



Mental Health During Cancer and Cancer Survivorship

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**A person becomes a cancer survivor
at the moment of a cancer diagnosis
and remains one for as long
as he or she lives.**



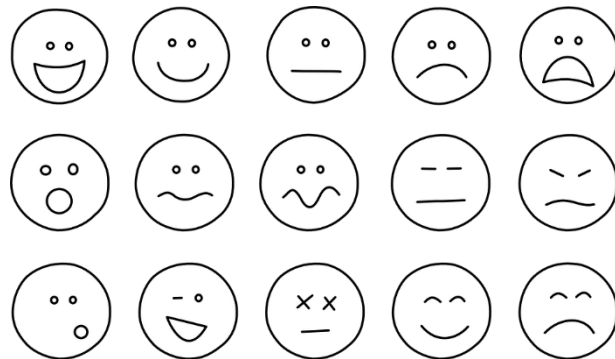
Cancer makes me feel...

The emotional side of cancer

- The day of diagnosis is essentially "unforgettable." That also includes the days when treatment begins and when treatment finishes.
- When diagnosed with cancer, it is common to have a lot of emotions. These can include, fear, anger, frustration, depression, and anxiety.
- At least 30-35% of cancer patients will be affected by a psychiatric disorder during all phases of their cancer journey.

Depressive Disorders

- Patients typically experience depression following their initial diagnosis.
- Depression is associated with pain and fatigue.
- Depression can affect decision making and is reliably associated with poorer clinical outcomes.
- Patients who are younger, socially isolated, or who may have a history of depression or anxiety are at a greater risk of depression,
- Symptoms may include persistent sadness, angry mood, or lack of pleasure in activities.

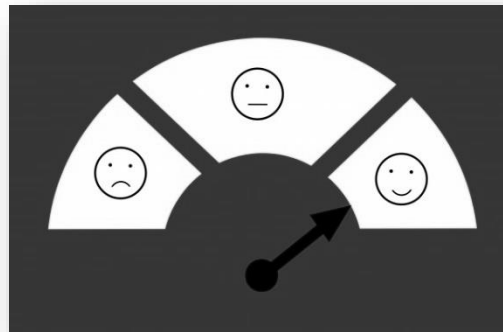


Anxiety Disorders and PTSD

- The prevalence rates for anxiety and affective disorders in cancer patients have been reported between 1% and 58% .
- Cancer is a traumatic event that can be experienced multiple times over a lifetime. It contains numerous unpleasant experiences including diagnosis, treatment and side effects from treatment, fear of reoccurrence, and fear of dying.
- Transitioning to survivorship is a celebratory time, but it can also be very stressful and mixed with fear about reoccurrence, ongoing monitoring, loss of supports, and a diminished sense of well-being.

Neurocognitive Disorders

- Mild neurocognitive disorders can be a side effect of chemotherapy or chemotherapy associated with radiation therapy which can cause impairments in your thinking , such as problems with memory, attention, concentration, learning functions, and calculations.
- If you are concerned about your brain functioning during or after treatment, bring this up to your doctor and request neuropsychological testing to determine if there are any problems and how best to treat those concerns.



Other effects related to cancer

- Losing hair
- Body changes and scars
- Sexuality
- Infertility
- Relationship changes
- Feeling unsafe in your body

Stages of Grief

- Denial
 - This can't be happening, there is no way I can have cancer.
- Anger
 - Why is this happening to me?
- Bargaining
 - Please God I promise to go to church every Sunday if you just let my treatment work.
- Depression
 - I no longer love to read or do the things I used to love to do.
- Acceptance/Relief
 - Negative acceptance is accepting your disease by surrendering to it and contemplating that you will die.
 - Positive acceptance is when you accept your diagnosis but put your energy into fighting it and staying positive.



Can you find the positive of cancer?

- The psychosocial impact on cancer survivors is related to their previous emotional life, social relationships, and support systems as well as the factors that are related to cancer itself and its treatment.
- Research shows that the fear, loss, and uncertainty that is brought on by cancer can help survivors find deeper meaning in life which may have been something lacking in their life prior to cancer.
- Cancer can be an amazing teacher...if you allow it to be.
- Can you forgive cancer?



