

FOREWORD BY JILL BIDEN

YOUR CANCER ROAD MAP

NAVIGATING LIFE WITH RESILIENCE



EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT

EXECUTIVE CHAIR OF THE CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY

KIM THIBOLDEAUX

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by Jill Biden</i>	xiii
<i>Introduction</i>	xv

SECTION ONE JUST DIAGNOSED

<i>Chapter 1</i>	Take a Deep Breath	3
<i>Chapter 2</i>	Know Your Diagnosis and Stage of Disease	11
<i>Chapter 3</i>	Build Your Team	17
<i>Chapter 4</i>	Understand Your Treatment Options	23
<i>Chapter 5</i>	Learn About Genetic and Genomic Testing	29
<i>Chapter 6</i>	Make an Informed Treatment Decision	35
<i>Chapter 7</i>	Get a Second Opinion	43
<i>Chapter 8</i>	Ask About Clinical Trials	49
<i>Chapter 9</i>	Get to Know Your Insurance Coverage	57
<i>Chapter 10</i>	Ask to Be Screened for Distress	65
<i>Chapter 11</i>	Ask About Fertility	69

<i>Chapter 12</i>	Young Adults and Cancer	73
<i>Chapter 13</i>	Set Up Advance Directives	81
<i>Chapter 14</i>	Care for the Caregiver	85

SECTION TWO ACTIVE TREATMENT

<i>Chapter 15</i>	Time to Gear Up for Treatment	95
<i>Chapter 16</i>	Learn How to Manage Side Effects	101
<i>Chapter 17</i>	Talking to Your Kids About Cancer	113
<i>Chapter 18</i>	Find Emotional Support	123
<i>Chapter 19</i>	Build Your Digital Support Network	133
<i>Chapter 20</i>	Focus on Nutrition	137
<i>Chapter 21</i>	Exercise and Mind-Body Techniques	149
<i>Chapter 22</i>	Focus on Finances	159
<i>Chapter 23</i>	Sex and Intimacy	165
<i>Chapter 24</i>	Managing Work and Cancer	171
<i>Chapter 25</i>	What If Treatment Doesn't End?	177

SECTION THREE AFTER TREATMENT IS DONE

<i>Chapter 26</i>	Tools for Survivorship and Beyond	185
<i>Chapter 27</i>	Survivor Care Plan and Medical Follow-Up	193
<i>Chapter 28</i>	Managing Fear of Recurrence	205
<i>Chapter 29</i>	Hospice and End of Life	213

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	223
<i>Cancer Support Community Board of Directors</i>	225
<i>Cancer Support Community Professional Advisory Board</i>	227
<i>Cancer Support Community Affiliates</i>	229
<i>Cancer Patient Advocacy Groups and Resources</i>	235
<i>Federal and State Programs: Insurance and Employment</i>	247
<i>Resources for Financial Support</i>	251
<i>Glossary</i>	255
<i>Index</i>	275
<i>Notes</i>	283
<i>Image Credits</i>	285
<i>About Kim Thiboldeaux</i>	287

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty-five years, I have talked to and met with thousands of cancer patients and their loved ones across the country and around the world. Among them are complete strangers and people who have known me since I was a child. They include friends, colleagues, neighbors, and contemporaries, some who are here today and some gone too soon.

Every story is different, unique, and personal. Yet over the years, I began to see common threads through each narrative. Each represents a life disrupted, a fear of the unknown, a desire for hope. Each person wants to feel confident in seeing the right doctors and making the right decisions. And each yearns for more time to fulfill unrealized dreams and aspirations.

I am often thrust into a stranger's life at their most difficult and vulnerable moments. I see each of these interactions as a privilege—a delicate thing to be cherished and safeguarded. I often say I have a front-row seat to the triumph of the human spirit. And in the end, I have received more from these exchanges than I have given.

This book is written to be a trusted ally for anyone diagnosed with cancer. It is called *Your Cancer Road Map* because it carefully and thoughtfully plots out the journey from start to finish. It includes instructions for navigating detours and warning signs, and tips to take in the scenery along the way, perhaps through a different lens. You'll encounter men—and women—at work, U-turns, and speed bumps. And also roadblocks, which can be discouraging and frustrating. Ultimately, this book is intended to shine a light and give you the tools and resources to find your way. I often say to folks, "There isn't

a right way to take on cancer—there is only the way that is right for you. You’re in the driver’s seat and you will decide which road to take and how you choose to get to your desired destination.”

