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1. Cancer 2. Health 3. Self-help

Second Revised Edition 2022 ISBN 978-1-928663-15-7

Published by—ROOTS & WINGS, New Paltz, NY. Printed in the USA

Edited by—Johanna Bard

Design—Tory Ettlenger

Logo design—Helene Sarkis

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Track Your Truth—Discover Your Authentic Self

*My Health & Wellness Organizer—
An Easy Guide To Manage Your Healthcare—And Your Medical Records (Revised 2022)*

After Shock: From Cancer Diagnosis to Healing (Second revised edition 2021)

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ROOTS & WINGS PUBLISHING, P. O. Box 1081, New Paltz, NY 12561 Email: info@rootswings.com

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Foreword

My path toward becoming a breast cancer surgeon was defined in 1977 when my sister Fern was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer at age 35. At the time I was a junior surgical resident and I immediately shifted my attention to learning about and navigating through all Fern's treatment options, while helping to support her and our family through this tragedy. It was a powerful and overwhelming experience.

Since then I have had the honor of treating and counseling thousands of breast cancer patients. This is a tremendous responsibility and privilege. I have done my best to support their decisions while providing medically correct information in a compassionate fashion. Achieving shared medical decision-making is our goal. Providing resources that help patients organize a large amount of information as they process through their emotions and spiritual beliefs is extraordinarily important. Coordination of all treatment modalities results in optimal outcomes.

Puja Thomson's first comprehensive book *After Shock: From Cancer Diagnosis to Healing* set the ball rolling by providing an excellent road map and compass to navigate this journey. Since its publication, I have been happy to make it available to my patients who wish to participate actively in their healing process. They have found this book to be encouraging and empowering. Providing a practical framework for evaluating the pros and cons of different treatments is extremely helpful—many patients are uncertain about how to blend the best of traditional and complementary

medicine for their particular needs and beliefs. Puja's work has been a very successful tool to assist in this process.

Now Puja Thomson has created *My Hope & Focus Cancer Organizer* to enable you to keep track of everything you need to know and do during a time that may be particularly confusing or overwhelming. The organizer is a wonderful tool to simplify, sort, and arrange your decisions on treatments, health, and well-being. Confronting the large amounts of paperwork that goes with the territory can be extremely stressful. By using this organizer you will gain clarity, feel relief, reduce stress, and be able to use your energy to

focus productively on your healing.

When your treatment is over, "My Survivorship Wellness Plan" offers excellent guidelines to help you and your doctor co-create a plan to assure your optimum future health and wellbeing.

Puja knows what you face from the inside out and from the outside in! I am grateful that she has drawn from her personal experience as a cancer patient and as a health care professional to develop this companion organizer. When using *My Hope & Focus Cancer Organizer*, I'm sure you will be too! Its structure will increase your confidence in your ability to play a more active role in your healing.

Sheldon Marc Feldman MD FACS
Chief, Breast Surgery and Breast Surgical Oncology
and Director, Breast Cancer Services at Montefiore
Medical Center; Professor of Surgery at Albert
Einstein College of Medicine.

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that help patients
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Acknowledgements

When I was wondering what to name the organizer, inspiration came from Gaitano Antonacci who had told his daughter-in-law that, for two years during his battle with melanoma, *After Shock: From Cancer Diagnosis to Healing* had given him ‘hope and focus.’ What better qualities and name could I wish for this organizer? Thank you, **Gaitano Antonacci**, for sharing that timely gift with me through Marisue Traina.



Many thanks go to my good friend and colleague, **Barbara Sarah LCSW**, for her unfailing encouragement. For years Barbara has been a powerhouse of inspiration in the Mid-Hudson Valley and beyond, especially as Founder of the Oncology Support Program at HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley in Kingston NY, which continues to nurture and educate cancer patients. Through her commitment and her superb ability to network, Barbara carefully involves others in shared efforts to nurture tiny seeds into healthy flowering plants. Because of Barbara, there are so many projects and events that have seen the light of day, like this one and more recently “Circle of Friends for the Dying.”



I got to know **Johanna Bard** through the Integrated Medicine Network. When she heard I was already working on an organizer based on *After Shock...*, without hesitation, she saw its purpose and offered to contribute her editing and organizational skills. Johanna’s help lightened my load and our reciprocal exchange enabled me to keep my focus, sparked new insights, and led to many enjoyable moments. Thank you, Johanna.



