self-care was, and still is, the hardest.” Betty Jean describes how naturally she returned to looking after others, and how cancer taught her that taking care of herself must come first.

How do you define hope today?

“Hope is not denial or unquestioning optimism. It is a daily decision to focus on what remains possible and to live fully in the moment I have.”

What one daily habit would you share with readers?

“Pause each day and ask yourself, ‘What do I need today?’ Then honour the answer.”

DISCUSS Which response felt most meaningful, challenging, or surprising to you?

BEYOND THE CONVERSATION

Ideas to bring RISE to life

Simple optional activities can help groups connect the reading with everyday life. Invite participation without pressure.

Begin with a meaningful passage

Ask each reader to choose a few lines that resonated and share why, if they wish.

A moment of stillness

Offer two minutes of gentle, unforced breathing or quiet reflection. Readers may simply listen.

Small action, meaningful change

Invite everyone to name one manageable act of care for themselves or someone else this week.

Gather around nourishment

Choose a recipe from the book's appendix to prepare or discuss, keeping dietary and accessibility needs in mind.

Create a circle of support

Discuss a concrete way to offer support without assuming another person's needs.

Reflection notes

One idea I want to carry forward: _____

One person I might reach out to: _____

One question I still have: _____

CLOSING

Continue the conversation

RISE rewards curiosity, not certainty. Allow room for different perspectives, questions without easy answers, and moments of laughter and quiet reflection.

CARRY THIS WITH YOU What do I need today? Then honour the answer.

Connect with Betty Jean

Betty Jean Aucoin welcomes conversations with book clubs, libraries, and community groups. For enquiries about author participation, speaking presentations, or related resources, please visit:

www.livinglifeovercancer.com

RISE: Living Life Over Cancer is available through major booksellers.

Real Stories • Real Tools • Real Hope

This discussion guide builds on the original reader guide prepared by Seraphina Caelis. Adapted for book club and educational discussion.