

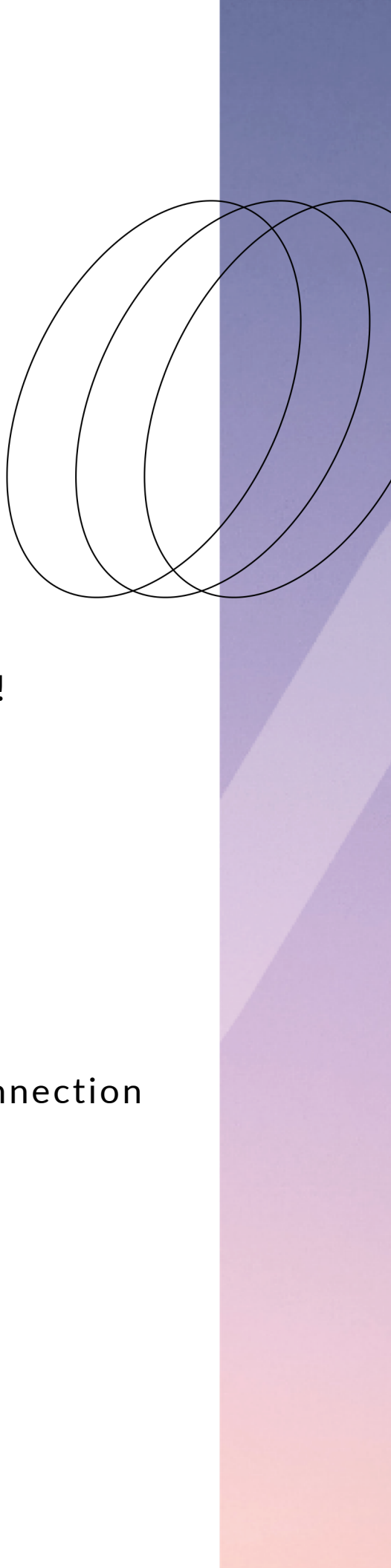
BRIDGING THE GAP:

CULTIVATING MENTAL WELLNESS IN HEART DISEASE



By Jillian Thorne

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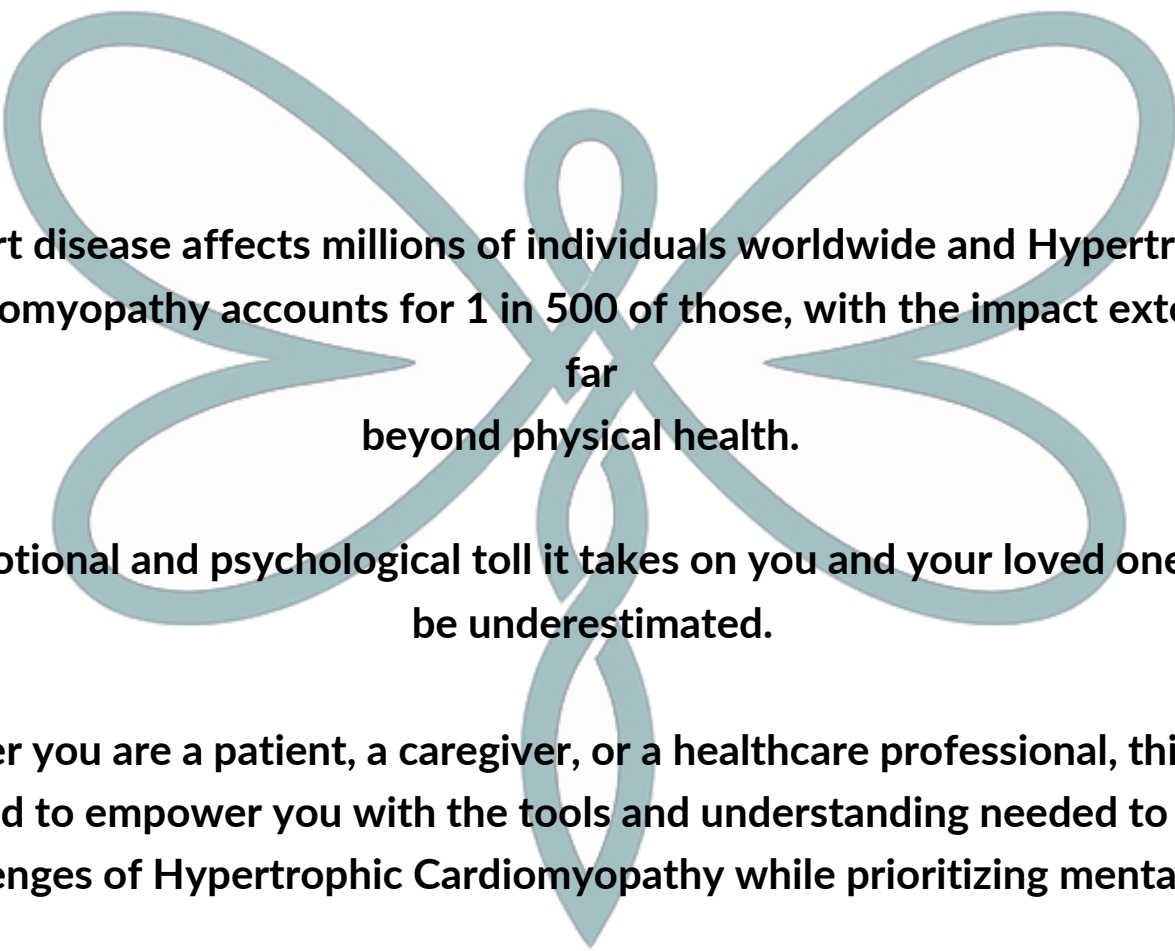
A Note Before You Begin

