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Program to offer men with cancer unique roadmap

DOUGLAS J. GUTH | TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2016



Cancer is a life-altering experience that impacts careers, relationships and bank accounts, while also giving the diagnosed an unwanted glimpse of their own mortality. Male survivors face a set of unique challenges, among them a clear direction on how to take back the power in their lives.

If cancer survivorship is a journey, Berea resident Dan Dean believes he has the roadmap. Dean, 36, is the founder of [M Powerment](#), an organization providing resources geared specifically toward men affected by cancer. A series of free workshops, including a [two-day event](#), Sept. 24 and 25, at [Market Garden Brewery](#) and [Nano Brew Cleveland](#) next month, promise action-oriented, practical skills that allow participants 21 and over to face the disease head-on.

"Men don't have great coping mechanisms to deal with illness," says Dean, a 12-year survivor of stage IV non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. "In layman's terms, guys don't talk about stuff."

M Powerment teaches participants to master their internal narrative and better communicate challenges with a spouse, partner or other support person. Program framework is based on mythologist Joseph Campbell's [Hero's Journey](#), which prompts listeners to "follow their bliss," as well as the tenets of [narrative medicine](#),

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"By doing the work, you'll shift your energy into a more empowered place than you would be if you were victimized by the experience," says Dean, an avid backpacker and hiker. "It's about focusing on things that help you grow."

M Powerment workshops are research-based and use strategies approved by oncology social workers. Dean's road to an "m-powered" existence began upon diagnosis at age 23. Later years found him sharing first-person interviews with cancer survivors via a personal blog. Dean's mother, Caren, died of brain cancer in 2014, giving him further perspective on living a full life five, ten or 20 years after the disease is first discovered.

Dean launched the group in May 2015, upon receiving seed money from the [Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation](#). He hopes to garner additional funding from cancer organizations and for-profit businesses as the enterprise expands. After the Cleveland event, Dean is looking ahead to events in Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver and Boston.

Ultimately, the program founder aims to form a wide-ranging network of cancer warriors. The program also has a sense of humor. Per the website, "This isn't a trust circle and you aren't going to hug someone in a sweater vest. You're going to flex your cancer kicking muscles and come out m-powered men."

"The mission isn't to be in a group circle and talk about what happened, but to give survivors tools to successfully move forward," adds Dean. "It's almost like a 'cancer fraternity,' meaning anyone that comes in with a shared experience is going to bond over the cause."



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Douglas J. Guth is a Cleveland Heights-based freelance writer and journalist. In addition to Fresh Water, his work has been published by Midwest Energy News,

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