



## Coping With Your Emotions

When facing a cancer diagnosis and treatment you are likely to experience a roller coaster of emotions. When riding this roller coaster, you will need to hold on, scream, yell, laugh, and exhale to make it through the ride. There are ups and downs; peaks and valleys; positives and negatives.

### Emotions/feelings you may experience include:

- Worry
- Sadness
- Anger
- Nervousness
- Disinterest in usual/pleasurable activities
- Uncertainty
- Hope
- Numbness/disconnect
- Relief
- Loneliness
- Isolation
- Happiness

These are all normal, expected emotions that cancer patients and their loved ones experience every day. You are not crazy, different, or alone in experiencing this vast range of emotions at various points in your cancer journey. Learning to cope with these emotions is a key part of learning to LIVE with your cancer.

There are many things you can do to help yourself and your family and friends deal with the vast range of emotions you may experience, including:

- Give yourself permission to feel and think the way you do at that moment.
  - Who can provide different kinds of support? You may need emotional, practical, spiritual support, or support through providing information and knowledge.
  - Explore both the caring, available persons and the less supportive persons.
  - How accessible are persons in your support network?
  - Who initiates the call for help?
  - Are you okay with receiving help?
  - What is the best way for you to access your support system?

Communicate with your loved ones about how you are feeling. Though you may be feeling angry and upset, try to avoid an angry or critical tone. Explain your feelings by using this formula:

- "I feel/felt" - a particular feeling or emotion.
- "When" - a specific situation you are communicating about.
- "Because it" - further explanation of the situation/your reaction.
- For example, "I feel scared about my visit to the doctor tomorrow when I will hear my test results because it will guide much of my future plans." Or "I felt loved when you gave me that hug this morning because you showed me how much you care about me."
- Use active coping techniques
  - Be comfortable with asking for, receiving, and refusing help.

- Be prepared with tasks you need help with so that you can delegate to those who ask to help. It is okay to say you don't want help with something- and you don't need a reason.
- Exercise: engaging your body in physical activity helps to manage stress and anxiety, as well as anger and worry.
- Guided imagery or visualization, meditation, and mindfulness focus on compassion, and awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. These can help clear the mind and encourages less focusing on the past (guilt) or the future (fear/anxiety/worry).
- Thought re-direction/opposite thinking: when a negative thought invades your mind, say aloud, NO. When negative thoughts are overwhelming you, think about the opposite that may happen.
  - For example: "This chemo is going to make me nauseous." Think the opposite thought: "I'm may not have nausea with this cycle of chemo. If I do, I have medication to help me feel better."
- Take a time-out, and walk away. Sit in a quiet place, gather your thoughts and feelings, breathe, reflect, and regain control of your mind.
- Go to a support group or support community like the [Cancer Support Community](#) or use online and telephone support resources through [CancerCare](#). You are not alone; going to a group helps to counter the isolation you may be feeling.
- Journal or blog to allow yourself to let go of feelings and find meaning in your experience.
- Online websites such as [MyLifeLine](#), and [Caring Bridge](#) can help build a supportive community of friends and family, as well as give you a platform to share your thoughts and feelings.

Emotional distress greatly impacts your ability to manage your cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. By engaging your mind with functional, positive coping mechanisms and communicating with your support network about what you need, you will be better equipped to manage the roller coaster ride, and perhaps, you'll be better off if it comes time to ride it again.

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