This guide was created from lived experience, not medical expertise. I am a patient², not a physician or licensed healthcare professional, and the information shared here reflects what I have learned through my own journey with heart disease, advocacy, and healing.

Nothing in this guide is intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent¹ any medical or mental health condition, and it should not replace professional medical advice.

Every heart and every person is different. Always talk with your physician or healthcare team before making changes to your medications, treatment, exercise, diet, or care plan.

Take what feels supportive, leave what doesn't, and always put the guidance of your healthcare team first.



Heart disease affects millions of individuals worldwide and Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy accounts for 1 in 500 of those, with the impact extending far beyond physical health.

The emotional and psychological toll it takes on you and your loved ones cannot be underestimated.

Whether you are a patient, a caregiver, or a healthcare professional, this book is designed to empower you with the tools and understanding needed to navigate the challenges of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy while prioritizing mental wellness.

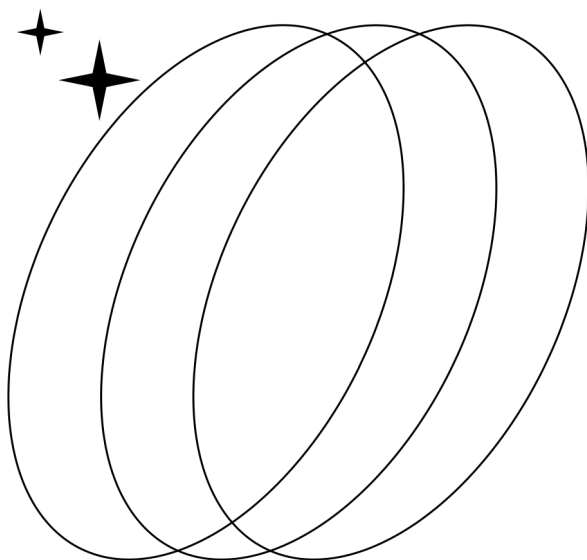
I invite you to embark on this journey with me as we explore the vital connection between mental wellness and heart disease. Together, let us cultivate a deeper understanding and pave the way for a healthier future.

**Love and Light,
Jillian Thorne**

Why Me, why this ebook?!

**Mental health and heart disease advocate,
turning battles into purpose.**

As someone intimately acquainted with the challenges of living with Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), I wrote this book out of a deeply personal motivation. Through my own experiences and struggles, I recognized the need for a resource that not only provides information about the disease but also acknowledges the profound impact it has on mental health. My hope is that this book serves as understanding, support and empowerment for individuals navigating the complexities of HCM, offering solace and guidance as you embark on your own healing journey.



INTRODUCTION

Understanding the Mind-Body Connection in Heart Disease

Living with HCM can be overwhelming, as it not only affects the physical health but also has a significant impact on mental well-being. You may experience a range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, frustration, and even depression, as you navigate the uncertainties and limitations imposed by your condition.

By acknowledging and supporting mental well-being, healthcare providers can offer comprehensive care that goes beyond the physical aspects of the disease. This can involve providing counseling, therapy, or support groups to help you and your family navigate the emotional challenges associated with HCM.



Mental well-being can directly impact the management and progression of the disease. Stress and negative emotions can potentially worsen symptoms and contribute to the development of complications. Therefore, cultivating a positive mindset and adopting effective coping strategies can help you better manage your condition and improve your quality of life.

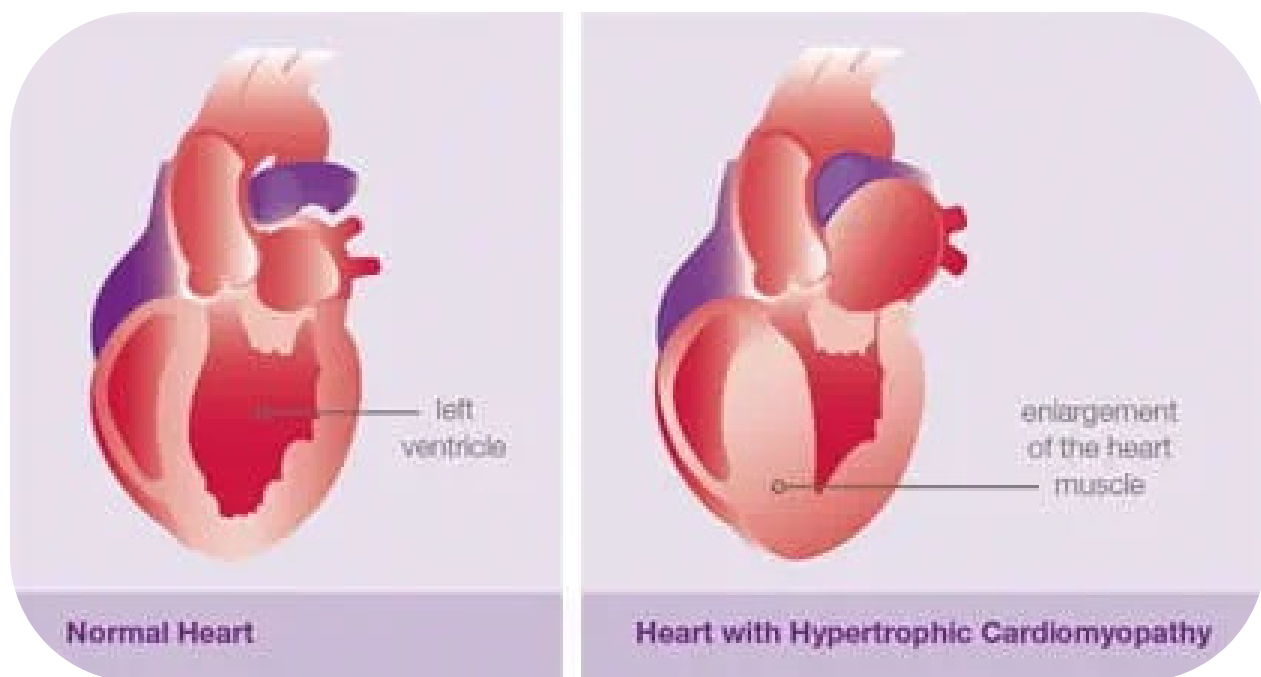
Fostering mental wellness can enhance your overall resilience and ability to cope with the disease. By developing healthy coping mechanisms, you can better adapt to the lifestyle changes, treatment plans, and potential limitations imposed by your condition. This can lead to improved quality of life, increased emotional well-being, and a greater sense of empowerment in managing your health journey.

Mental wellness in heart diseases refers to the psychological balance achieved by individuals learning to manage their heart condition.

