

Coping With Your Emotions When You Have Cancer: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Finding out you have cancer can cause a flood of emotions. You may feel angry, sad, or powerless. Emotions can be overwhelming to you and your loved ones. This time in your life may feel dark and hopeless.

However, many people survive and even thrive with cancer. Some types of cancer can be treated and cured. There are many treatments to control pain and improve your quality of life. Even if you cannot be cured, you do not have to suffer.

It is important to know that it is normal to have all of these emotions, or none of them. Everyone reacts differently. And your feelings may change often, without warning. It is common to go through any or all of these feelings:

- Anger, fear, or worry.
- Not believing that you have cancer.
- Feeling out of control and not able to care for yourself.
- Sadness, guilt, or loneliness.
- No hope for the future.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Cancer can be very unpredictable. Learning to live with uncertainty is part of living with cancer.

- You may have some false ideas about how you "should" feel when you have cancer. Although some people with cancer suffer from depression, not all do.
- If you are depressed, talk to your doctor and get treatment. It will help you to feel better and focus on making good health decisions. Symptoms of depression include:
 - You feel helpless or hopeless.
 - You lose interest in being with family or friends.
 - You lose interest in hobbies or activities you once enjoyed.
 - You do not feel hungry.
 - You cry a lot, or for long periods of time.
 - You have trouble sleeping, or you sleep too much or too little.
 - You think about killing yourself, or you make plans or take action to kill yourself.
- Share your feelings with someone you can trust. It is okay to feel angry and frustrated. You will feel better if you can share these feelings with someone. Do not pretend to be cheerful if you are not.
- Know which family members or friends you can turn to for support. Find a good listener. You do not always want advice.
- Find a support group for people who have cancer. A support group can be a safe and comfortable place to talk about your illness.
- Let yourself grieve. But when symptoms get in the way of your ability to carry on with daily activities, talk to your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor if you are thinking about using any over-the-counter or herbal supplements. Some of them may not be safe if used with certain other medicines.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to 988lifeline.org for more information or to chat online.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel like hurting yourself or someone else.
- Someone you know has depression and is about to attempt or is attempting suicide.

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Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You feel very sad and think you may be depressed.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **E783** in the search box to learn more about "**Coping With Your Emotions When You Have Cancer: Care Instructions**".

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