What can I do today to
help myself heal
emotionally?

Let's talk about stress!

- **Environmental**

- Weather
- Pollen
- Noise
- Traffic
- Pollution

- **Social**

- Deadlines
- Presentations
- Disagreements
- Time demands

- **Physiological**

- Illness
- Aging
- Injury
- Lack of exercise
- Poor nutrition
- Inadequate sleep

- **Thoughts**

- Fight or flight response

What can chronic stress do to you?

- The relationship between stress and disease has been studied for over 50 years
- People that suffer from chronic stress can experience any or all of the following:
 - Hyperactivity in a particular “preferred system” of the body, such as the skeletal-muscular, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal systems
 - Muscle tension and fatigue for some people
 - Adrenal Fatigue
 - Hypertension
 - Migraine headaches
 - Ulcers
 - Chronic diarrhea
 - Impede tissue repair and remodeling
 - Can contribute to decalcification of the bones, osteoporosis, and susceptibility to fractures

How are you currently managing your stress?

- I ignore my own needs and work harder and faster.
- I eat more than usual.
- I get irritable and take it out on others.
- I smoke or drink (too much caffeine is not good either).
- I withdraw emotionally and just go through the motions.
- I sleep more than I need to.
- I seek out friends for conversation and support.
- I engage in some physical activity.
- I take time to relax and unwind.
- I confront my stress and try to change it.
- I change my outlook on the problem.
- I take some time off for me.

Types of self-care

Known

- Physical and mental condition
- Physical activity
- Healthy eating

Unknown

- Good hygiene
- Risk avoidance
- Health literacy
- Rational and responsible use of products, services, diagnostics and medicines

How to create a self-care routine

- Make quality a priority in your life
- Keep track of what you are thinking
- Be kind to yourself
- Say NO
- Stay connected to yourself
- Learn what stress management techniques work best for you



What are the benefits of self-care?

- Improved mental health
- Enhanced self-esteem and self-worth
- Increased resilience
- Reduced health care costs
- Self-care is an active decision-making process that allows people to effectively engage in their own care.
- Replenishes empathy and compassion

Techniques to manage stress

- Body Inventory/Scanning
- Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Meditation
- Visualizations
- Challenging irrational ideas
- Thought stopping
- Worry control



Diaphragmatic (deep) Breathing

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
- Inhale slowly, to a count of 4, through your nose. You can imagine that your stomach is a balloon and you are blowing it up, or you can imagine you are smelling the best smelling food you have ever smelled.
- Exhale slowly, through your mouth, to a count of 4. Make sure your body is relaxed and your shoulders are down.
- Repeat for 5-15 minutes.

Meditation made easy

- Start by doing diaphragmatic breathing for a minute or so.
- Decide on a mantra that you want to use to help you achieve your stress reduction goal.
- For example: breathe in and think "I am" and breathe out and think "strong."
 - I am...sleepy
 - My body is...strong
- Your mind will wander, that is ok, just bring it back gently to the mantra.
- Continue for 5-15 minutes.

Visualization for healing

- Start with diaphragmatic breathing
- Close your eyes and envision the part of your body (or whole body) that you want to heal.
- Think about what healing looks like for you.
- If healing a specific part of the body (abdomen) imagine a white light shining down healing you or imagine that part of your body becomes warm and with that warmth is healing and comfort.
- For whole body healing, imagine the outline of yourself standing in front of you filled with a dark color (black, brown, gray) and as you see your body healing, starting at the top of your head, change that dark color to a pleasant or neutral color like blue, or white. Continue seeing the dark color drain out of you until your whole body is filled with the neutral color.
- Practice this daily.

Seek out support

- Talk to your PCP or Oncologist about how you are feeling.
- Counselors, Therapists, Health Psychologists, Neuropsychologists.
- Priests, Pastors, Chaplains, Religious Community.
- Psychiatry for medication management.
- Friends and family.



You are not Alone!

Let us be there to
support you through your journey.