Tory Ettlinger is much more than the skilled graphic designer of this book. Based on her personal knowledge of the challenges found in the journey from illness back to health, she has a unique sensitivity to what a user of the organizer may be experiencing. It shines through the pages. I am thankful that her design combines both clear intention and a supportive softness that has transformed the raw text in a beautiful way.



Over the past few years, it has been heart-warming and quite humbling for me to be privileged to hear the stories of many, many courageous cancer patients who have shared their experience of using *After Shock: From Cancer Diagnosis to Healing*. I thank each one of you.



Finally, I lovingly honor the memory of **Kathleen Navyo Folliard RN, Miki Frank, Joyce Goodrich PhD, and Kathleen McBryde**—four courageous women who, through cancer, have passed on beyond the limits of this life. Each contributed to *After Shock...* and to the possibility of *My Hope & Focus Cancer Organizer*, although they have not lived to see its birth.

Introduction

My Hope & Focus Cancer Organizer

If there were ever a time when I needed to weave hope and focus into my life, it was after my cancer diagnosis. I began to create a structure to support my journey. From my first fledgling notes, grew *After Shock: From Cancer Diagnosis to Healing—a step-by-step guide to help you navigate your way*. This comprehensive book is especially important during the first crucial year or when facing an unwelcome recurrence.

From that experience now comes *My Hope & Focus Cancer Organizer*, which provides a tool to simplify, sort, and organize your records.

This organizer:

- ✧ Removes a great deal of stress—no need to try to figure out how to arrange your paper work. It is all laid out for you.
- ✧ Saves lots of time.
- ✧ Frees your energy and contributes to your sanity—so you can more easily focus on your choices and healing.
- ✧ Helps you gain hope and focus as you clarify and record your journey to healing, and take charge of this “runaway train” with ease.
- ✧ Enables you to find information when you need it and incorporate new paperwork as it accumulates.
- ✧ Encourages you to be an active participant with your doctor in shaping a post-treatment survivorship wellness plan that makes sense to you.
- ✧ Maximizes the blessings of a healthy life while minimizing the risk of any recurrence.

There are many ways to organize your paperwork.
What matters is that you can find everything
—without fuss or stress.

Please note: Go to *After Shock: From Cancer Diagnosis to Healing (Second Revised Edition 2021)* for clarification of conventional and complementary treatment options, how-to’s, wellness strategies and support, personal stories, and abundant resources.



HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR INFORMATION

Use this 2022 Revision of **My Hope & Focus Cancer Organizer** as your master copy. The author gives you, the purchaser, for your use only, permission to make copies of those pages you will use multiple times. You may then 3-hole punch these “fill-in pages” and insert them into a 3-ring binder ready to add your information when you wish to update your medical journey.

Keep it Simple in 6 Steps

1. Fill out the ready-made forms such as “My Yellow Pages” (Pages 5-18)

2. Gather any paperwork you have already accumulated.

3. Sort it out with a support person.

- * Call a friend, family member, colleague or someone you can trust and set a time for this project.
- * Clear and reserve a space on a bookshelf for books and relevant material.
- * Put bulky items, such as articles, magazines and newsletters into folders or magazine boxes, and place them on your shelf along with books.
- * Spread all the remaining papers, (records, reports, notes) out on the top of a table or on the floor to see what you have.
- * Discard any duplicate information.
- * Sort the papers into groups of similar items such as:
 - Notes from conversations with friends
 - Questions for my professional practitioners and their answers
 - Test results
 - Bills, insurance letters and miscellaneous papers
 - Ideas and resources to follow up
- * Clip the papers of each group together.

- * Identify each group by writing its name on a brightly colored slip of paper and put that on the front page of each group.
- * Sort the papers within each group by date or by service provided.
- * Print out additional fill-in pages when you need them.

4. Insert your papers into your Organizer binder.

- * Create main sections using the dividers.
- * Punch holes in your papers and insert them in an appropriate section with the most recent on top.

5. Be prepared for your next appointment.

See page 50 for helpful ideas and tips.