CHAPTER 1

YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED, NOW WHAT?!

The moment the doctor delivers the news, time seems to freeze. Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) - a term that feels foreign and ominous. As the words sink in, a whirlwind of emotions takes over: disbelief, fear, confusion. It's natural to feel overwhelmed, but amidst the shock, there's a path forward.



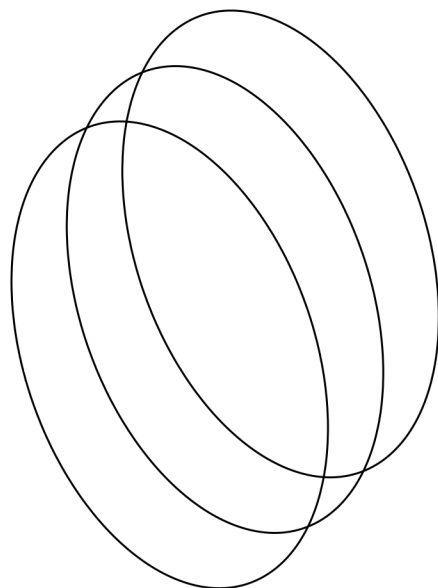
First, you'll learn about what Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy is::

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy or HCM is a genetic heart condition characterized by the thickening of the heart muscle, especially the left ventricle. This thickening can obstruct blood flow out of the heart and lead to various complications, such as arrhythmias, heart failure, or sudden cardiac arrest. If there is no significant blocking of blood flow, this is called nonobstructive hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain, fatigue and dizziness.

YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED, NOW WHAT?!

Then your vocabulary will grow with words like::

Left ventricular hypertrophy, diastolic dysfunction, systolic anterior motion (SAM) of the mitral valve, myocardial brosis, arrhythmias, asymmetric septal hypertrophy, left atrial enlargement, left ventricular out ow tract obstruction, mitral regurgitation, sudden cardiac death, implantable cardioverter-de brillator, pacemaker, (ICD), septal myectomy and ablation.



You'll learn about treatment options::

Common treatment options include medications such as beta-blockers, calcium channel blockers, and antiarrhythmic drugs to manage symptoms like chest pain, palpitations, and arrhythmias. Look out for new medications "speci c" for HCM! Lifestyle modi cations, including regular exercise, a heart-healthy diet, and avoiding strenuous activities, can also help in managing HCM. In some cases, surgical interventions like septal myectomy or alcohol septal ablation may be recommended to relieve left ventricular out ow tract obstruction. Close monitoring by your cardiologist specializing in HCM is crucial to tailor treatment plans to your needs and optimize outcomes. In severe cases individuals may require a heart transplant as a treatment option when other interventions have been exhausted.

And you'll try to learn how to live all while still living::

Learning to live with HCM involves not only managing the physical aspects of the condition but also focusing on healing mental health. Coping with a chronic illness like HCM can be challenging and may impact mental well-being. It is important for you to prioritize self-care, seek support from loved ones and healthcare professionals, and engage in activities that promote relaxation and stress management. Building a strong support network, practicing mindfulness techniques, and seeking counseling or therapy can help you navigate the emotional aspects of living with HCM. Taking care of mental health is an integral part of overall well-being and can contribute to a better quality of life.

CHAPTER 2

Healing Your Mind: Cultivating a Positive Mindset

"Positive thinking is more than just a tagline. It changes the way we behave. And I firmly believe that when I am positive, it not only makes me better, but it also makes those around me better"

- Harvey Mackay

It's cool to care for your mind



Cultivating a positive mindset is crucial for living with HCM. A positive mindset can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, which are common emotional challenges that you could face after being diagnosed. By fostering a positive outlook, you experience improved mental health, better coping mechanisms, and enhanced resilience in dealing with the physical and emotional aspects of this condition. This, in turn, can positively influence your adherence to treatment plans, lifestyle modifications, and overall self-care practices, ultimately supporting the progression of HCM management and heart healing.

Embrace the magic of sunshine thoughts



The power of positive thinking is a concept that emphasizes the impact of one's mindset and attitude on your overall well-being and success. By maintaining a positive outlook, you can cultivate resilience, reduce stress, and improve your mental and emotional health. Positive thinking can also enhance problem-solving skills, boost self-confidence, and increase motivation to achieve goals. Research suggests that a positive mindset can have physical health benefits as well, such as strengthening the immune system and reducing the risk of certain health conditions. Practicing gratitude, mindfulness, and self-affirmations are some ways to harness the power of positive thinking in daily life.

Chill pill exercises that won't stress you out!

4-7-8 Deep Breathing Technique

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose for a count of 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for a count of 7 seconds.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of 8 seconds, making a whooshing sound.
- Repeat the cycle for a few minutes, gradually increasing the duration as you become more comfortable.

This exercise can help calm the nervous system, reduce stress and promote relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to relax.
- Start with your toes and gradually work your way up through your body, tensing and then relaxing each muscle group for about 2-5 seconds each.
- As you tense each muscle group, focus on the sensation of tension, then release the tension and notice the feeling of relaxation.
- Move through the following muscle groups, tensing and relaxing each one: toes, feet, calves, thighs, buttocks, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck and face.

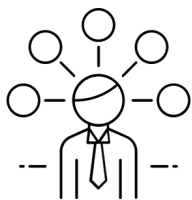
This exercise can help muscle tension, promote relaxation, and alleviate stress and anxiety. It's best practiced regularly to experience its full benefits.

Mindfulness Meditation

- Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down.
- Close your eyes or softly gaze at a fixed point.
- Bring your attention to your breath, noticing the sensation of each inhale and exhale.
- When your mind wanders (which it will inevitably will), gently bring your focus back to your breath without judgement.
- Notice any thoughts, feelings, or sensations that arise, acknowledging them without getting caught up in them.
- Continue to breathe and observe for a few minutes or as long as you like, gradually increasing the duration of your practice over time.

This meditation can help reduce stress, improve focus, and cultivate a greater sense of calm and awareness in daily life.

Reframe and Conquer



Thoughts

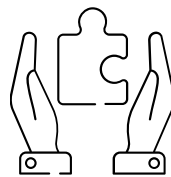
This technique involves identifying and challenging negative thought patterns and replacing them with more positive and realistic perspectives.

Original thought:: I'll never be able to manage my HCM effectively. It's too overwhelming.

Reframed thought:: Managing my HCM may present challenges, but I am capable of learning and implementing strategies to improve my health. Each step I take, no matter how small, is a victory and brings me closer to living well with my condition.

Reframing the negative thought into a more empowering perspective, allows you to shift your focus from feeling overwhelmed to feeling capable and motivated to take control of your health.

**"YOU NEVER KNOW HOW STRONG YOU ARE
UNTIL BEING STRONG IS YOUR ONLY CHOICE"
- BOB MARLEY**



Challenges

This technique involves shifting your perspective from viewing obstacles as insurmountable barriers to seeing them as potential learning experiences or chances to develop new skills.

Original challenge:: Living with HCM is exhausting and overwhelming. I'll never be able to live a normal life.

Reframed challenge:: While living with HCM presents its challenges, it also provides me with opportunities to prioritize self-care, strengthen my resilience, and appreciate each day. It's a chance for me to cultivate a deeper understanding of my body and discover new ways to live, well despite the obstacles.

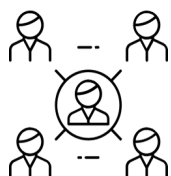
Reframing the challenge from a negative perspective to a more positive and empowering one, allows you to see your condition as a catalyst for personal and self-discovery.

CHAPTER 3

Bossing Yourself Around::

Self-Awareness & Self-Advocacy

Ever wonder why we're so adamant about bossing ourselves around for self-awareness and self-advocacy? Well, imagine if we didn't! We'd probably end up arguing with our own reflection in the mirror, negotiating with our subconscious over who gets control of the TV remote, and scheduling therapy sessions for our inner critic. Instead, let's embrace the chaos and take charge of your own narrative - after all, who knows better than ourselves. It's like being your own personal superhero, with a cape made of self-awareness and a utility belt full of assertive skills. Grab that metaphorical megaphone and start bossing yourself around like the CEO of your own life, because who else is going to do it better?!



