

“Navigating Relational Health Through the Challenges of Cancer” (Jason Binder) [#127]

Brad Power

January 15, 2025

“Cancer is personal to me. It sends shock waves to your life, your roles change, your priorities change. There's this uninvited guest into the relationship, and you're constantly overwhelmed with grief of denial or anger or sadness or numbness that's knocking you out.” – Jason Binder

“In the initial conversation, people come with this overwhelming sense of fear and unsettledness about what to do next. I let them know that that's not abnormal; it is really a great starting point.”

– Jason Binder

Meeting Summary

Cancer profoundly impacts both patients and loved ones, often leading to emotional disconnection, miscommunication, and relational strain. With women six times more likely to face separation or divorce when diagnosed than men, couples must develop tools to sustain intimacy and resilience.

Jason Binder has been a caregiver during his wife's glioblastoma battle, a relational health coach, and the creator of Elliot AI. Jason blends personal experience, a background in oncology, and cutting-edge tools to help couples navigate relational health during adversity.

What are strategies to build resilience into your relationships?

- Increase your self-awareness.
- Share your vulnerability.
- Develop your communication skills.
- Practice guided activities.
- Bring empathy (which is different from sympathy) into high-tension situations.

What are exercises and tools to develop your shared values and increase emotional intimacy in your relationships?

- Define a “resilience covenant” to ground you during difficult times.
- Use clinically-validated scales to measure your emotional intimacy, resilience, and quality of life and identify gaps.
- Use the CARE model to focus on connecting, affirming, reflecting, and empathizing.
- Practice meaningful intimacy in your day by using it for 10 minutes.

How can an AI companion strengthen your emotional connections and create hope during challenging times?

- Help you manage anxiety and provide support.
- Provide guidance, answer questions, and offer affirmations.
- Support you between sessions with your coach.

How can you learn more?

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- See our other discussions of mental health and cancer, including:
 - [“Using Psychedelics to Get Comfortable with Your Mortality” \(Jeff Krolick, Robert Ellis, Manish Agrawal, Rebecca Ehrenkranz\) \[#74\]](#)
 - [“Healing the Cancer Journey: Tools for Emotional Wellness” \(Savio P. Clemente\) \[#87\]](#)
 - [“Exercise as a Countermeasure to Hormone Deprivation Therapy Side Effects and for Bone and Mental Health” \(Kerri Winters-Stone\) \[#48\]](#)
 - [“Palliative and Psychosocial Services for Cancer Patients” \(James Tulskey\) \[#85\]](#)
- You can check out the website for [Aware Coaching services](#), schedule [a free 30-minute consultation](#), or contact Jason Binder at Jason@myawarecoaching.com.

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Meeting Notes

KEYWORDS

Cancer journey, relational health, caregiver support, emotional intimacy, resilience, AI digital twin, patient-centric, care model, coping mechanisms, clinical outcomes, survivorship, digital coaching, emotional connection, quality of life, caregiver stress.

SPEAKERS

Jason Binder (77%), Brad Power (9%), Andrew McGlone (5%), Hilary Elkin (3%), Jason Binder Chatbot (2%), Aubrey Kelly (1%), Jay Einbender (1%), David Plunkett (1%), Alexander Lalov (0%)

SUMMARY

Jason Binder, founder of Aware Coaching, discussed the importance of relational health in the cancer journey. He highlighted the disproportionate impact of cancer on relationships, particularly when the patient is female, citing a study showing women face six times the risk of separation or divorce. Binder shared his personal experience with his wife's glioblastoma and the development of Aware Coaching, which uses self-awareness, communication, and resilience to support caregivers and patients. He introduced an AI digital twin companion to provide guidance between sessions. The program costs \$2,400 for 12 sessions and aims to improve emotional intimacy, resilience, and overall well-being.

OUTLINE

Introductions and Background

- Jason Binder is the founder of Aware Coaching, which addresses relational health in the cancer journey.
- His background includes work in pharma and his experience as a caregiver to his wife's glioblastoma (an aggressive brain cancer).
- There is a disproportionate impact on women when they are the patients in cancer relationships.
- Aware Coaching is driven by Jason's personal and professional experiences.

Aware Coaching and Relational Health

- Jason describes Aware Coaching as a practice focused on communication, vulnerability, and resilience.
- Self-awareness develops empathy and improves relationships.
- Guided activities and an AI digital twin companion support clients between sessions.
- A “resilience covenant” grounds clients during difficult times.
- Clinically-validated scales measure emotional intimacy, resilience, and quality of life.
- His personal experience with his wife's cancer journey, including multiple surgeries and treatments, and his professional expertise, inform his coaching practice.
- Data-driven, customized programs address specific needs in cancer relationships.

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Emotional Intimacy Scale and CARE Model

- The emotional intimacy scale is a series of questions.
- Measuring emotional intimacy and other scales identify gaps in relationships.
- The CARE model focuses on connecting, affirming, reflecting, and empathizing.
- He shares exercises and activities to develop shared values and emotional intimacy in relationships.

Conflict Resolution and Coping Mechanisms

- There are healthy ways to deal with conflict resolution and address unmet needs.
- Empathy and sympathy are different, and you can bring empathy into high-tension situations.
- Brain cancer causes personality changes and creates the need for adaptive coping mechanisms.
- The CARE model addresses these challenges and improves relationships.

AI Companion

- An AI companion can support clients between sessions.
- The AI companion can provide guidance, answer questions, and offer affirmations.
- AI has the potential to scale a coaching practice and reach more people.
- The AI companion can help clients manage anxiety and support each other.

Holistic Approach and Program Details

- A holistic approach to cancer care, including patient and caregiver support groups, is important.
- He offers a 12-session coaching program for \$2400.
- The benefits of the program include improved emotional bonds, reduced stress, and better coping mechanisms.
- The program has the potential to scale and reach more people through digital technology.

Final Thoughts

- Jason was able to help ground a caregiver in her fear and grief and be a great listener for her at the beginning of the process. In the initial conversation, people come with an overwhelming sense of fear and unsettledness about what to do next. He lets them know that that's not abnormal; it is really a great starting point.
- The program can be adapted to different stages of the cancer journey.