6. Divide and conquer.

- * Use additional **dividers** to organize your paperwork more precisely so that you can find specific information more easily.
- * Use additional **binders** or one that is much thicker as your papers multiply. For example, treat this as your starter binder, and consider using a separate billing or financial binder.

PART I

MY YELLOW PAGES



CREATING MY PERSONAL DIRECTORY

Use these pages to record all your most important cancer-related contacts to create a ready reference directory at your fingertips.

☞ **Emergency Contact and Medical Information**

☞ **Most Frequently-Used Contacts**

Make a list of the contact information you expect to refer to constantly. Knowing exactly where to turn for a particular phone number can prevent a lot of unnecessary stress.

☞ **Personal Support Team**

Individuals and Groups

☞ **Professional Team**

Doctors and Other Conventional Health Practitioners
Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Practitioners

☞ **Health Insurance, Legal and Financial Contacts**

☞ **Thank you List**—Appreciate help!

☞ **Where To Find My Important Papers / Records**—Ease your mind!

AND

☞ **Chronological Health (and Cancer) Log**

Fill out the log to the best of your ability, including your health history prior to your diagnosis, first symptoms [if any] and discovery of your cancer, through diagnosis, follow-up tests and results, treatment decisions and all appointments.)

Keep this record of your progress up-to-date. Include any other health concerns. Refer to it during an office visit. You will not have to rack your brain to remember details, and it may prevent you from blanking out, when physicians ask for such information.

Make sure you continually update these pages.

*What matters is that you know where to find everything
—at the drop of a hat!*

EMERGENCY CONTACTS AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

Add your emergency telephone contact numbers below and add your primary ICE (In Case of Emergency) numbers to your cell phone contact list.

	NAME	HOME PHONE	CELL PHONE	WORK PHONE
Primary contact:	_____			
If unavailable, contact:	_____			
Next of kin	_____			
Friend	_____			
Walk-In Medical Clinic/ Hospital Emergency Room	_____			
Police, Fire, Ambulance (if in doubt, call 911)	_____			



EMERGENCY MEDICAL DATA

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Insurance Co. and ID#: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Medical Conditions: _____

Medications: _____ Blood Group: _____

Medication Allergies: _____

Additional Information:

FOLD

MY TESTS AND RESULTS

Dr. _____ Date (mmddyyyy) _____

Q: What tests support your diagnosis? What specific information did this test (_____) show?

A:

Q: What is the size of the malignant area in centimeters? ((1 cm))

A:

Q: What is the grade of cells (aggressiveness of cells)? What does that mean?

A:

Q: Are the malignant cells fast moving or slow moving? Hard to destroy, or easy to destroy? Hard to remove or easy to remove? What does that mean?

A:

Q: Do you already know the answers to these questions from the lab test or pathology report? If not, then when will you know?

A:

Q: Are there any supportive tests that can tell me more about my tumor, e.g. estrogen receptor status?

A:

Q: Has the cancer spread to any other place(s) in my body? If so, where?

A:

Q: What other sites have been checked for cancer and found cancer-free?

A:

Q: Do I need further tests? If so, is the test you are recommending necessary to identify the type of cancer I have?

A:

Q: Will this test that you are recommending help you (the doctor) or me, come to a more informed decision? What will the test entail?

A:

🌀 **Question for myself** (and discuss with a support person):

Q: Are the health professionals I've consulted in agreement with each other?

A:

MY TREATMENT OPTIONS

Dr. _____ Date (mmddyyyy) _____

Q: What are my treatment options?

A:

Q: Which of these are standard treatments? And with which have you had success?

A:

Q: Are there alternatives? If so, what?

A:

Q: For each possible option, please tell me where the treatment will be given. What is the duration of the treatment? How often will it be given?

A:

Q: What are the **benefits** of this treatment? Short-term? Long-term?

A:

Q: What are the **risks** of this treatment? Short-term? Long-term?

A:

Q: What are the **side effects** of this treatment? Short-term? Long-term?

A:

Q: Do you know of any experimental treatments or clinical trials for my kind of cancer that you would recommend for me?

A:

Q: Is it better to get a second opinion now before anything is done, or wait till after the tests, surgery or other procedures that you may be recommending? Why?

A:

🌀 **Question for myself** (and discuss with a support person):

Q: Do I have enough information? If not, what is lacking?

A: