

What are serious health conditions?

This Pocket Guide focuses on serious health conditions, although rituals may be beneficial at other times in life. To determine what a serious health condition is I may inquire about . . .

- 🌱 my prognosis with and without offered treatments with my healthcare provider
- 🌱 how long I will feel how I feel now, be independent, or hospitalized
- 🌱 my own assessment of how I feel

To ascertain how serious my health condition is, I may obtain additional opinions from another . . .

- 🌱 oncologist or surgeon or radiation oncologist or pathologist
- 🌱 psychiatrist or psychologist
- 🌱 rheumatologist or pain management specialist, etc.
- 🌱 hospital, institution or clinic
- 🌱 traditional or alternative health care practitioner
- 🌱 scholarly literature search on my condition

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What are rituals?

Rituals are . . .

- 🌱 practices, observances, habits, ceremonies, routines, and/or formalities that I engage in privately and/or with others
- 🌱 performed to help me feel balanced, empowered, transcendent, and soothed
- 🌱 often designed to aid my healing
- 🌱 often repeated the same way each time
- 🌱 spiritual or religious for some people
- 🌱 often calm and thoughtful ways to honor myself and my experiences

Rituals are not necessarily . . .

- 🌱 understood or accepted by healthcare professionals or others
- 🌱 outwardly visible
- 🌱 easy to design, get used to, or be comfortable with at first
- 🌱 helpful for all people
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Why Rituals are Empowering

Rituals may help me . . .

- 🌱 feel in control
- 🌱 feel more connected to others
- 🌱 improve my treatments
- 🌱 accept my diagnosis
- 🌱 accept my eventual death
- 🌱 honor and protect my space
- 🌱 remain focused and in touch with myself
- 🌱 manage stress and anxiety
- 🌱 have an improved outcome

Rituals may help those . . .

- 🌱 who love me
- 🌱 who love me honor my wishes

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Rituals for Serious Health Conditions Empowerment Pocket Guide

Elizabeth Shadigian, MD
Empowering WomanCare
and Gynecology



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Day to Day Rituals

I make sure that I . . .

- 🐾 continue to do things that are pleasurable and meaningful
- 🐾 only talk about my condition when, where and with whom I want
- 🐾 nourish and hydrate my body with food and drink that is right for me
- 🐾 keep my body moving and stretching as much as I can
- 🐾 feed my important relationships
- 🐾 ask for what I want and say “no” to what I don’t want
- 🐾 enrich my intellect by reading, writing, listening to or making music and discussing topics
- 🐾 tinker, cook, organize or otherwise enjoy time at my home or others’ homes
- 🐾 rest and sleep enough
- 🐾 listen to my body in all ways
- 🐾 enjoy family, friends and animals

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An Example Ritual

I may insist on . . .

- 🐾 being able to sit, lie down or walk
 - 🐾 being able to control light and temperature
 - 🐾 being asked permission before being touched
- I may bring to treatments . . .
- 🐾 my own special set of clothes worn only for chemotherapy/radiation/infusion sessions
 - 🐾 my friend or partner and ask them to wear clothes that match mine
 - 🐾 my own sheets and pillow, rather than use the ones provided by the treatment center
 - 🐾 my own food, drinks and snacks
 - 🐾 my own music with headphones, reading material, computer, art projects, etc.
 - 🐾 affirmations, poems, meditations, incantations and prayers to recite & ponder
 - 🐾 special water, sprays, fragrance, or aromatherapy to support me

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An Example Ritual

I create affirmations such as “I don’t blame myself or anyone else for what is happening to me.” I say them often. I may ask . . .

- 🐾 to hold the bag, syringe or pills before they are administered and say a blessing that they will only be for my body’s highest good
 - 🐾 to check that the medication is the correct type and dosage for me
 - 🐾 my care provider to raise or lower medication dosages based on my experience
 - 🐾 to have a private room or close the curtains
- When I return home I may . . .
- 🐾 immediately launder my clothes
 - 🐾 wash my skin in a long shower or bath
 - 🐾 drink my favorite beverages to flush toxins
 - 🐾 repack and replenish my “treatment” suitcase for next time
 - 🐾 go for a run, rest or nap, call a friend, do something spiritual, or engage in sexual or physical intimacy

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Other Rituals and Ideas

I may . . .

- 🐾 tell a joke each time a new person visits
- 🐾 have fresh flowers at my bedside
- 🐾 laugh instead of cry
- 🐾 feed my animal, instead of myself
- 🐾 play cards with my healthcare provider
- 🐾 visit a new travel destination on the internet
- 🐾 write another page of my unpublished book
- 🐾 take care of other people and their concerns
- 🐾 give away some of my possessions
- 🐾 take the time I need to make decisions
- 🐾 decide where I want my treatment: outpatient, inpatient, home, or hospice
- 🐾 decide who I do and don’t want to be with me
- 🐾 plan for my after death celebrations
- 🐾 do something different than my usual habit
- 🐾 have animals with me continuously
- 🐾 _____
- 🐾 _____
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