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TRANSCRIPT

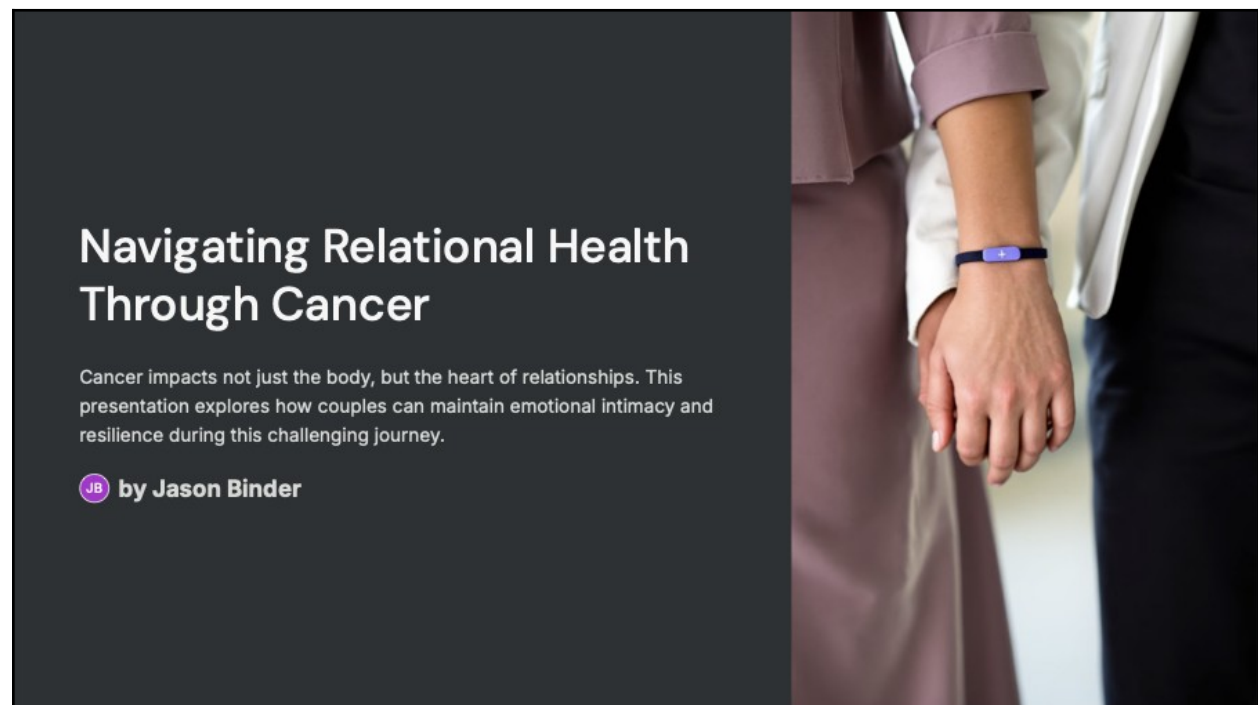
Brad Power

This is the Cancer Patient Lab and our weekly webinar series.

We're honored to have Jason Binder with us today. He's a good friend and colleague. We've been working together in the CancerHacker Lab accelerator. He's been working on mindfulness and help with mental health and behavioral health in relation to cancer.

This is for information purposes only. This is not medical advice. We try to arm our patients with information they can take to their medical team.

We are a nonprofit, patient-led organization, and we depend on the kindness of people making donations. So if you would like to make a donation, you can do that through our website, where we have a donate button.

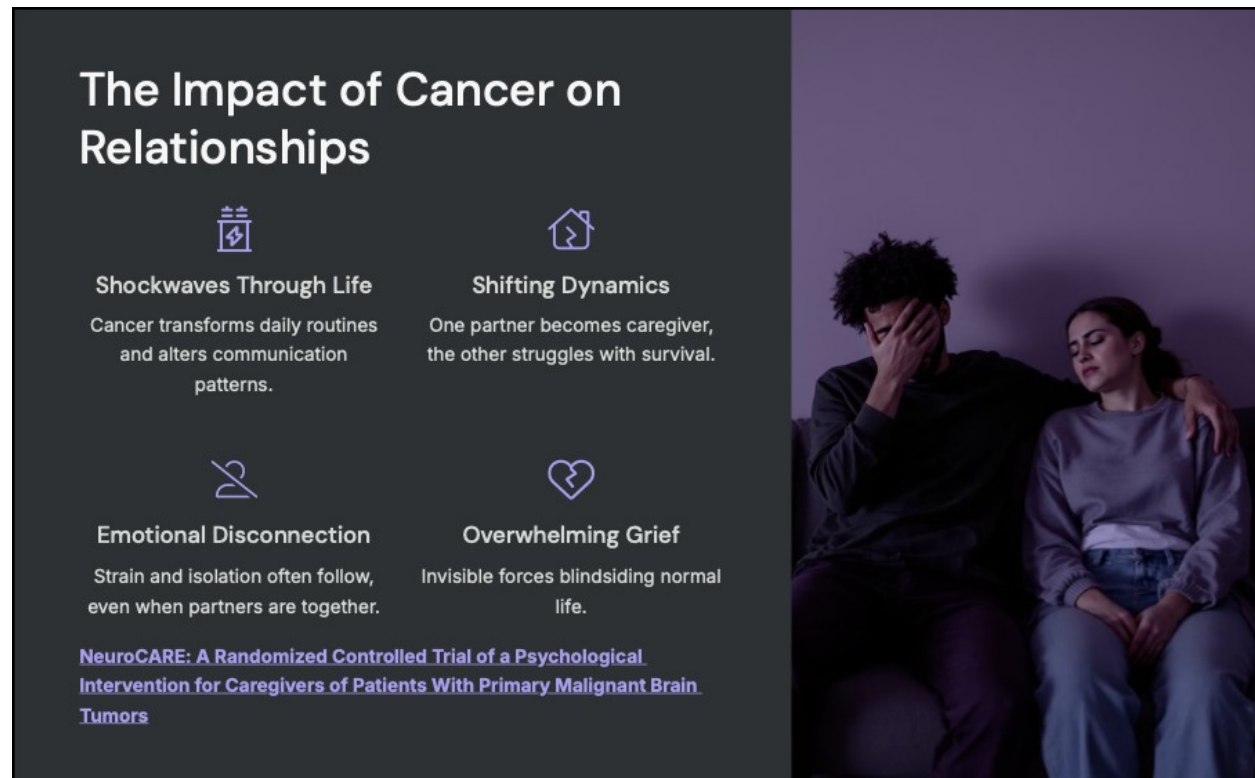


Jason Binder 1:11

I'm the founder of Aware Coaching. I'm going to talk to you a bit about relational health and navigating that as an unmet need in the cancer journey.

I had the opportunity to be part of the [CancerHacker Lab](#) accelerator and learned a ton. If you're thinking about being an innovator or getting into an accelerator, I highly recommend what Brad and Ari have done.

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The Impact of Cancer on Relationships

- Shockwaves Through Life**
Cancer transforms daily routines and alters communication patterns.
- Shifting Dynamics**
One partner becomes caregiver, the other struggles with survival.
- Emotional Disconnection**
Strain and isolation often follow, even when partners are together.
- Overwhelming Grief**
Invisible forces blindsiding normal life.

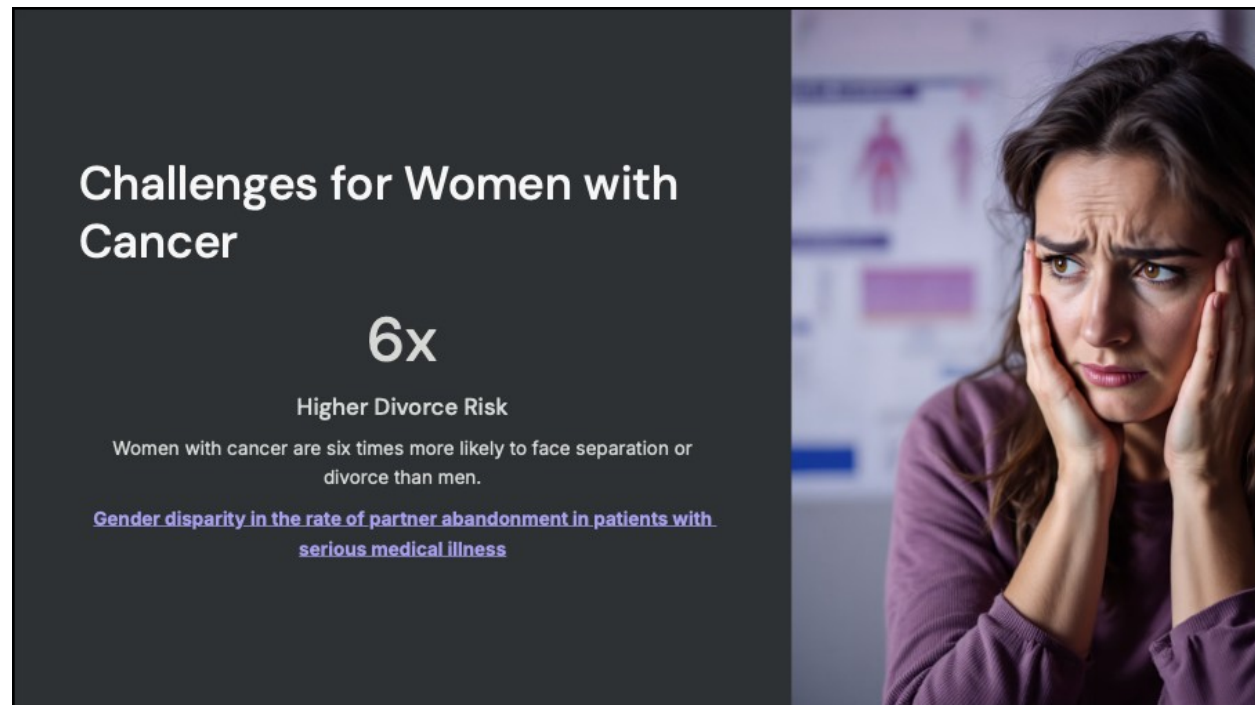
NeuroCARE: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Psychological Intervention for Caregivers of Patients With Primary Malignant Brain Tumors