Cultivating Self-Awareness

Recognizing and addressing your emotional needs begins with self-awareness, acknowledging and accepting your feelings without judgement. Take time to check in with yourself regularly, identifying emotions as they arise and understanding your underlying issues.

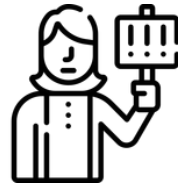
Keep a daily journal where you reflect on your thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Each day, take a few moments to write down your observations about what happened, how you felt, and why you reacted the way you did in certain situations.

By reviewing your thoughts you gain insight and can identify patterns in your thoughts and behaviors.

This practice can help you become more attuned to your emotions, beliefs and values, ultimately leading to greater self-awareness and personal growth.

Bossing Yourself Around: Self-Awareness & Self-Advocacy



Cultivating Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is crucial for us HCMer's. Treatment options can vary depending upon individual factors such as, symptoms, severity of the condition, and lifestyle preferences. By being an informed self-advocate, you can actively participate in decisions about your treatment plan, ensuring all aligns with your goals and values.

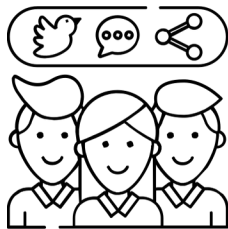
- During appointments, don't hesitate to ask questions, recommend treatments, and ask about potential side effects and long term prognosis.
 - Clarify your uncertainties or concerns.
- Communicate regarding your treatment plan, whether it's a preference for a certain medication or a desire to explore alternative therapies.
- Seek second opinions if you have doubts or uncertainties about diagnosis or treatment plan.
- Be proactive in advocating for timely and comprehensive follow-up care to maintain optimal health and well-being.

By developing self-advocacy skills you can also serve as an advocate for others with HCM. Sharing your knowledge and experiences can help empower others in navigating their own healthcare journeys.

Empower yourself through knowledge and education by deepening your understanding of the condition through seeking new information.

CHAPTER 4

Community: Finding Support and Connection



Social support is like the ultimate cheer squad in the game of managing HCM. They're the ones who help bring positive vibes on an extra down day, or the laughs when all you want to do is cry, and the helping hands when you need them the most. With friends, family or support groups by your side, facing the challenges of HCM feels less like a solo mission and more like a team effort.

- **Online Communities:** Join online forums, social media groups, or HCM-specific websites, where individuals share their experiences, ask questions and offer support to one another.
- **Local Support Groups:** Check if there are any local support groups or other HCM related meetups.
- **Ask your healthcare provider to connect you with other patients, advocacy groups or support groups affiliated with hospitals or medical centers.**
- **Don't underestimate the power of your existing network.** Family members, close friends or colleagues may not have HCM themselves, but can still offer valuable emotional support and understanding.
- **Virtual events such as webinars and conferences focused on HCM, can be a great way to connect with others in the HCM community.**
- **Don't be afraid to reach out to others who have shared their stories online.** Sending a message to someone who has been through a similar experience can lead to valuable connections.

Building a support squad for HCM takes time, but the bonds formed and the support received are truly invaluable.

CHAPTER 5

Physical Movement: Nurturing your Body and Mind

Exercise plays a vital role in the management of HCM. While it's essential for you to consult with your healthcare provider before starting an exercise program, regular physical activity can have numerous benefits. Low to moderate-intensity aerobic exercises such as walking, cycling or swimming are generally recommended, as they can improve circulation and endurance without putting excessive strain on the heart. In addition to aerobic exercises, you can also benefit from exercises that are gentle on the heart. And don't overlook the fun of a dance party as a great way to not only get your heart pumping, but boost your mood too!!



Tai Chi::

A gentle form of martial arts that involves slow, flowing movements and deep breathing. It can improve balance, coordination and flexibility while promoting relaxation and reducing anxiety.



Stretching and Flexibility Exercises::

Incorporating gentle stretching exercises into your routine can help improve flexibility, reduce muscle tension, and enhance range of motion without placing excessive strain on the heart.



Water Aerobics::

Exercising in water provides resistance without putting strain on the joints or heart.



