

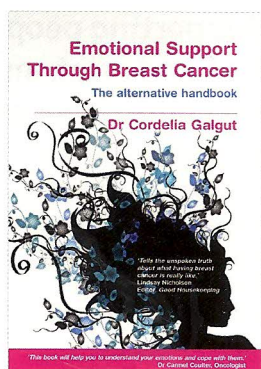
## Emotional support through breast cancer: the alternative handbook

**Dr Cordelia Galgut**

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This is a small book but one packed with insights about the emotional effects of breast cancer from the perspective of women who have been diagnosed with the disease. This is Galgut's second book on the subject. The first, *The Psychological Impact of Breast Cancer*, was aimed at mental health professionals. This handbook is aimed at breast cancer patients, their families and friends and includes information on diagnosis and treatment, practical ideas to help support sufferers at all stages, suggestions about how to communicate with family and friends, relaxation exercises, and discussion of the long-term consequences of breast cancer. As a therapist, I have known a number of women who have lived with breast cancer and many of the contributors' experiences left me feeling great admiration for their courage and resilience. Galgut has gathered together a compilation of realistic and compassionate suggestions to help support sufferers at all stages, based on her own perspective and those of others who have been faced with this shattering diagnosis.

The author takes a very human approach by acknowledging the many areas of distress, shock and fear around diagnosis. I particularly like the way various myths are highlighted and challenged, offering the possibility that it is natural and acceptable to experience negative feelings. Suggestions about focusing on affirmations and tuning into thought processes form another aspect of the book, enabling the reader to explore and recognise some alternative approaches. A section on both the initial and longer term shock following diagnosis suggests there is a need to be aware of the impact that shock may have

on the individual, with every subsequent shockwave making the following one even harder to cope with.

There are also positive suggestions about finding support from organisations offering psychotherapy or counselling and some helpful ideas about talking to doctors and nurses, asking questions, and taking someone along who will take notes to record responses. Another part of the book draws together the doubts, fears and shared experiences that are a reality for many. I was particularly moved by the inclusion of a poem written by the author, which she offers as an expression of her own feelings.

Galgut makes it clear that this is not an advice manual but a book containing various thoughts, feelings and suggestions, based on her own and others' experiences of living with breast cancer, that may be helpful to others. I would thoroughly recommend this book to clients and colleagues and I have already found it useful in my role as a therapist. A copy is available in my waiting room for anyone who may find it helpful. ■

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