



Hiring a Cancer Coach: What You Should Know



Here are some factors to consider when searching for a cancer coach of your own.



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Organizations like the [Cancer Journey Training Company](#) provides a list of cancer coaches who completed the Panic to Powerful training program and offer a free 30-minute consultation. But organizations like this are rare; even the International Coach Federation, considered a world leader in training and certifying coaching professionals, doesn't offer a cancer-specific program.

Often, patients who want to hire a cancer coach must do their own research and go with their gut. A good way to start: Ask doctors or care teams for a recommendation. A simple online search will also reveal numerous candidates. Here are some factors to consider:

- **FEES:** Cancer coaches work independently, not for a hospital or cancer center, which means that health insurers don't cover their fees. Costs vary by coach and typically range from \$50 to \$150 an hour. Jeannine Walston, Talaya Dendy and other coaches offer packages. Some coaches charge a fee for an initial consultation. "Cancer is a costly disease," says licensed social worker Angelique Caba, senior director of social work administration for CancerCare, a national nonprofit organization that provides free, professional support services for anyone affected by cancer. "When you are already facing steep medical bills, you have to decide whether hiring a cancer coach works for your budget."
- **SPECIALTIES:** Some coaches offer guidance through the entire journey, from diagnosis and treatment to survivorship. Others specialize. Donita Wheeler started Donita Mama Bear cancer coaching company in 2016 as a survivor of breast and ovarian cancers. Since then, she has been treated for melanoma and cared for her mother-in-law, who died this year from complications of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Wheeler now specializes in helping those in survivorship. "There is a mentality that once you're done with treatments, you're done with cancer," she says. "The reality is that you are still facing an uncertain future. Your cancer may come back. As a coach, I help clients focus on courage over fear."
- **EXPERTISE:** Cancer coaches tend to enter their line of work because of personal experience with the disease, either as a patient or caregiver, but that doesn't mean coach and client must have the same diagnosis or type of cancer. "I've learned strategies for improved health and healing that aren't specific to any one type of cancer, as each person with the disease is an individual," Walston says. Look for a coach who has more to offer than the fact that they've been there, survived that. For instance, Walston learned from stints at cancer-related government agencies and nonprofit groups, Wheeler is a certified life coach and former teacher, and Dendy serves on advisory councils for cancer organizations.

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