



The Open Heart Companion: Preparation and Guidance for Open-Heart Surgery Recovery

By Maggie Lichtenberg, PCC

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<http://www.openheartcoach.com>

For Immediate Release

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Open heart surgery's challenging four to eight week recovery period is finally addressed in this highly informative book

Santa Fe, New Mexico, (June 2006) Every year in the US alone, 709,000 open-heart patients (current AHA figures) plod through an arduous convalescence. Yet rarely are heart patients told what to *really* expect during the stressful open-heart surgery recovery period at home. Maggie Lichtenberg, a recent open-heart surgery thriver, former publishing company executive, professional speaker, and coach (PCC), decided this needed to change. Through dozens of interviews and weaving in her own personal battle with heart disease, she wrote *The Open Heart Companion: Preparation and Guidance for Open-Heart Surgery Recovery* (Pub Date June 13, 2006, ISBN: 978-0-9776063-0-6). This one of a kind recovery guide reinforces the wisdom that knowledge is power, and knowing what to expect during open-heart surgery recovery -- and preparing for it -- is a life-affirming process.

For those facing heart surgery, this book includes tips on recovery. A few include:

1. Organize a "home team" before, or just home from, your surgery. Dole out assignments to friends and family -- dinner nightly, buddy system, running errands, housekeeping, chauffeuring -- so your primary caregiver is supported along with you.
2. Arrange for spiritual and psychological support before, during, and especially after the operation from people who will be willing to check in on you regularly about your state of mind and soul.
3. Take a positive approach to avert intermittent depression during recovery -- combat lethargy, force yourself to get exercise despite your fatigue, explore meditation, go into prayer, exchange supportive phone calls with another heart patient, ask for help. Another seven tips are found in Chapter 10 of *The Open Heart Companion*.

This is the first book written with the focus primarily on the recuperation period with the goal of reducing fear and stress -- and maximizing support options -- by simply planning ahead. Not only does the book empower patient and loved ones before the open-heart surgery date; it also provides supportive guidelines, plan-ahead exercises, resources, checklists, glossary, and index for the challenging "recovery gap" between hospital discharge and readiness for a cardiac rehab program.

As Kathleen Blake, MD, President, New Mexico Heart Institute, states in the Foreword, "Because *The Open Heart Companion* outlines a series of plans for thoughtful and collaborative action, it will be equally useful for those assisting in the care of a family member or friend."

If you know someone facing heart surgery, stop by our site today for the support you need. In addition to the book, Lichtenberg offers an informative newsletter, a Recovery Organizer, coaching, and a monthly phone support group.

Advance praise for *The Open Heart Companion*

by Maggie Lichtenberg

"The Open Heart Companion is just that -- a book that acts as a loving, wise, and comforting partner who gently guides you through the stages of preparing for and successfully completing open-heart surgery. A life-saving gift filled with invaluable resources, real-life stories and must-know information, this book is required reading for all patients and loved ones."

Cheryl Richardson, author of *Take Time for Your Life*

"The Open Heart Companion is *must* reading for anyone who requires open-heart surgery. Written by a life coach who has been there herself, The Open Heart Companion will help you get the most out of this dramatic and life-changing experience."

Christiane Northrup, MD, author of *Mother-Daughter Wisdom* and *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*

"This passionate and personal guide will help you both survive and thrive after open-heart surgery."

Mehmet C. Oz, MD, author of *Healing from the Heart* and *You: The Owner's Manual*

"This beautifully written, comprehensive and absolutely accurate account of how to go into, come out of, and recover from open heart surgery is a must for patients and physicians alike. I plan to keep a supply on hand for my own patients, confident that they will find it, as I did, immensely instructive and helpful."

Marianne J. Legato, MD, author of *The Female Heart: The Truth about Women and Heart Disease*

"Maggie Lichtenberg has created a terrific resource for those undergoing open-heart surgery, both for the preparation and the recovery period. Drawn from dozens of patient and caregiver interviews, the book is filled with specific exercises and insights to make the open-heart experience easier on the patient and loved ones."

Amy Verstappen, President, Adult Congenital Heart Association (ACHA)

"... The Open Heart Companion is a superb accomplishment and a very practical guide for patients requiring heart surgery. It is extremely well organized, very informative, and provides a profile for how we (medical profession) can do it better.

"The perspective of someone who has experienced a particular situation is often more insightful than that of experts with formalized training. In fact, experience brings its own expertise and that's what is in your book. Your words have helped me become a better surgeon, not in the operating room, put in pre- and post-operative care — thank you. ..."

Joseph A. Dearani, Cardiothoracic Surgeon, Mayo Clinic

Media Questions for Maggie Lichtenberg, Author

The Open Heart Companion

1. Why was it so important for you to write this book?
2. You are a former heart patient and thriver yourself. What was the most difficult challenge of your recovery?
3. I know this book deals primarily with heart surgery, but it also appears that the recovery tips included could benefit most major surgeries. What guidelines are particularly relevant to *any* major surgery?
4. What top two to three healing strategies became prominent parts of your book, which you feel are essential for the recovery process?
5. Can you explain what a cardiac rehab program is and how you feel it benefited you?
6. Also, why, even though your own surgeon stated, “You don’t need one,” did you feel it is necessary to recommend that every open-heart patient enroll in a cardiac rehab program?
7. In your book you talk about organizing a “home team” and the importance of lining up support before your surgery. What exactly is a home team and can you explain why you feel this way?
8. In your opinion, how long does it take for an open-heart patient to feel “back to their old self” with full energy and stamina – to get beyond that feeling of intense fatigue?
9. You have gotten some terrific reviews already including one from your own surgeon at Mayo Clinic. Why do you feel this book differs from the rest and has gotten such positive feedback?
10. You offer so much more in addition to this book. Can you tell us about the other services you provide in order to help heart patients and caregivers who currently face open-heart surgery?

Library Journal review – June 15, 2006 issue

Lichtenberg, Maggie. [The Open Heart Companion: Preparation and Guidance for Open-Heart Surgery Recovery](#). Open Heart. Jun. 2006. 208p. index. ISBN 0-9776063-0-9 [ISBN 978-0-9776063-0-6]. pap. \$20. HEALTH

"The breastbone is divided, then the protective sack around the heart is cut open. The heart lies naked, most often stilled as its functions are turned over to a heart-lung machine for several hours while arteries are reconfigured or valves repaired or replaced." In this guidebook to open-heart surgery, recent patient Lichtenberg discusses her path to finding resources that helped her through her own ordeal. She provides practical information on preparing for your hospital visit and what to expect during your stay. Where this book excels-and many hospitals fail-is in sharing insight on what you can expect in the transition from hospital to home and how to best manage the four- to eight-week period of home recovery. Lichtenberg offers excellent guidelines and checklists for people at various stages of surgery that will help them organize their entire experience and think about surgery as more than just time spent in the operating room. This book does an excellent job of encompassing patient-center concepts and helping readers become knowledgeable about hospital processes and procedures that can often cause stress and discomfort. **Highly recommended** for public and consumer libraries.-

Howard Fuller, Stanford Health Lib., Palo Alto, CA