

"Faith in action is doing and love in action is service. By transforming that faith into living acts of love, we put ourselves in contact with God." — Mother Teresa



# Practical Wellness Tips

BY FAITH JONES, SURVIVOR, ADVOCATE



**1 Move Your Body** - Moving your body daily is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can aid in the recovery from active treatment, and although it may be challenging to engage in physical activity during treatment, even just going for a walk has benefits. Find movement that feels good for you and is something you enjoy so you'll stay consistent. It could be lifting weights, but it could also be swimming, biking, dancing, yoga, etc. Remember to focus on different modalities that improve strength, mobility, and cardiovascular health.

**2 Eat Whole, Nutritious Foods** - The benefits of eating more whole and nutrient-dense foods are helpful both in treatment and out of treatment. While going through active treatment, I spoke

with a holistic naturopath to put together a meal plan for me. It consisted mostly of plant-based foods, some seafood, and reduced sugar. I've continued eating that way and it has helped immensely; I have more energy and feel physically well. I'm not recommending that everyone should adopt a plant-based diet. However, incorporating more vegetables and fruit, consuming less packaged foods, reducing sugar intake, and opting for organic meat and seafood when possible can make a difference in the way you feel.

**3 Prioritize Sleep (and Rest)** - Sleep and rest are so important to the body, they reduce stress and inflammation, boost brain power, regulate hormones, and help with tissue repair and overall health. We all know how we feel when we don't get enough sleep. We live in a society

that rewards hustle culture and doesn't prioritize sleep, and it's having a negative effect on us physically, mentally, and emotionally. Currently one of my favorite books is *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto* by Tricia Hersey. It explains that we are all deserving of rest.

**4 Find Your Community** - Finding a sense of belonging and having people to encourage you is vital to staying positive. I was diagnosed in the middle of the pandemic, so it felt very lonely at times. I found an organization called The Breasties that held monthly virtual meetings with other people going through treatment. Some of the people I met at the meetings have become such good friends that I have now had the pleasure of meeting them in person.

**5 Check in with Your Breath** - The simple act of noticing your breath can activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to lower your heart rate and blood pressure and promotes digestion. This can help you feel more at ease and calm. A simple breathing exercise that I do regularly is placing my hands on my stomach or chest to feel my breath moving in and out of my body. I take five full breaths while counting them in my head.

**6 Practice Gratitude** - Studies have shown that writing down one thing you're grateful for each day can improve your mental well-being. It can be as simple as being grateful for waking up that morning. Think of one thing each day that you're grateful for.

**7 Find Something That Inspires You** - For me, that is my Christian faith. It helped keep me grounded throughout my active treatment and into survivorship. Someone sent me a list of healing versus while I was going through treatment, and

I kept coming back to them as an anchor to remind me that I would get through it. Whatever that anchor is for you, remember to check in with it to keep you inspired and grounded.

**8 Drink Plenty of Water** - There are many benefits to staying hydrated, including helping with brain and kidney function, lubricating joints, body temperature regulation, and boosting energy. I start each day with a glass of warm water and lemon.

**9 Find Time for Yourself** - Find moments of joy to do what you want. It may be hard with a busy schedule and family obligations, but even taking five minutes to do something you enjoy can help you feel better. I looked forward to having a relaxing bath whenever I could while going through treatment and still continue this practice today.

**10 Notice Your Feelings and Thoughts** - A mindfulness exercise with the acronym *RAIN* is a practice in noticing how you're feeling without placing judgment, and instead using self-compassion. *RAIN* stands for Recognize what is going on, Allow the feeling or thoughts to be there, just as they are, Investigate with kindness, Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the emotion, but feeling the emotion. For example, stating I am feeling sad, as opposed to I am sad.

The way I approach wellness is from a holistic framework, one that incorporates physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual practices. With all these practices, being as consistent as possible is the most important thing you can do and you're more likely to stick with it if you set realistic goals. Also, not being too rigid when you can't take breaks.

Through it all I've learned to take it one day at a time (sometimes one hour, or even one minute!) If you've just been diagnosed, are currently going through it, or are on the other side of active treatment, I see you! Give yourself the grace and patience to feel everything you're feeling! Sending you lots of love, healing, and prayers. ●



**Faith Jones** loves all things related to health and wellness. She's a holistic wellness professional and advocate based in Toronto, Canada. With close to 20 years of experience, she's a certified personal trainer, mindfulness teacher, Thai massage practitioner, and founder of [www.fitnesswithfaith.ca](http://www.fitnesswithfaith.ca). She works one-on-one with individuals and in group settings running local and international workshops and retreats.

Faith was diagnosed with estrogen receptor-positive/progesterone receptor positive (ER/PR+) HER2- breast cancer in July 2021, after finding a lump while in the shower. Her treatment was a lumpectomy with lymph node dissection, chemotherapy, and radiation. She is currently on endocrine therapy for up to 10 years. One of the most challenging parts of her treatment was when she had an adverse reaction to chemo, something her medical oncologist said he had never seen before, which left her in the ER unable to walk and unable to feel her hands and feet. Being unable to finish chemo and with doctors not being able to inform her of what her recovery would look like, she continued to have faith throughout the process that she would make a full recovery. She was consistent with her rehabilitation plan and was able to walk again after many months of working with a physiotherapist, chiropractor, occupational therapist, and massage therapist.

She believes there needs to be more awareness and education around breast cancer at a young age. Unfortunately, it doesn't just happen to women over a certain age. And you don't have to have a family history or a gene mutation—both of which she doesn't have—and yet she was still diagnosed. Young folks are normally diagnosed at a later stage because they don't have access to mammograms. Faith's a huge advocate for breast self-examinations as a lot of young women who are diagnosed discover their own lump. She also believes there needs to be more research done on Black women and breast cancer. There's a disparity between Black and white women breast cancer with Black women having a higher mortality rate. What can help is improving cancer screening programs that are accessible to underserved populations and by addressing the biological differences in breast cancer across racial and ethnic groups. When Faith was diagnosed she knew she wanted to share her story to encourage others going through a similar journey to help them advocate for themselves. She plans to continue to share her story and be a breast cancer advocate for the rest of her life as she truly believes it can save someone's life.