



Odyssey

Enhancing the quality of life for people with cancer

WHAT WE DO

Odyssey is a unique organisation which enhances the quality of life for people with cancer through programmes of adventure based mainly in the outdoors. Using the stimulation of uncertainty and surprise Odyssey takes participants on a five day journey aimed at combating the psychological and emotional devastation caused by their illness. By supporting people to overcome



appropriate challenges, (some of them physical, others creative or artistic) Odyssey helps people rebuild their confidence and regain their zest for life.

ORIGINS

Odyssey was founded in Kent in 1994 by consultant oncologist Dr. Howard Smedley who saw a gap in the provision of support at the point where people are leaving treatment. Since then Odyssey has consistently tried to run a minimum of 3 courses a year in Kent and since 2005 has striven, when funding has permitted, to run courses in Wales, the West Midlands and Scotland. With skills and knowledge acquired over 17 years, Odyssey believes its body of experience to be unrivalled.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?



Odyssey courses are for people living with or having had a recent experience of cancer and who need a helping hand to get on with life again. Places are free and available to anyone over 18. There is no upper age limit, the oldest we have had so far is 84!

Patients are referred onto our courses through health professionals working in the NHS, private hospitals, hospices and GP clinics. Regular training events ensure that referrers

have the chance to experience Odyssey for themselves and that courses continue to fulfil patients needs. Our long term aim is to widen Odyssey's cover geographically so courses are available to people from all over Britain and within easy access of where they live.



WHY THERE IS A NEED FOR ODYSSEY

The increasing success of cancer treatments has meant that many people are surviving cancer and returning to normal life, often after a prolonged interlude of treatment. Others are terminally ill, but not physically incapacitated and a third group comprises of those who have to live through a long period of uncertainty before knowing the outcome. A fundamental need for all three groups is to maximise the quality of their lives.

Many forms of support are offered through treatment centres, but typically they are introspective in approach. Odyssey is about active engagement and frequently provides the stimulus and confidence that people need to re-engage with life. For example it's not uncommon, following an Odyssey course for people to return to work after a long period away or to take up a new pastime. For others it helps them find positivity, enjoyment and peace during the closing part of their lives.

THE ODYSSEY STAFF

The five who run any given course are drawn from a larger pool of staff trained in delivering Odyssey courses. Most will normally work in the field of outdoor development training with both charities and businesses. Between them, they have an immense breadth of experience, a passionate belief in the power of the outdoors and a huge sense of fun. They are also incredibly well tuned with the cancer element to the course and will ensure that each participant feels comfortable at all times.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

We are thrilled to see so much enthusiasm for the courses we organise, but in order to continue offering the opportunity to others we need to fundraise. The more we raise, the more places we can offer. If you would like to help, events such as coffee mornings, sponsored walks and tombolas can be great fun and relatively easy to organize, while larger challenges may also help you achieve a personal goal or a holiday of a lifetime.

Whatever it might be Odyssey will be delighted to support you. Odyssey staff are very versatile and can offer advice on initiatives ranging from "Elvis" nights to global challenges!!

For help or further information contact Hugo on hugo@odyssey.org.uk. If you would like to make a donation, either with a single one off payment or via a regular direct debit please see our website www.odyssey.org.uk/donate.

As a small charity, small donations have a huge impact. Please help us if you can.

"Yes I have an incurable and progressive cancer; yes I'm dying and I may die this year or next year, but Odyssey made me realise that there was still some living to do and I should not 'die' before I'm dead."