Rebounding::

Rebounding or bouncing on a mini trampoline can provide a low-impact cardiovascular workout that gets your heart pumping and increases circulation without putting excessive strain on your heart and joints. It can also help improve lymphatic function, which supports immune function and detoxification.



Pilates::

Focuses on strengthening the core muscles, improving posture, and enhancing overall body awareness. May need to modify exercises for HCM.



Yoga::

Incorporates gentle stretching, breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques.

Physical Movement: Nurturing your Body and Mind



Don't Sweat It:: Find your own workout way

- It's important to remember everyone's experience with HCM is unique. What works for one person may not be suitable for another.
- Instead of comparing yourself to others, focus on listening to your body, understanding your limitations, and choosing activities that feel comfortable and safe for you. This may involve modifying intensity, duration, or type of exercise to suit your needs.

Ending each exercise practice with gratitude allow us to appreciate the strength and resilience of our bodies. This fosters a deeper connection between mind, body and spirit.



Don't Forget It:: Incorporate mindfulness in physical activity

- Begin workouts with a deep breathing exercise to help center your mind and nervous system. Focus on inhaling deeply through your nose, filling your lungs with air, then exhaling slowly through your mouth.
- Take a moment to mentally scan your body from head to toe. Notice any areas of discomfort, then make adjustments as necessary.
- Pay attention to the sensations in your body as you move through each exercise. Notice the feeling of your muscles contracting and relaxing, the rhythm of your breath, and the connection between your body and the movement.
- Focus on the present moment as you exercise. Let go of thoughts of past or future.

CHAPTER 6

Reflect & Resonate

Mantra for HCM

**BEATING STRONG, LIVING BOLD:
MY HEART, MY STRENGTH, MY STORY**

Having a mantra for HCM can provide a powerful psychological anchor during challenging times. It serves as a reminder of resilience, strength and positivity, which can help you cope with your condition more effectively. Repeating the mantra can have a calming effect on the mind and body, reducing stress and promoting overall healing and recovery.

Reflect & Resonate

Heartfelt Reflections: 5 Empowering Exercises for Personal Growth with HCM

Heart-Centric Gratitude::

- Find a quiet space and close your eyes.
- Take deep breaths, focusing on the rhythm of your heartbeat.
- Reflect on three things you're grateful for despite living with HCM.
- Visualize these blessings filling your heart with warmth and strength.



Heartbeat Visualization::

- Sit comfortable with your eyes closed. Imagine your heartbeat as a powerful force within you, pulsating with resilience and vitality.
- With each beat, visualize it radiating positivity and healing energy throughout your body.
- Allow this visualization to instill a sense of confidence and peace within you.

Strength Inventory::

- Take a moment to reflect on the strengths and qualities that have helped you navigate life with HCM.
- Write down at least five strengths, such as resilience, perseverance, courage or adaptability.
- Acknowledge these strengths and how they have contributed to your personal growth and ability to overcome challenges.



Reflective Journaling::

- Set aside time each day to journal about your experiences, emotions, and insights related to living with HCM.
- Reflect on how you've grown personally and emotionally through your journey, or taken a few steps back. (which is ok too)
- Write down any lessons learned, moments of gratitude or areas where you'd like to focus on growth.

Reflect & Resonate

Affirmations::

- Stand or sit comfortably, placing your hand over your heart.
- Close your eyes and repeat affirmations.
- Repeat several times, allowing your positive energy to sink in.

Heart - Centered::

My heart beats with strength and resilience.

•

I trust in the wisdom of my body to heal and thrive.

•

With each beat, I embrace the power of resilience within me.

•

My heart is a symbol of courage and determination.

•

Every heartbeat is a reminder of my inner strength and perseverance.

•

My heart's journey is unique and valuable, shaping me into a stronger individual.

•

I honor my heart's resilience and embrace each day with courage and gratitude.

I AM::

I am at peace with my heart's journey, trusting in its strength.

•

I am surrounded by love and support, nurturing my heart and soul.

