

and recognise the symptoms so that your relationship doesn't break down. There was always something, at every single session, there was always something that I got out of it and thought 'yes, that makes sense, I acknowledge that and will take that on'.

At Phyllis Tuckwell, they have so much expertise that they're able to see first-hand what people like me are going through, so when I start to say how I'm feeling, they're able to have an appreciation of that because they've seen it before and they have that experience.

Since the counselling, I consider whether I'm making the best use of my time - now that doesn't mean going off and abseiling or jumping out of a plane, it can simply be that I'm sat watching the TV and that's the right thing for me to do and I'm happy to do that. **So I'm much more content with my lot in life.** I'm trying to distance myself a little bit from the cancer, rather than letting it define me. I accept what I've been through, I'm annoyed by it but I accept it, and I spend more time considering where I am today and how I want to lead my life.

It's very difficult to give advice to anybody who's found themselves with cancer, but the one thing I would say is that there's a lot of help out there, so make sure you seek it out and get it, because it's a very difficult process to go through alone.

Phyllis Tuckwell has changed my life. I would have got through the cancer treatment, but not in a great emotional state. **Phyllis Tuckwell gave me a perspective on where I was at and enabled me to accept what I was going through, and for that I'm forever grateful."**

We are privileged to care for people like Peter and his family, at probably the most difficult time in their lives, but we can only do this with the generosity of our local community.

We have to raise over £20,000 every day in order to provide care, free of charge, to our patients and their relatives.

For further information about how to support Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care, contact our Fundraising team on:

**01252 729446**  
**support@pth.org.uk**

Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care

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Our patients are inspiring...

**"Phyllis Tuckwell has changed my life."**



### **Peter's Story**

The Beacon Centre, our physiotherapy exercise classes and our *Coping and Resilience* course.

**Phyllis Tuckwell**<sup>®</sup>  
Hospice Care   
...because every day is precious

# Peter's Story



**“My cancer history goes back five years. I was referred to the Beacon Centre in Guildford both when I was originally diagnosed with cancer in 2014, and then again when it came back in 2017.**

*Because the cancer affected my leg, and I was getting a lot*

*of nerve issues and muscle wastage, I was invited to join a physiotherapy exercise class at the Beacon Centre. They understood the sort of exercise I needed, and provided that exercise in a very considered and caring environment, with others who were experiencing similar symptoms. **The exercise routines were perfect for what I needed, and it also got me out of the house, it got me away from thinking about my situation for a while.** It was quite a social class - we used to have a coffee and a chat afterwards, and there were some common experiences that we would talk about. It was a very friendly group and I would look forward to seeing them each week.*

*As I progressed through my treatment and the side effects it brought with it, the need for counselling support arose, as I knew I needed additional emotional support beyond what I was getting from my family and friends. Because of the support I had had back in 2014, through the Beacon Centre, I knew that counselling would help me and so I was proactive in asking for it the second time around. I was offered a series of one-to-one counselling sessions at the Hospice in Farnham, and at the same time my wife was offered counselling too.*

*Cancer is really tough on the carer. When I first had cancer, in 2014, I really struggled with my treatment. I just wanted to be left alone, but of course my wife wanted to help, and so we suffered a bit of a breakdown in our relationship. We got through it, but it wasn't great. So when the cancer came back,*

*that experience meant that we recognised those early symptoms of stress and angst returning, and so very early on we were able to request counselling for both of us. My wife saw a different counsellor to the one I was seeing, and very quickly they were able to put strategies in place for her, that linked in with the strategies that I was given, and because of that we were able to maintain our friendship, have a complete understanding of where one another was at, and recognise when each of us needed our own little space and time to ourselves. Because of that support, our relationship didn't break down at all, and we got through it really well. It was also the year of our daughter's GCSE exams and so there was all the stress of that, and the counselling helped my wife to manage that as well, without becoming ill herself, which she had in 2014.*

*I had counselling for quite an extended period, and then an opportunity arose to join a Coping and Resilience group. I'd had experience at the Beacon Centre with a group counselling session, so when I was offered this course I jumped at the chance, because I remembered what it had given me before - both strategies for coping with my situation and the chance to meet other people with often not too dissimilar experiences.*

*The course follows a group structure, with course leaders - one from Phyllis Tuckwell and one who was an NHS specialist - leading the sessions. Each week they would focus on one element of coping and resilience, almost like in a classroom, and **it was very interactive - we were challenged with questions, we asked our own questions, and we worked together.***

*Going through cancer and its treatment is a very lonely and difficult place to be. You need strategies for managing both the emotional and the physical side, and that's part of what the Coping and Resilience course gave me. **It taught me strategies for how to deal with the emotional side of managing and coping with my illness, but equally important was relating to the other people on the course.** Sometimes you think that you're the only individual person who has your condition and ailments and side effects and so on, and suddenly you*



*meet other people and they're talking the same language and they have an understanding of exactly what you're going through because they're going through it too. And quite often the experiences we shared were very common and that's really helpful. It left me feeling that I'm not singled out for this horrible disease, and my that experiences are often not so dissimilar to those of others, and so that aspect was extremely valuable to me.*

**The course has finished now, but it was life-changing.**

*I still practice some of the strategies and elements that we reviewed each session. I learnt about the power of positive thinking, how you can always look at something negatively, but that you can put a spin on that and make it more positive. How you can make sure you're making the best value of your time, allowing yourself to relax and rest, and accepting that rest is not a failure, it's actually part of your treatment process. When I first started coming to the sessions I felt very weak, I almost couldn't understand why every other cancer patient seemed to be stronger than me, and able to cope better, to do more. I was in not a great place. Those very negative words like failure and loneliness were at the forefront of my thinking, but through the counselling and course sessions they were able to switch everything around to say 'well look what you're going through, look how you're managing, you're not failing, you're actually achieving an awful lot to go through this'. So they put an entirely different spin on my thought processes, and turned me from thinking that I was a very weak individual who couldn't manage or cope with this treatment, to thinking 'well, I AM managing it'. So the strategies and messages were very powerful.*

*They also helped me to understand why other people react in the ways that they do, both immediate family and friends. Why some people understand it and some people don't, why some people distance themselves and some people can't do enough for you. I learnt that the relationship with my wife and the rollercoaster pattern that we went through is quite common, and how to manage that*