This is all about the relational impact of cancer. We are very patient-centric, or caregiver-centric. Being in pharma for 25 years, “patient centricity” was drilled into me every day, but the intersection of the caregiver and the patient is really core to relational health, quality of life, and clinical outcomes. I don’t think there’s enough said about it, or enough tangible things to help those relationships thrive as we go through a cancer journey.

Cancer is personal to me. It sends shock waves to your life, your roles change, your priorities change. There's this uninvited guest into the relationship, and you're constantly overwhelmed with grief of denial or anger or sadness or numbness that's knocking you out.

Unexpectedly, there was a recent publication around neuro care where there were specific interventions around stress and coping for caregivers. Surprisingly, it had a positive impact for those that are caring for people with primary malignant brain tumors, which I've been dealing with – my wife, who has glioblastoma, since February 2022.

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Challenges for Women with Cancer

6x

Higher Divorce Risk


Women with cancer are six times more likely to face separation or divorce than men.

[Gender disparity in the rate of partner abandonment in patients with serious medical illness](#)

The infographic features a dark grey background with white text. On the right side, there is a photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a purple top, looking distressed with her hands on her face. The background of the photo shows a blurred medical chart with human figures.

The other thing that I have learned on this journey is that there's a disproportionate and major impact when she's the patient. The American Cancer Society published this article several years ago before COVID, and it showed that women face six times the amount of separation divorce in couples that have cancer when she's the patient and he's the caregiver. As a dude, I don't like that, and it suggests that it's a lack of commitment. I'm going to argue that it's a lack of capability – about men being able to hold all of this in a way that doesn't allow the voice of, “Hey, it's better if you go do this other thing and leave them all on their own.” So that's part of the reason in the birth of relational health coaching as well, that burning platform as a father of three daughters.

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Our Journey

- 1 High School Sweethearts**
In 2025: 25 years of marriage & 33 years of friendship
- 2 Pharma Career**
Transforming oncology drug development with 25 years of expertise in Data, Digital, and AI.
- 3 Master's in Christian Leadership & Life Coaching Certificate**
Developed Life Coaching practice steeped in Grief, Trauma & Loss.
- 4 Wife's Diagnosis**
Tracy diagnosed with glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer.
- 5 Caregiver Role**
Jason thrust into world of medical decisions and emotional upheaval.
- 6 Aware Coaching Born**
Learned importance of communication, vulnerability, and shared resilience.

This is Tracy and I. This year we'll celebrate 25 years of marriage, 33 years of friendship.

As I said before, I've had 25 years in pharma, at three major oncology drug development organizations, where I led data, digital, and AI transformations. Put that together with a master's degree in Christian leadership and a life coaching certificate, and we've developed a practice that's steeped in grief, trauma, and loss. We experienced that ourselves. When my wife went to the ER, I went to church, and she called me and said they found a four centimeter brain tumor, which led us to two surgeries, 30 plus rounds of spinal and brain radiation, six rounds of chemo, shingles, wearing Optune, and a prognosis that she's outlived four times already.

It made me a caregiver. We have five kids, four biological, one adopted, between the ages of 16 and four. I was doing a lot of caregiving. Now I'm taking on a lot more scheduling and finances and all these different things and medical decisions.


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Introducing Aware Coaching

Our Purpose
We provide compassionate support for relationships navigating the cancer journey, transforming challenging moments into opportunities for deeper connection.

Our Expertise
Combining real-world experience with professional knowledge in oncology and coaching to deliver meaningful support.

Our Innovation
Leveraging technology and coaching expertise to create a comprehensive support system for couples facing cancer.



www.myawarecoaching.com





Fighting for Relational Health: Aware Coaching
Aware Coaching offers compassionate, personalized support for families dealing with cancer, helping them transform pain into strength through innovative...

"Fully Known, Fully Accepted."

Out of all this personal experience and professional expertise came Aware Coaching, which drives the importance of communication, vulnerability, and developing resilience. That's the business. That's what we offer in terms of driving relational health, getting really good at self awareness. Because when you have self awareness of your heart, you can have eyes to see and ears to hear and become aware of not knowing your own journey, but that of someone else who's suffering, and you can be more empathetic in how you do that.

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Program Components

			
One-on-One Sessions	Guided Activities	Digital Support	Resilience Covenant
Personal coaching sessions in a supportive, warm environment with expert guidance	Structured reflection exercises to process emotions and track progress	AI-powered coaching interface for continuous guidance and support	Personalized commitment document to strengthen your journey together

If you were to come to Aware Coaching, you and your spouse, partner: one of you is the caregiver, one of you is the patient. You're going to get one-on-one sessions with a coach like me. There's going to be lots of guided activities that I walk you through. I also have an AI digital twin companion that can help between sessions, so you don't have to worry about getting ahold of the coach. You can go through the guided activities and ask it questions to give you feedback, and at the end, you've got a resilience covenant that you can use when things flip upside down again, grounded in truth, promises made to each other, promises made to self, to ground you when you get in that – in our case, it was the recurrence. We're not always face-to-face against each other because of cancer, but we can be shoulder-to-shoulder as we put that out in front of us.

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Personalized Coaching



Comprehensive Assessment

Using validated tools like the Emotional Intimacy Scale (EIS); we measure key aspects of relational health, emotional resilience, and quality of life.



Data-Driven Analysis

We analyze assessment results to identify specific areas where support is most needed, such as communication, stress management, or emotional intimacy.

