

During Cancer Treatment - Coping with your feelings

Emotional health affects your everyday life and overall health. Be patient with yourself.

Your emotions may lead you to experience any combination of the following symptoms:

Emotional (Mind)	Physical (Body)	Spiritual (Spirit)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anger• Anxiety or fear• Denial or shock• Grief bursts• Guilt or regret• Irritability or loneliness• Nightmares• Relief• Sadness or depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appetite changes• Difficulty sleeping• Digestive problems• Fatigue or headaches• Heaviness/pounding in chest• Muscle aches• Numbness• Shock• Tightness in throat or chest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feelings of emptiness• Loss of meaning/direction• Doubt about your beliefs• Feeling of "Why me?"

DEPRESSION AND SADNESS

Feeling sad may cause you to have no energy or appetite. It's okay to cry or express your sadness. You don't have to be upbeat all the time or pretend to be cheerful in front of others.

Depression can remove the joy from your life so you can't function. Depression is normal during a time like this and some symptoms could be due to side effects. Talk to your health care team if they last for more than two weeks.

FEAR AND WORRY

Some people fear becoming dependent on others or being in pain. Others worry about money or their future. If you feel overwhelmed by fear, remember that others have felt this way and it's okay to ask for help.

Some people say it helps if you:

- **Learn more about your illness and care options.** Ask questions of your health care team.
- **Update your affairs.** Make sure your will, advance directives and other legal paperwork are in order. For details about health care directives, please ask your health care team or visit lightthelegacy.org.
- **Try to work through your feelings.** Talk with someone you trust.

GRIEF

Grief can be expressed through feelings of shock, anger, guilt, fear, loneliness and sadness. Healing takes time, patience, courage and support. With time, grief may even strengthen and enrich life.

GUILT AND REGRET

It's normal for people with cancer to wonder if they did anything to add to their situation. People sometimes feel guilty that they're upsetting their loved ones by having cancer. It's important for you to:

- Try to let go of any mistakes you think you may have made
- Forgive yourself
- Focus on things worthy of your time and energy

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LONELINESS

During your cancer journey you may find yourself alone more than you would like. People may distance themselves from you because they have a hard time coping with your cancer or they may think that you prefer to be left alone if you don't feel well. If you want more company, let them know you welcome their visits, mail, email and phone calls. Join a support group to talk with others who share your feelings.

[Visit CentraCare.com/events](http://CentraCare.com/events) for a list of cancer support groups and events.

Some healthy ways to cope with your feelings:

- **Express emotions freely as you feel the need.** Crying is acceptable and healthy.
- **Take slow, deep breaths to help you relax.** See information on roll breathing.
- **Write.** Use a journal to help you process your thoughts and feelings.
- **Laugh.** Laughter, as they say, is the best medicine. It makes you forget for a while and produces endorphins, which are your body's natural way of producing pleasure.
- **Choose relaxing activities such as massage, yoga or meditation.** Quiet moments help clear the mind and give you a sense of peace.
- **Make time to do something that gives you pleasure.** Listening to music, gardening, shopping, walking with a friend or seeing a movie can be enjoyable.
- **Talk about your feelings.** Share with loved ones or in a support group.
- **Consider how your faith or spirituality provides inspiration and enlightenment.**
- **Seek and accept help.** When people help, accept it.
- **Volunteer.** Volunteering provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment.
- **Build your resiliency.**
 - a. **Hope.** To build a sense of hope, plan something to get your mind off cancer. Try visualizing what you want instead of worrying about what you fear.
 - Plan your days as you've always done.
 - Continue doing the things you like to do.
 - Find things in life to look forward to.
 - b. **Inner Strength.** Revive your spirit by doing things that are meaningful to you.
 - Focus on the present instead of the past or future.
 - Make plans for places to go and things to do.
 - Focus on relationships you have with people close to you.

Take care of yourself:

- Ensure you have vegetables, fruits and grains in your diet.
- Stay active daily.
- Have a positive outlook.
- Avoid unhealthy fats such as; saturated, trans fatty acids, overly processed and fried foods.
- Avoid skipping meals, physical inactivity, obesity and stressors
- Review any medical or nutrition concerns with your health care team.
- Smaller frequent meals are best to not feel to overly full.
- Decrease acidic foods and try not to eat two to three hours before bedtime.
- Hydration is key.
- Calm activities such as deep breathing, meditation, or prayer can decrease anxiety.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and smoking.