•

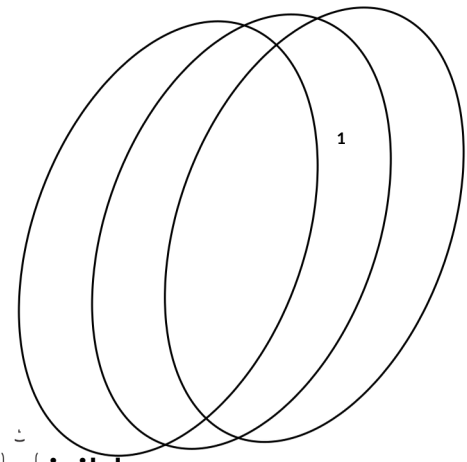
I am resilient, embracing the challenges with grace and courage.

•

I am worthy of love and care, including self-compassion for my journey.

•

I am a beacon of strength and resilience, embodying the courage to face every heartbeat with unwavering determination and gratitude.



Final thoughts::

Living with an illness is hard, especially an invisible one where you feel like you are being silently judged. And you might be - sometimes silently and sometimes not so silently. There isn't a playbook for this disease. Most HCM patients will tell you every day they wake up is different. Different symptoms, or different emotions. Different body weight depending on fluid retention that day, or exhaustion level depending on your activity the day before. How can you accurately plan for all that? You can't. The only thing you have control over with this disease is YOU.

Throughout the past two decades, my journey with HCM has been a rollercoaster of emotions, challenges, yet also moments of profound insight. I've dedicated countless hours trying to decipher its complexities, searching for answers and solutions to alleviate its impact on my life. Amidst this struggle, I stumbled upon a fundamental truth:: **while I cannot control my condition or the circumstances Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy presents, I hold the power to shape my perspective and response.**

My true empowerment lies not in changing the situation with HCM, but in transforming my relationship with it. Embracing this realization, I discovered the profound influence of my thoughts in shaping my experience. By choosing to cultivate positivity, resilience and even acceptance, I unlocked a newfound sense of control and peace within. Ultimately, it was this shift in mindset that transformed my journey with Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, illuminating the path towards greater understanding, acceptance and personal growth.

My hope is to not just inform, but to inspire healing and transformation on your HCM journey. May this empower you to navigate each beat with resilience, grace and newfound strength.

Workbook::

This space is dedicated to reflecting on your own journey with heart disease.

By utilizing tools discussed in the book, you can engage in meaningful reflection, track your progress, and gain insights into your physical and emotional well-being. This reflective space serves as a sanctuary for you to process your experiences, set goals, and cultivate resilience on your journey towards better health and well-being.

Heartfelt Reactions::

Write your personal journey with heart disease.

Workbook::

Reframing Your Perspective:: New insights on your disease

What physical challenges have you faced the most since receiving your diagnosis?

What are some physical goals would you like to accomplish with heart disease?

What mental challenges have been most difficult for you since receiving your diagnosis?

What mental objectives would you like to achieve while managing your heart disease?

Workbook::

Reflect & Reframe::
Write and rethink a thought

Original thought::

Reframed thought::

Original challenge::

Reframed challenge::

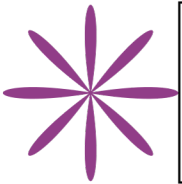
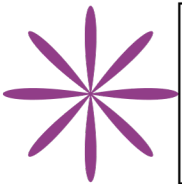
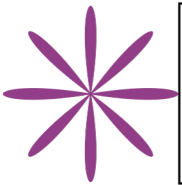
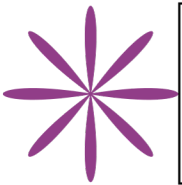
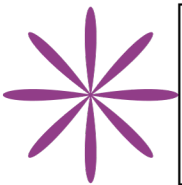
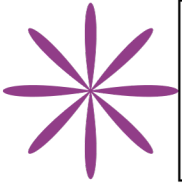
Workbook::

Empowering Your Journey::
Create a personal mantra for HCM

A large rectangular area defined by a dotted purple border, intended for writing a personal mantra. The border is composed of small, evenly spaced purple dots forming a continuous line around the perimeter of the page.

Workbook::

Empower Your Mind::
Create personal affirmations



YOU'VE GOT THIS



@oilyhearts
@twicetheheartfoundation



twicetheheartfoundation.org