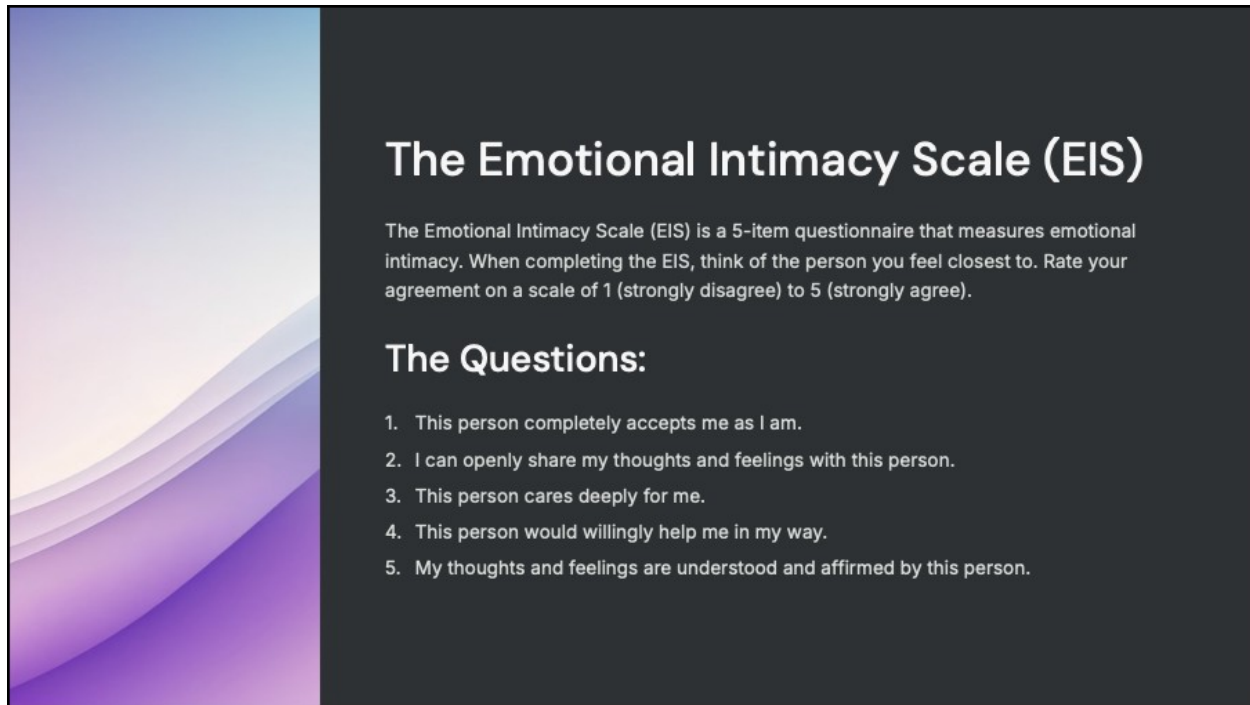


Customized Program Design

Based on these insights, we design a highly targeted coaching program that directly addresses the unique needs and goals of each patient-caregiver pair.

To personalize this, I use several clinically validated scales. I've got an emotional intimacy scale, some resilience scales, some specific quality of life measures for patient and caregiver. That helps me to then look at the curriculum and best fit it to what those gaps are, so that we have a customized program based on connecting, affirming, reflecting, and empathizing that can fill those gaps, fit those needs, fit those opportunities together. It's not a "one size fits all". It's really going to be data-driven, which we can then measure halfway through, at the end of our session's progress, but also really be fine-tuning where those gaps are between you and your relationship, emotional intimacy, resilience, those things that drive your ability to handle treatment after treatment after treatment. The drive for us is driving 30 miles to Wake Forest every day, five days a week, for six weeks. It wears you down. If we have something to ground ourselves on in our relationship, we can get up and do it again together.

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The Emotional Intimacy Scale (EIS)

The Emotional Intimacy Scale (EIS) is a 5-item questionnaire that measures emotional intimacy. When completing the EIS, think of the person you feel closest to. Rate your agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The Questions:

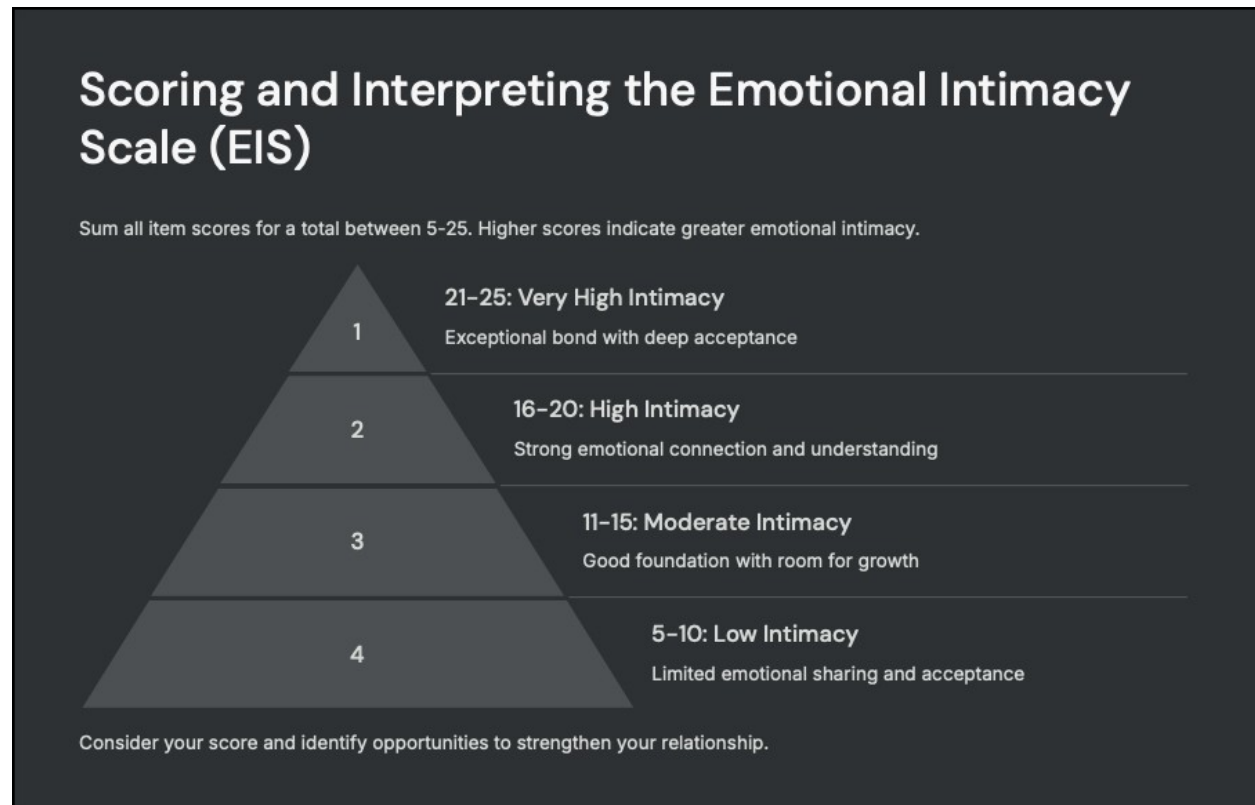
1. This person completely accepts me as I am.
2. I can openly share my thoughts and feelings with this person.
3. This person cares deeply for me.
4. This person would willingly help me in my way.
5. My thoughts and feelings are understood and affirmed by this person.

To humor me, we'll take the emotional intimacy scale together. Think about that person who's closest to you, whether that's your spouse, or the closest person in your journey, and then rate between 1 and 5, where “1” is: “strongly disagree” and “5” is “strongly agree”. This scale is five questions long.

1. This person completely accepts me as I am.
2. I can openly share my thoughts and feelings with this person.
3. This person cares deeply for me.
4. This person would willingly help me in any way.
5. My thoughts and feelings are understood and affirmed by this person.

Take two seconds to go through those; score them 1 to 5.

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Jason Binder 9:25

Hopefully you're able to add those up, and then you can get a sense of where you are in the emotional intimacy scale by looking at what those summaries are. It's going to be a scale of low intimacy to very high intimacy, and it will give you a sense of where you are.

Imagine pairing this with scales around resilience, scales around quality of life as a caregiver, as a patient, the patient scale also includes brain cancer specific ones. Should that be part of your journey? We have something to work with. We have something to measure against. We have something to illuminate where those gaps are in a quantitative way, and it's not to blame, it's not to shame or judge, it's a starting point.