The subtitle of the book is *Navigating Life with Resilience*. I have thought a great deal about resilience lately. What is resilience? How does one find it within oneself? Can it be discovered and assimilated from inspiration around us? I believe resilience comes with heightened self-awareness and an ability to embrace change and let go of the things that are out of our control. Resilience is like a muscle that needs exercise and strengthening. Becoming resilient takes practice—and patience. And building these skills will enhance your ability to recover and move forward.

I encourage you to write notes in the margins of this book, circle and highlight things that capture your attention or resonate with you, and dog-ear the pages. Keep it in your purse or briefcase or backpack and take it with you to doctor’s appointments and chemo infusions. Read it in the late hours in bed or in the backyard with a cup of coffee. You can read a chapter here and there and put the book down to revisit later. Read it again when you need tips or resources. Pass it along to a spouse or friend to peruse.

My hope is that you use the tools in this book to become more resilient and more empowered as you face cancer. And I hope that you find grace and fortitude along the way and that you share our belief that community is stronger than cancer.

Visit the companion website to discover more about topics discussed in *Your Cancer Road Map*, find easy access to resources, and get to know author, Kim Thiboldeaux.
cancersupportcommunity.org/YourCancerRoadMap

TEN TIPS FOR LIVING WELL WITH CANCER*

TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME, AND MAKE ONE DECISION AT A TIME

If life feels overwhelming, take small steps to find your best path. Talk, listen, and learn. In time, you will have the information you need to make the right decisions for you.



PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU NEED

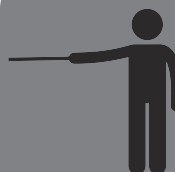
Be aware of your feelings. Focus on activities you enjoy. Try to find humor in each day. Seek out people who help you feel relaxed or happy. Spend time alone if you need to.

Some days you may not know what you need, and that's okay, too. **Be kind to yourself.**



BE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE

You may feel frustrated by changes to your life. Talk with your medical team and your family and friends. Work together to come up with a plan that gives you as much control as possible over your treatment and care.



COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Let your health care team know how you feel. Ask questions and ask again if you don't understand the answers. Tell your team about your goals for treatment. Be sure they know how your treatment and symptoms are affecting your everyday life.



GET HELP FROM OTHERS, BESIDES YOUR DOCTOR

Expand your health care team to include a patient advocate and other specialists. A patient advocate or navigator can help you find resources, manage insurance, and prepare legal documents. Other useful specialists may include a nutritionist to help with eating, a psychologist or social worker for emotional distress, a physical therapist for weakness, and a palliative care specialist for symptom management.



MAINTAIN HOPE

Hope can make each day a little better. Accept that some days will be better than others, but try to enjoy small moments and do things that make you smile.

Even if a cure is unlikely, look for ways to find hope where you can.



REACH OUT TO OTHERS WITH CANCER

It's comforting to talk with people who understand what you're going through. Try to connect with others online or in a local support group.



ASK FOR SUPPORT AND ACCEPT HELP WHEN IT IS OFFERED

Let your family and friends know how they can support you. Be specific if you can. Consider using an online platform and calendar such as the Cancer Support Community's MyLifeLine to stay organized and let friends know what's needed.



FOCUS ON NUTRITION, EXERCISE, AND MIND-BODY WELLNESS

Healthy food provides nutrients to help your body. Exercise can lift your spirits, boost your energy, and reduce stress. Meditation and mindfulness can bring a sense of calm. Even minor efforts can help you feel better.



KEEP A NOTEBOOK NEARBY

Use a notebook to keep track of side effects, take notes when you talk with your health care team, and record financial or insurance details.

**Adapted from Cancer Support Community, *Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Metastatic Breast Cancer*, February 2019, www.cancersupportcommunity.org/sites/default/files/fields/resource/file/2018-03/mbc_book_2018.pdf.*