



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## STRENGTHENING THE SPIRIT

Life changes in many ways when you or a loved one develops cancer. You might find yourself turning to your spiritual side more often to help you to cope. Or, you may begin to question your faith. Both of these reactions are normal as you try to reorient your life during a time of crisis. It's important to remember that you're not alone at this time—many people have taken this spiritual journey before you.



### EVERYONE HAS A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Whether or not you attend a church, synagogue, mosque or temple, you are a spiritual person. Everyone holds certain beliefs and values about what makes life worthwhile, and many people have experienced moments when they have felt connected to a deeper meaning or reality.

Spiritual moments can happen at any time—for example, when you feel close to nature, look into the face of a loved one, enter a house of worship or sense a greater power.

Spiritual beliefs and experiences are nurtured in different ways. For some, participation in a religious tradition is important. Others draw spiritual understanding from philosophy or the arts. Whatever your spiritual beliefs, remember that spirituality is a dimension of your life that can be developed and strengthened.

### TIPS FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR SPIRIT

**Take time regularly to meditate or pray.** This can bring a sense of calm and stability during difficult times.

**Read spiritual writings.** These can include the Bhagavad Gita, the Bible, Koran or other faith-based texts. Delving into sacred texts can put you in touch with ancient traditions of wisdom and give you a sense of connection with a more divine reality. Recently published books on spirituality can also give new insights.

**Seek the help of others.** You might begin an ongoing dialogue with your clergy or counselor, or join a group for meditation, prayer and support.

**Retreat to spiritual spaces, natural settings, or concerts and museums.** Visiting such places may help you cultivate a sense of peace.

**Keep a journal to express your feelings, thoughts and memories.** This can contribute to your process of self-discovery and development.

## A STRONG SENSE OF SPIRITUALITY CAN HELP

**A sense of meaning, purpose and connection beyond yourself can help you to have a better quality of life during cancer. Some studies show that people with cancer have less anxiety, depression and pain when they feel spiritually connected.**

Spirituality can also help you to put your problems in perspective. Practices such as prayer, meditation and worship can help you to calm and restore yourself. Many people also find the support of other members of spiritual communities to be a great source of practical and emotional help.

A diagnosis of cancer can start a process of looking inward for a stronger connection to what is most meaningful and sacred. Out of the turmoil of this crisis, you can find strength and deeper meaning in your life.



### **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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