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The CARE Model

- 1 Connecting**
Share emotions to build understanding.
- 2 Affirming**
Recognize and appreciate each other's strengths.
- 3 Reflecting**
Express current needs and collaborate on solutions.
- 4 Empathizing**
Foster compassion and validate feelings.

Everything is grounded on the CARE model. I've developed this through my years of life coaching in marital settings where we needed to generate emotional intimacy, relationship repair, and basing it out of emotional connections and intimacy...

Guided Activities: The CARE Model

			
Connecting Through activities like Emotion Mapping and Shared Values Exploration, partners learn to identify emotions, triggers, and shared priorities, fostering deeper mutual understanding.	Affirming Daily affirmation exercises help partners recognize and celebrate each other's strengths, resilience, and caregiving actions, building a foundation of mutual appreciation.	Reflecting Needs Expression Exercises and Conflict Resolution Practices enable open communication and constructive problem-solving, addressing unmet needs and reframing disagreements.	Empathizing Through Empathy Mapping and Guided Role-Playing, partners explore each other's perspectives and practice compassionate responses in challenging scenarios.

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... with connecting, learning how to affirm character, affirm values, affirm and pour into the other person by being observant and intentional, reflecting and being thoughtful about how past experiences or circumstances have played out, and learning how to express your needs out of that. Teaching people that they have needs. Teaching people that they have heart languages.

When I first got into this, I literally had three heart words: I was, “Good.” “Fine.” “Sure.” It's pretty much how I described my heart. If someone asked, “How are you?” “I'm good.” “I'm fine.” “Sure.” But as I learned, as I had to work through all this, I realized there's a lot more to me, and as I was able to put feelings to words, when she gives feelings and words, I can better understand what she's going through, and I can become closer and more united because of that. When I empathize and generate compassion, the ability to validate how she's feeling in our context.

Everything I do is around exercises and activities in the CARE model. Those things might look like emotion mapping. Where am I? What do I feel? What's the trigger? Where do I feel it in my body? A lot of that they talk about mindfulness, centering, understanding where you're feeling these different things and doing that multiple times a day. Not only do you get better at naming it, you can – as someone who's data-driven – you can look for trends. You can see cause and effect correlations, and be more proactive going into those situations the next time.

A lot of people in a marriage or in a dedicated relationship don't think about the “we”. I might think about you, I think about me, but what's our frame and concept of “we”? I work them through exercises to develop shared values. What are my values? What are her values? What are our values? Then we have something to work off of, in terms of a foundation.

Affirmation is celebrating each other's strengths, identifying resilience and continuing to call out appreciation, because the silent killer of relationships is bitterness and resentment. If I hadn't gone through my own process of learning these things, when I'd say something to Tracy, like, “I just need to get away from cancer today.” She hears that as, “I need to get away from you.” I have to be able to nuance that and explain how, “It's not you, it's this,” and then empathizing that she can't get away from it. It's in her skull. Her treatment is on her head. Being able, as a caregiver, to articulate that in a way that doesn't have the unintended consequence of hurting or blaming is something that is a nuance that you would learn in our coaching reflections.

This is where conflict resolution comes in. This is where you get a lot of intimacy aversion in terms of blaming or shaming or blocking or stonewalling or holding back love or using humor to hurt. Not everyone's going to have the emotional ability to engage in a constructive way, but also coping. A lot of us have really poor coping mechanisms, especially men. Why do they leave? Well, maybe it's the bottle or the screen or the thing that was already there before cancer that gets exacerbated in this huge trauma event for the relationship.

How can we address these unmet needs in a healthy way? How do you empathize? It's different from sympathy. It's experiencing it with the person, versus being thoughtful about what they're going through. How can we bring these in when tensions are high? Or how do we bring them in

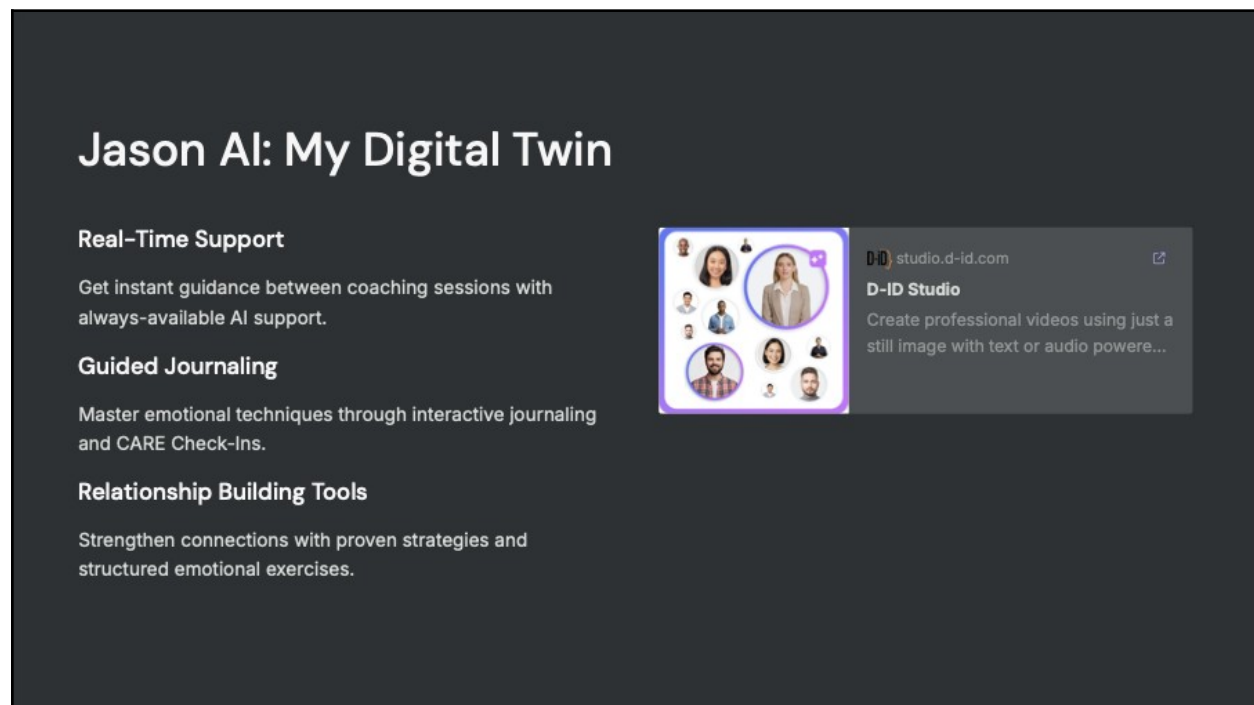
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when there's been alterations in your body? Or with brain cancer, every time they open up the skull, atmospheric pressure on its own has an impact on how the brain is working. Personality changes.

This would be something you could take away today. It's a little bit of all the CARE curriculum, the CARE journey, what you could do 10 minutes today with your partner, if you're going through the cancer journey, and it might take a little bit to get to this place, because cancer's been eating at you. There may be unresolved feelings. There are a lot of existential crises that happen. Can we find a place where we can share with each other, highs and lows, creating safe space? I hear about “psychological safety” all the time. This is a “how you do that” versus “you should just do it”, asking open-ended questions to draw things out, seeking to understand, seeing someone and what they do every day, and being intentional about that, versus being engrossed in self.

The physical connection in terms of holding hands, hugs, going on walks together. **There's lots of ways to practice meaningful intimacy in your day, just by using it, utilizing 10 minutes.** I'll leave that for you as a next step and a practical takeaway.

