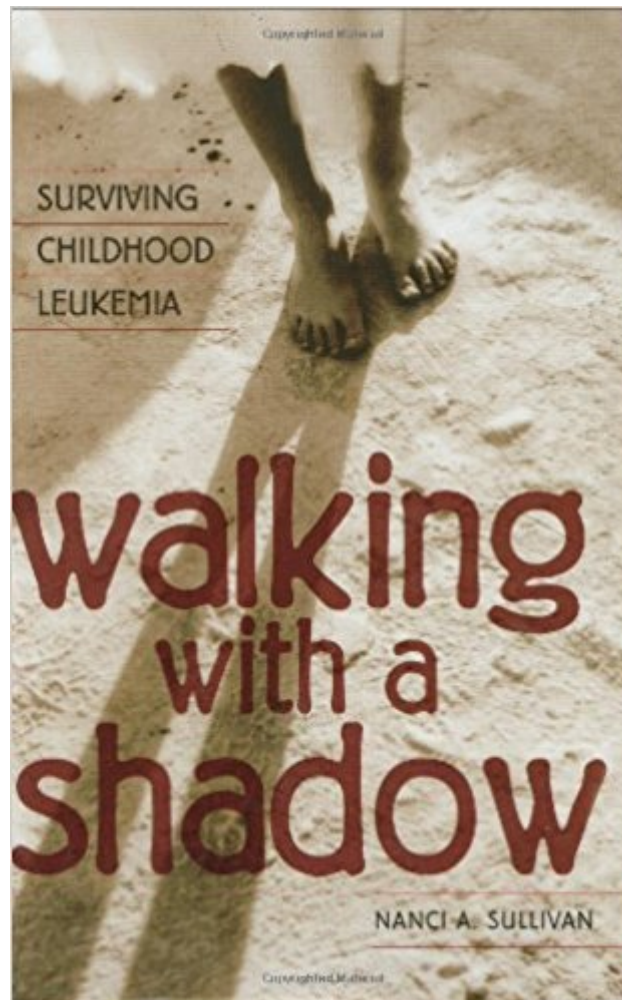




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# Walking With A Shadow: Surviving Childhood Leukemia



## Synopsis

Childhood cancer, particularly leukemia, is on the rise. Leukemia strikes one child in every 25,000, and most often does so between the ages of 3 and 7. Annually, more than 2,700 children are diagnosed with leukemia in the United States. Due to advances in biotechnology and medicine, survival rates for this once-deadly disease now stand at 80%. But the psychological effects of diagnosis, removal from school, treatment, and remission or cure, linger. Here nine long-term survivors of childhood leukemia share their vivid memories and give us insight into the physiological changes, psychosocial and educational difficulties that became a constant shadow in their lives. Author Nanci Sullivan provides recommendations for ways teachers, counselors and other professionals may better help young students with leukemia cope.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

NANCI A. SULLIVAN has 24 years experience as a practitioner, researcher, and administrator in education and special education.

This book may be helpful in research, but it would make any current cancer patient feel dismal will less than positive prognosis after recovery due to learning disabilities from the medications. These were patients from decades ago, and I think the doses have changed. Also, the writer started this project with intention of writing about survivors with resulting LD , so I think her view was skewed.

The research compiled and summarized in this book is a phenomenal historical perspective account up to 2004 of childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia. I think the review above by K. Conway was really unfounded; however everyone is entitled to their opinion. To state that this book is outdated, hopefully when K. Conway purchased it to read the person would know the book was published in 2004. All books have a purpose no matter how old they are and they can serve as a great resource. We learn from the past as we are living in the present and moving into the future. However, the treatment protocol of medications is basically the same. I do agree with one comment made above by K. Conway that one would hope that the dosages would change over time since the research did demonstrate the long-term effects of these medications were very toxic for those children in the 1970s and 1980s. Secondly, if K. Conway had read this book this person would have known that the book crosses four disciplines-education/learning, medicine/physiological, psychological and social outcomes. It was not a book exclusively focusing on learning disabilities nor did the author's purpose want it to be. If K. Conway had read the book's "Preface" and "Introduction," this person would know that LD was one small area of interest of the author in researching long-term survivors of childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Her interest grew due to the impact of long-term survival side-effects across several disciplines that had been shared with the author through Children's Hospital with Dr. Albo of Pittsburgh and St. Jude's Hospital of Memphis with Dr. Mulhurn. It was determined that the minimal research at that time showed that developing children from the ages 5-7 were more susceptible to the toxic treatment regimes of that time period and many had acquired long-term side effects in many areas up to 10 years post-treatment. K. Conway's review above stated the book was depressing. I believe it was far from depressing but was inspirational and enlightening. If K. Conway had actually read the "Surviving" reflections of the 9 stories of the individuals who are the longest living childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia survivors of Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh today, it is a poignant and uplifting account of what these children and now adults upon reflection say about surviving and their life today. Bravo to these long-term childhood cancer survivors! It provides so much hope to parents of children today who have children diagnosed with this disease. I certainly hope none of the survivors who are written about in this excellent and thorough book read what K. Conway believes that it is depressing. This is a hybrid book that is well-balanced between research and human interest. And to the review above by K. Conway, I believe your review of the book is skewed because it is obvious you did not read it or if you did read it, you missed the entire point of the book!

As more and more children survive leukemia, parents, teachers and the medical profession will

need to understand and be prepared for the aftermath of the disease. This very readable book, a result of qualitative research, covers 9 survivor stories with diagnosis dating from 1966-1985. Now adults, the survivors reflect on their memories of diagnosis, treatment and living with the consequences of therapy side effects. The author's aim is to illustrate the educational difficulties post treatment and the impact of school (or absence of school) during treatment and later years. Educators need to be added to the medical/parental team as a resource and strength in the child's progression of diagnosis to survival. It is always best to hear first hand from those who go through treatment to potentially make changes for the benefit of the patient. As a pediatric oncology nurse, I have seen the positive effects of the hopefulness and priority of education to hospitalized children. Child life therapy is another bonus offered in larger treatment centers. An additional plus to the book is the various comprehensive appendices regarding bibliotherapy (with age recommendations), video and internet sites for children, bereavement and resources for parents. A glossary of medical terms and explanations of blood tests (which become a new short hand language for families) aids the non-medical reader. Lastly, multiple listings of support organizations for families, financial assistance, transportation needs, clinical trial web sites and bone marrow information complete this terrific book. Any parent, educator (in the course of a 40 year career a teacher can expect to have an average of 4 students with cancer), psychologist, medical social worker, etc. will find this book useful.

When a child is sick with leukemia everyone's focus is on surviving. That is paramount. This book tells us what happens in the other areas of their lives once they do survive, and that becomes paramount. We should study the lives of these survivors to learn what we can to address these kids' needs more effectively. This book is filled with priceless insights that current kids who are surviving leukemia will wish we had studied with great commitment. I suspect that others with different chronic health issues may be able to identify with the struggles of those in this book.

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