

A Metaphor Menu for people living with Cancer



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Our research on metaphors for cancer at Lancaster University (<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/melc/>) has shown that metaphors can be a helpful resource for talking and thinking about the experience of illness.

However, different metaphors suit different people, or the same person at different times.

We have therefore created this 'Metaphor Menu' for people living with cancer – a collection of metaphors inspired by a range of different people who have experienced cancer. We hope that at least some of these metaphors may be helpful to you, whether for personal or professional purposes.

We would be grateful to receive feedback on the Menu, and we encourage you to suggest your own metaphors, if you wish.

You can do so here: <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/melc/the-metaphor-menu>

If you would like to use the Menu for your own purposes (in patient support groups, healthcare practice, teaching, etc), please contact Professor Elena Semino at Lancaster University: e.semino@lancaster.ac.uk, Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, LA1 4YL, UK.

Acknowledgements

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1 Imagine it a bit like a scary fairground ride – it might be scary in places, but it will eventually stop and you can get off. Be strong, be brave and we will be here to hold your hand if you need it.



2 My journey with cancer may not be smooth but it certainly makes me look up and take notice of the scenery.

3 Some journeys with cancer will be longer and others short, but what matters most is how we walk that journey.





4 Cancer is a hard journey with many twists and turns. No two people go through the exact same route. It's like driving a horse-drawn coach without the back wheels. It's helpful to occasionally stop, rest the horses, and review the situation with someone you are close to.

5 The rocks in our path are easier to handle when we are all in it together. The best people to help you are the ones who have been there before you or are heading there with you.

6 I compare life after cancer to walking with a stone in your shoe. If you let the stone rest right under the sole of your foot, it hurts every time you take a step and it is hard to move forward. But if you can manoeuvre the stone to sit between your toes, it is still there but you can walk the fine line of life without hurting.



7 I don't intend to give up;
I don't intend to give in.
No I want to fight. I don't want
it to beat me, I want to beat it.

8 I respect Cancer and never
underestimate the power
it has, but, if you can face up
to it and hit it back head on,
you stand a good chance of
beating it for a bit longer.

9 Having cancer is not a fight
but a relationship where
I am forced to live with my
disease day in, day out. Some
days cancer has the upper
hand, other days I do.

10 'Battle' suggests either
I win or cancer does.
I think of it more as 'working
with cancer'. For me, seen in this
more everyday way the cancer
becomes easier to cope with.



11 You fight this terrible,
faceless illness that has
invaded every part of you.
You stand and say, 'No, this
is not all there is to me'.
You have fought back, taken
control of the things left to
you. And even when you
felt crap, you forced yourself
to get out of bed and keep
going.

12 Cancer is part of me, the cure for cancer is accepting it, to heal is to convince the cancer cells to sing in tune with the rest of the body.



13 For me, cancer arrived as an unwelcome lodger, parking itself in the back room and demanding attention. I tried to be a courteous if unwilling host until eventually the time came to invite my cancer to leave. It has left the place in a bit of a mess, and I'm conscious that it has kept the key. Still I'm hopeful that in due course all I will be left with is the rich memory of time spent with a stranger I never expected to meet.

14 Initially, cancer feels like an alien invasion. It is as if you want to strip off your body and get a new one. Then in time, you 'connect' with it somehow.



15 Cancer makes me appreciate everything just a little bit more. Previously normal, everyday experiences suddenly take on a new value.

16 Cancerous tissue is like a garden that has become overgrown with weeds. The weed-killer also damages the healthy plants, but you hope they will re-grow.

17 My way of dealing with my diagnosis is to 'bend with the wind'.



Sources of the metaphors in the Metaphor Menu Examples
1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 17 are based on the data collected as part of our project.

Example 5 is adapted from a comment on the
New York Times blog 'The New Old Age',
April 2014 (http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/22/fighting-words-are-rare-among-britishdoctors/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0).

Examples 6 and 14 were offered to the research team for inclusion in the Menu
by people who have experienced cancer.

The team are grateful to Jette Holt for Example 6.

Example 9 is adapted from an article by Kate Granger
in the Guardian newspaper, April 2014
(<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/25/having-cancer-not-fight-or-battle>)

Examples 11, 12 and 15 are adapted from two of the comments on an article by
Kate Granger in the Guardian newspaper, April 2014
(<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/25/havingcancer-not-fight-or-battle>)

Examples 13 and 16 were adapted from an article by Andrew Graystone,
BBC news magazine, November 2013
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24985184>)

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