In between sessions, because I'm a digital and data and AI geek or interested person, I've been thinking about ways to utilize this technology to help the inbetweens. Because you'll be really focusing on coaching, you'll take notes, and then, like, 12 hours later, you've forgotten everything you've done.



The image is a screenshot of a presentation slide with a dark background. The title is "Jason AI: My Digital Twin" in white text. Below the title are three sections, each with a heading and a brief description:

- Real-Time Support**: Get instant guidance between coaching sessions with always-available AI support.
- Guided Journaling**: Master emotional techniques through interactive journaling and CARE Check-Ins.
- Relationship Building Tools**: Strengthen connections with proven strategies and structured emotional exercises.

To the right of the text is a screenshot of a software interface. It shows a grid of circular avatars of various people. To the right of the grid is a dark grey box with the text "D-ID studio.d-id.com" and "D-ID Studio" followed by "Create professional videos using just a still image with text or audio powere...".

What could it look like to be able to talk to me in a way that's meaningful to then be able to get questions answered? For example:

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Jason Binder Chatbot 17:34

Jason, I'm here to help you. What specific information are you looking for?

Jason Binder 17:37

Give me an example of how to do an affirmation.

Jason Binder Chatbot 17:47

To create an affirmation. You can focus on specific traits or actions you appreciate in your partner. For instance, you could say, “I appreciate how you always listen to me with patience and understanding. It makes me feel valued and supported.”

Jason Binder 18:04

What about dealing with my anxiety today? Tracy looks like she's really tired.

Jason Binder Chatbot 18:13

When dealing with anxiety, it's important to acknowledge your feelings and practice self compassion. You can create an affirmation like, “I am capable of managing my anxiety with grace and strength.” Choose to focus on the present moment and trust in your ability to overcome challenges. As for Tracy feeling tired, offering her support and understanding can help her feel heard and cared for.

Jason Binder 18:36

What could be a good journaling prompt for that today?

Jason Binder Chatbot 18:45

A journaling prompt for today could be, “Reflect on how Tracy's tiredness impacted your anxiety. Consider how you can support Tracy and manage your anxiety in a healthy way.”

Jason Binder 18:56

Is there a particular scripture I could use today?

Jason Binder Chatbot 19:04

You can consider using Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” This verse can help you find peace and trust in God's presence during moments of anxiety.

Jason Binder 19:21

That's just a sprinkle of what the AI is capable of. It's trained on several resources that I love. It's trained on the full CARE curriculum. As someone who's gone to seminary, if there's a spiritual angle, they can go there too. It's the first generation of my digital twin in the coaching realm.

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Relational Health Coaching Benefits

Research shows that relational health coaching can significantly improve emotional intimacy, resilience, and quality of life (QoL) for cancer patients and caregivers. Here's what the evidence reveals:



Stronger Emotional Bonds

Higher Emotional Intimacy Scale (EIS) scores are linked to lower stress, improved psychological well-being, and healthier coping behaviors.



Better Physical and Psychological Outcomes

Patients with strong emotional support before interventions experience reduced pain, fatigue, and distress, along with improved overall outcomes.



Improved Caregiver-Patient Dynamics

Cohesive relationships between patients and caregivers are associated with better treatment adherence and survival rates.



A Holistic Approach to Cancer Care

This evidence-based approach addresses the emotional and relational dimensions of cancer, enhancing well-being and long-term resilience.

There are a lot of benefits. These are just what I've seen. This is what the literature suggests in terms of relational health coaching as it applies to cancer:

- Stronger emotional bonds lead to lower stress, improve well being and better coping, because negative coping destroys relationships
- Better physical and psychological outcomes. Interventions will help with reduced pain, fatigue, and distress.
- Improving the relationship between caregiver and patient has an impact on adherence, as relates to taking medicines and survival rates, and then
- Holistic approach to cancer. We're very patient-centric, patient support groups, caregiver support groups. We treat them with drugs, or we treat them with specific things. We approach this centered into integrative and comprehensive care for cancer. It is an opportunity to bring this into holistic practices.

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Program Overview



12 Personalized Sessions

\$2,400 comprehensive package*, delivering one-on-one coaching sessions tailored to your unique journey through cancer and relationships.

*Scholarships available through [The Aware Foundation](#)



Integrated Resources

Access to structured tools including the CARE Check-In Model, emotional journaling guides, and resilience covenant materials.



Continuous Support

Full access to Jason AI coaching companion, evidence-based strategies, and faith-informed guidance between sessions.

The Future is Here – Introducing Our 2025 Virtual Experience

Get ready for an exclusive glimpse into the future! Our groundbreaking 2025 virtual experience product is set to launch in the coming year, revolutionizing the way you connect and engage.

This immersive, 100% virtual experience will transport you to the cutting edge of innovation.

Stay tuned for more details on this game-changing offering!

This is what the program looks like. For 12 sessions, it's \$2,400. You get 12 hours with me. You get the full curriculum. That's a full e-guide with exercises. You get to have access to me. With those guides, you get access to the AI to take you through it. That's the offering today. Everything's on zoom. You would schedule through my calendar. I have blocks that are mornings and evenings and afternoons. It's very much at your own pace and at your own availability. With lots of flexibility. I utilize AI notetakers, if that's of interest. We have all the details provided during and after. If you want to come back to some of the guidance, there's a blurred out whiteboard that always has stuff on it. We talk about those types of things.

I have a nonprofit entity called the AWARE foundation that provides scholarships to those who couldn't afford it because of financial toxicity.

The way I see this going into 2025 is being able to package the entire digital experience as a product on its own, so that it can scale to multiple people and not have me as a bottleneck. I think I can provide a great service, but as the technology continues to improve, I think you'll see a lot more opportunity to reach more people that way.

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Why Choose Aware Coaching?

Personal Experience

As a caregiver to his wife during her glioblastoma journey, Jason intimately understands cancer's impact on relationships. His personal experience navigating healthcare systems, managing daily care, and maintaining hope through uncertainty brings genuine empathy to his coaching approach.

