

Words of Wisdom

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Counsellor Jane Gillespie's book Journey to Me openly talks about her battle with cancer.

First-time author Jane Gillespie had just finished her chemotherapy when she decided to run away. "I'd bottled up all my feelings about having cancer and once the treatment ended I suffered a breakdown," she explained. "I just had to pack up and leave."

The Canberra mother of three had been diagnosed with a malignant lump in her breast in 1994, a "harrowing experience" that would turn her "whole world upside-down" & push her to flee to Sydney.

In the autobiographical Journey to Me, to be published on March 24, Ms Gillespie recounts how the pressure to shield those close to her from the emotional trauma became "impossible". "Cancer is not just a physical illness," she said. "It literally eats you up from the inside. You feel like you can't share it with your family and friends. You want to protect them and not burden them even more.

Eventually I couldn't stand this anymore." But her impromptu move interstate did not provide the relief Ms Gillespie had hoped for. "I thought I could leave the past behind and yet it followed me. Imagine my shock when I discovered I'd brought myself with me."

In the end, it was "joining the Life Force Cancer Foundation [LFCF] that saved my life", Ms Gillespie said. The not-for-profit organisation, which has support groups in Edgecliff, Annandale and Chatswood, helps cancer survivor's deal with the emotional aftermath of their illness.

Ms Gillespie, who now works as an LFCF counsellor, said she hoped her book would fulfill a similar role. "I really want people to understand that there's life after cancer but also that it's OK to be down and negative," she said. "Being open about what's going on inside of you is a vital part of the healing process."

Jane Gillespie is one of Life Force Cancer Foundation Counsellor's . LFCF is a non-profit organisation, providing emotional/psycho social support for people dealing with the experience of cancer, through a range of support programs and therapies including group work and meditation, counselling, special workshops and retreats. Support groups are held weekly in Sydney's metropolitan area.

More information about Jane or LFCF can be found at these websites;

www.janegillespie.net

www.lifeforce.org.au