

## Book Review

**Coping Together, Side by Side: Enriching Mother–Daughter Communication Across the Breast Cancer Journey.** Written by Carla L. Fisher. Hampton Press, Inc., New York, NY, 2014. 242 pp. Price: \$29.95 (US), £17.01 (UK). ISBN: 978-1612891415 (paperbound).

A breast cancer diagnosis is a turning point. The journey following this turning point is never simple. Not only does this disease change the biomedical needs of the patient, it greatly impacts the psychosocial needs of the patient and the patient's family, as well. Unfortunately, health care professionals often overlook psychosocial needs. In keeping with the current movement towards advocating for more comprehensive oncology care, *Coping Together, Side by Side: Enriching Mother–Daughter Communication Across the Breast Cancer Journey* asserts that the mother–daughter relationship is key in the breast cancer experience. This book discusses improving care for patients with breast cancer by focusing on fostering healthy communication skills within the mother–daughter dialogue. Author Carla L. Fisher advocates for a comprehensive “psychosocial map” to guide behavior. Fisher presents convincing evidence to support the efficacy and importance of family inclusion in oncology care. Her work serves as a call to action for clinicians.

Using evidence from scholarship as well as popular culture, Fisher explores the mother–daughter bond through a developmental lens. She examines this dynamic across entire lifetimes. Fisher focuses on communication, especially during times of transition, as key to the success of this bond. Fisher outlines the qualities of familial communication that both help and hinder patient coping, such as openness versus avoidance. The book discusses why and how social support is so important for patients with cancer. The work presented deepens existing scholarship on breast cancer by examining the transitional time following a breast cancer diagnosis both as an individual experience and as a shared experience. This book briefly covers some ways in which the mother–daughter relationship changes following a breast cancer diagnosis, along with the possibility of genetic counseling for family members. These are complex domains and could have been expanded upon.

This book succeeds in explaining the theoretical biopsychosocial groundwork of its perspective in a way that is easy to comprehend and therefore accessible to a wide audience. Fisher integrates theoretical perspectives well in order to lay a solid foundation for her view. She uses just under 300 references to augment her nationally recognized research. The mixed-method foundational study described in the book effectively provides a

psychosocial map that can help to improve mother–daughter communication, especially as it relates to breast cancer.

The reader will find information on the struggles commonly faced during the fight against breast cancer and guidelines for how to address these struggles. This book does a good job of choosing and presenting powerful personal narratives within a theoretical framework. These narratives, gathered from survey, interview, and diary methods, help to guide and teach what constitutes healthy communication and what specific communication issues mothers and daughters may face. These stories, structured based on the stage of life diagnosis occurred, may help mother–daughter readers feel less alone while facing the unknown obstacles that lay ahead. Fisher's vision lends hope in the face of great struggle and wisdom in the face of great complexity. Nuances are not ignored.

This in-depth exploration into the breast cancer experience humanizes the living, breathing organism that is the mother–daughter relationship. As a result, this book can help clinicians better understand, and therefore better incorporate, the family into oncology care. This book skillfully gives a voice to these difficult topics and helps these important stories be heard. Literature on breast cancer can overlook the needs of the patient's family; in this way, this book is unique. *Coping Together, Side by Side* successfully demonstrates how Fisher's foundational study can be applied to practical use through interventions and resources.

Overall, I highly recommend this book, especially for mothers and daughters, because it serves as a compass to navigate the often-tumultuous waters of breast cancer. This book provides a comprehensive look into the highs and lows of the breast cancer experience while providing ways to cope and support one another. Additionally, this book explores specific roles within this relationship and functions well as an informative guide for health care professionals looking for a better understanding of this fluid and dynamic relationship. This book works as a great educational tool for spreading awareness and offers a unique vision, deepening the existing literature on breast cancer. Just as moving as it is informative, *Coping Together, Side by Side* stands apart while bringing families together.

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