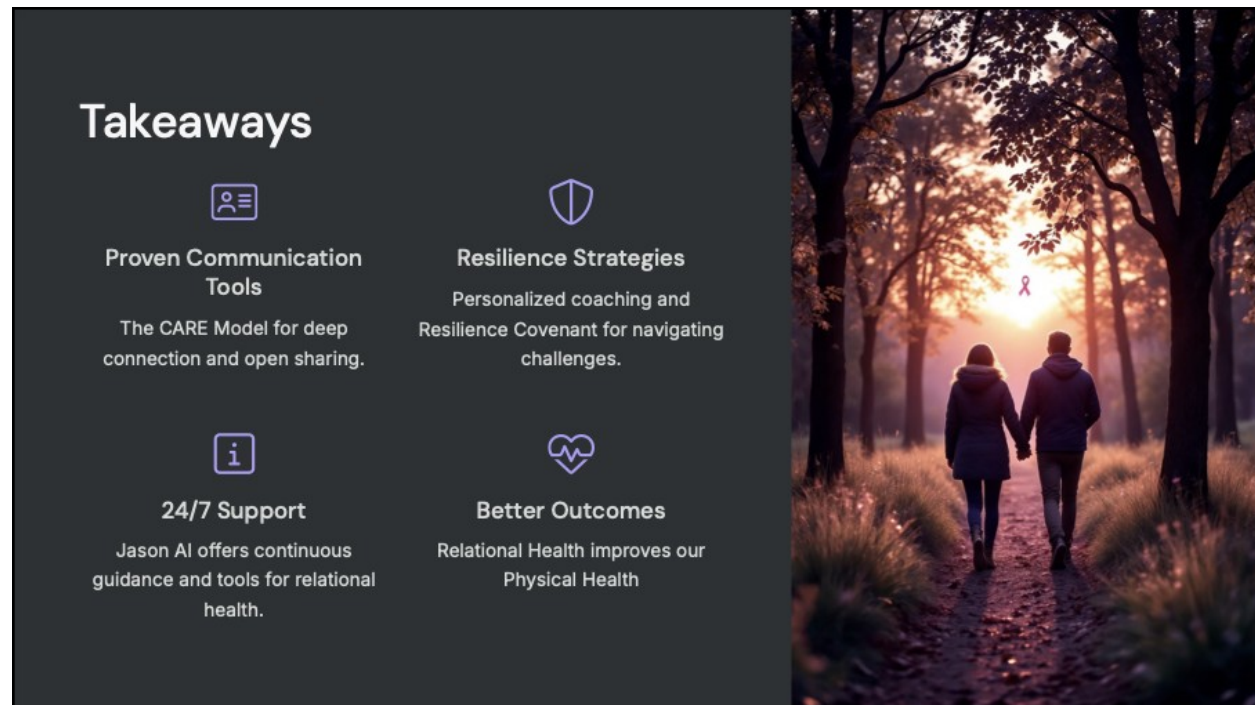
Professional Expertise

With over a decade in oncology and relational health coaching, Jason combines clinical expertise with compassionate guidance. His Christian Life Coaching certification and work with leading cancer foundations enables him to provide comprehensive support for couples facing cancer together.

Why would you choose Aware Coaching?

Through my own personal experience of being a caregiver, understanding how to navigate when Tracy's cancer came back in September of last year, I was able to do multiple second opinions. I was able to do multiple clinical trial navigations. I was able to get directed and access doctors personally because of the background, the experience I have of navigating the system. Getting connections with Brad and Ari and those folks has given me a broader network of connections. My professional expertise. Unfortunately, I understood all of the data that came back with her diagnosis of molecular glioblastoma with P-net features. (A "molecular glioblastoma with P-net features" refers to a type of glioblastoma tumor that exhibits histological characteristics similar to a Primitive Neuroectodermal Tumor, meaning it contains areas with highly cellular, small, undifferentiated cells resembling embryonic neurons, alongside the typical glioblastoma components, often indicating a more aggressive and poorer prognosis compared to a standard glioblastoma.) I could find that there's just a handful of use cases in the literature, and the prognosis was terrible. I can help people bridge that clinical into the compassionate guidance of navigating this gray, especially in rare cancers, when recurrence is an art project, not a standard of care, and then being able to help unify people to see this as something that cannot be A Not, not have pain, be the plasma cutter of the relationship, but it be the welding of them together that no force could pull apart.

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Takeaways




- Proven Communication Tools**
The CARE Model for deep connection and open sharing.
- Resilience Strategies**
Personalized coaching and Resilience Covenant for navigating challenges.
- 24/7 Support**
Jason AI offers continuous guidance and tools for relational health.
- Better Outcomes**
Relational Health improves our Physical Health


The background image shows a couple walking away from the viewer on a path through a forest at sunset. A pink awareness ribbon is visible in the distance, symbolizing cancer awareness.

I wanted you to take away that we've got a proven communication vehicle in terms of the CARE model that's going to have lots of good experiences and exercises. It's baked in to have resilience as a key outcome and a deliverable. In terms of a resilience covenant out of the experience, there's never going to be a time where you can't get some sort of help and guidance based on utilizing the digital twin. The data shows that relational health improves physical health. When you've got cancer, and if you've got one of those harder diagnoses in terms of the stage, or ones where there just aren't a lot of choices, we're going to use every tool in the toolbox, known or unknown, to continue to be here and be part of the life that we've been given.

“Navigating Relational Health Through the Challenges of Cancer” (Jason Binder) [#127]

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Navigating Relational Health Through Cancer

I'm accepting new clients, if that's of interest to you or someone you know. This is how to reach me. We do free 30 minute consultations, so there's no no financial commitment, and you can learn more about the services at myawarecoaching.com.

If you would, please scan the QR code here and complete the survey about the presentation. I love ruthless feedback. It's part of being in product development. The better feedback I get, the better I can make this for the next people. I really appreciate the time.

Brad Power 25:47

One of the challenges in a “soft” discipline is: how do you make tangible the services you provide? You did a really good job of that.

Could you go through a client case: somebody showed up, they had this issue, you had this conversation, and this is what it was like from their perspective – to help us imagine what it would be like if we were working with you from a patient perspective?

Jason Binder 26:40

As I was starting this out, my initial model was one of trying to make it all free for everyone. So I got a few folks that bit with that.

One was a GBM caregiver. She was with her husband, and she had been caring for him for five years – to the point where she said she didn't know who she was anymore. Every time we met, there was this unloading of burden that I was happy to receive. Second, it was a lot of encouragement as she battled 24/7 home care. She battled fear of the next thing being the final thing with him.

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I was able to help ground that and be a great listener for her at the beginning of that process. In the initial conversation, people come with this overwhelming sense of fear and unsettledness about what to do next. I let them know that that's not abnormal; it is really a great starting point.

Giving them the ability to kind of vomit all that poison, all that stuff that's happening in a way that's non-judgmental has been some of the things I've been able to do with several folks that have come my way. That's a good starting point, before we even get into the work. There's this backed-up stuff that needs to come out, and they need someone who's just going to receive it and then hold them in that hope.

Brad Power 28:35

This reminds me of the movie “The Green Mile.” The character in a prison could absorb all the poison and take it off of the person.

Jason Binder 28:53

Yes. Tom Hanks. Well done.

Jason Binder 29:07

I can definitely put more age diverse couples in the presentation.

Hilary Elkin 29:12

That was my comment. Thank you very much. I don't want to look at a bunch of 20-year-old couples when I'm in my 60s.

As a cancer survivor, what I have found is that it's too easy to get lost in screen time, and I'm a member of therapy groups, and so is my husband, and the tendency is to go to information first, which is screen time. That is mostly how we get it now, but what's most valuable to me as a patient is the cuddle time, it's the going to church time, it's reading scripture. Or it's the gentle conversations. This is a caution. I hope you're pushing the people who come to you electronically to spend that face-to-face. Touch time.

Jason Binder 30:17

The whole premise around the CARE check-in is to practice those things. Most people don't know how to do that in a way that's going to be meaningful. Most people don't know that there are seven different types of intimacy and how to practice those things. Yes, everything is around creating that sacred space to connect with feelings, to share needs, to receive those in a way that's authentic, versus just checking the box.

Like you said, screen time is like just checking the box through life and running real fast, but having those real, sacred moments of connection is going to build the intimacy, the emotional intimacy, that's the bedrock for all the other intimacy. It's also going to allow you to together be resilient when it just hits the fan, because you've had those small times you're you're praying together, you're reading scripture together, you're going to church together, you're going for

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walks together. There's a lot of “we”, there's a lot of build up, of oneness between y'all. So there's more to withstand those storms.

The way I can reach more people is in two dimensions. The way that I can make sure that if you have a question and you know, I can't get to the text right away, you've got someone who's going to represent the coaching practice and give guidance that's aligned to that is the way to utilize digital. You can't remove the authentic human connection of the coaching experience. That's just noise. It has to be something that's going to drive that exercise between y'all, to generate that connection through what I'm trying to do in a way that's repeatable and evidence-driven that actually drives those results. That point is perfect.

Andrew McGlone 32:15

As Jason will know, I'm very much involved in artificial intelligence, using digital twins as a way to communicate, not only to individuals, but to many people. I'm interested, Jason, in your artificial AI twin. How do you find Tracy and the children and the other families and caregivers that go along on that journey with you? Because it's not just you as a caregiver. It's colleagues. It's family. It's friends. How do you find they interact with your twin? Does Tracy have an AI companion twin of her own, and if not, are you looking at getting one?

Jason Binder 33:05

My kids think it's the most cringy invention ever, because the mouth doesn't look exactly like me. So immediately it's like, “That's weird. That's not you all.” But for those that don't know me, you don't know that that isn't the Six Sigma representation of me, and it's human enough to be credible. With some software engineering horsepower, I can make it better. People who don't know me will take it on face value as something authentic, knowing that it's not to replace necessarily at this moment, it's to augment.

There's no plan for Tracy to have one at this moment. There's value in being able for her to share that journey from a patient perspective. It just isn't on our roadmap. I think there's some other good ideas out there that are thinking in those lines,

Andrew McGlone 34:09

I know the answer to this question, but I think it might be of interest to other people and concerns with AI. I'm assuming that the interactions that somebody would have with your AI companion are confidential and private. It's an amazing ability to ask somebody or something that's a representation of somebody anything you want, and get back any answer that you want without fear of upsetting that person that you're effectively speaking to. It's really good for mental health. But how do you ensure that there are guardrails in place so that your AI twin can't do something inappropriate?

Jason Binder 34:49

You're able to train it on specific things, so it's going to reach from a knowledge base versus from the internet. There are levels of tuning that you can have in terms of how much freedom you give to that that allows you to manage that in terms of everything I have being that is

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private, compliant, all those things. This is my beta version of that. There's still work to be done, but the intention is around knowledge sharing at this point. That's where I'm at. You can tune these avatars to be 100% expansive into all the knowledge it can reach into. Or you can whittle it down to the knowledge base that you give it,

Andrew McGlone 35:38

You have the ability to train it so that it looks like you, sounds like you, has information that's really specific to you, so that if somebody is wanting in this interaction, that that really feels like it's with you.

Jason Binder 35:55

Your AI companion is able to do that. It is my voice there as well, if it wasn't 100% clear. You can upload voices and those types of things.

Brad Power 36:07

I'm a little confused, because “digital twin” has a particular meaning to me. It comes from industry where they have a simulation model of a piece of hardware or something. The digital twin is a simulation that you can then run experiments against, instead of doing it on the thing itself.

I think an “avatar” is more along the lines of what you have created. It reminds me of how I interact with ChatGPT: you can choose the voice, or for Google Maps, you can choose the voice, and it can be anything you want. It could be somebody who's British, a woman, or a man that you know, anything you want.

What was your thought process when you made it be you? Is that because you're using you with Tracy, or it's you, and it's a surrogate for you when you're not physically available so people can interact with a digital you? Because it might be taking that a step further. It might be, “what's the ideal avatar for that individual that would make them most comfortable?” It could be the grandmother.

Jason Binder 37:19

You're right on. This is germinating out of Aware Coaching and me trying to scale this product, but you're right: maybe there's a better way to do it for the mass that it's the relatable face that they want to see with the relatable voice. It still can be trained on the core content, so that the information shared and the tone is still the same. It's empathic, compassionate. It can bring stuff up from the curriculum to guide, but maybe that self service, maybe it's other types of faces that bring stability and resilience to the conversation for them. That's a good build.

Andrew McGlone 38:05

If I may just expand on that a little bit, one of the reasons that we don't generally call them “avatars” is that we're actually only a couple of iterations away from them really being lifelike and literal twins. We're only a couple of years away from them being holograms. It's for us to get

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stuck with the name of an avatar. That would restrict us a little bit. But the next iterations coming out are really quite fantastic.

Aubrey Kelly 38:46

Recognize that for the majority of partners, one of the partners has had cancer. In my situation, my son has had cancer and is a survivor, and is a seven year survivor right now, and still, there's underpinnings. I would love to understand how adaptable it is to different stages of a cancer journey. There are different ways to process and certainly different things that are out of our control.

Jason Binder 39:26

Right now, the coaching programs focus on partners, so it's not going to be parent to child, but we could adapt to that.

There's a difference in urgency or need depending on the type of cancer, and then where you are in that. There's some tuning that I would do based on what those folks brought to the table. Brad and I have talked about this: you get a glioblastoma diagnosis, it's “Holy crap.” Everything has to stop. We know that the tick of that clock means something. I'm not trying to minimize any other cancer diagnosis. There are different trajectories that you come in.

I've been talking to the organization called The After Cancer, where it's survivorship, and then imagine – and I'll be doing some talks with them around the same thing – but in the service of a survivorship model where maybe treatment isn't in the foreground, it's in the background, but there's a lot of casualties that still show up, whether it's been surgeries, or chemo brain, whatever those things are. You all aren't the same person that you were before cancer after, but you're also not able to be done with it just because treatments are over and being thoughtful about that. That's part of the fine tuning of the assessments when you come in. “Where are you? What hand have you been dealt? Where are you on that?” How do we shape it to be meaningful?

Aubrey Kelly 41:21

The idea of a partner package: processing a pediatric diagnosis or a child diagnosis is a critical component.

Jason Binder 41:34

Are you talking about me and my husband?

Aubrey Kelly 41:40

Yes. My husband and I are processing what has happened to our family. There are still remnants.

Jason Binder 41:44

That does apply in that relationship in what I had for today. You all grieve in different ways. There are different guilts for mom versus dad, and how this happened.

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Tracy and I talk about putting grief on the table. We can't hide it because it festers. It's a wound. So we put it on the table in front of us. We have something we can work with and be more accepting of each other.

Jay Sandler 42:59

Regarding digital twins: Have you thought about the posthumous value or lack of value of them? We all face our mortality. We all die, but cancer makes it real time and visceral in a way that is tough to put words to. I'm curious what your take on that aspect of a digital twin is.

Jason Binder 43:34

What you're asking is the digital twin can exist beyond the life of the person who may be battling cancer. I've grown in my space . At first I was worried about the ethical dilemma that that posed, and would that get in the way of grieving and closure? I even discussed it with my own counselor, and his response was that it could really help with that, because I lost my dad when I was 31. How wonderful would it be to ask him a question about fatherhood today, not that I would, not that I wouldn't do my own work. I still like that. I started to do my work to know that he's gone, but my kids have never heard him tell a story about me. My oldest, who's 16, was four months old, and none of my other kids were even alive. There's value in that.

Jason Binder 44:57

I appreciate your feedback, and happy to take any other questions. Happy to take criticism and feedback as well.

I liked Hillary's comment about images. I can do that. The cool thing about the program I use is it's AI-generated images, so you can just tell it to “Let's have this one be a little more diverse.”

Brad Power 45:24

In this day and age, people aren't heterosexual normative. Showing some examples, we've got race, we've got different sexual orientations, maybe just mix it up a bit in the imagery.

David Plunkett 45:53

Another area where you might consider looking at expansion in the future is cross-generational. In my case, it was between me and my grandmother, and I can't imagine that's terribly unusual,

Jason Binder 46:13

To be caring for your grandmother is not unusual at all.

Brad Power 46:26

Any final words?

Jason Binder 46:30

Please feel free to check out my [AwareCoaching.com](https://www.AwareCoaching.com). I'm always looking for ways to make relational health more present in people's minds, as it relates to something that's needed on the cancer journey and open to talking with folks that find interest offline.