

Your loved one may have fluctuating emotions about their cancer diagnosis. As a caregiver, you can help with these emotions and help them concentrate on their care. This fact sheet will cover:

- Ways you can help
- The emotions your loved one may have
- Long-distance caregiving



Ways To Help

Listen to your loved one. It is important to listen without judging or “cheerleading.” We are often tempted to say “you will be fine” when we hear scary or sad thoughts. But simply listening to those feelings can be one of the most important contributions you make.

Do what works. Think about how you’ve helped each other feel better during a difficult time in the past. Was a fun outing a helpful distraction? Or do the two of you prefer quiet times and conversation? Do whatever works for you both, and don’t be afraid to try something new.

Ask questions. It is okay to ask loved ones for guidance about how they want to be helped. Don’t assume you know their wants and needs. This allows your loved one to be involved in their care.

Support your loved one’s treatment decisions. While you may be in a position to share decision making, it is the other person’s body and spirit that bear the impact of the cancer. Their decisions matter most.

Get information about support groups. Joining a support group gives your loved one a chance to talk with others and learn what they do to manage difficult emotions. Ask a hospital social worker for a referral, or contact CancerCare.

Continue your support when treatment is over. Despite being relieved that the cancer has stopped growing or disappeared, a person may feel scared that it will return. The end of treatment also means fewer meetings with their health care team, on which they may have relied for support.

Recommend an oncology social worker or counselor. Your loved one may need additional support coping with their emotions. Suggest speaking with a professional such as an oncology social worker.



Coping With Difficult Feelings

Your loved one with cancer can feel emotions such as:

Sadness. Sadness can come and go throughout their cancer journey. For some, it can be more constant or last longer.

Anger. Your loved one can be angry about the way treatment and its side effects make them feel or about the changes their diagnosis has made in their lives.

Worry. Cancer can be one of the most stressful events your loved one experiences. Common worries include fear of treatment not working or the cancer returning. They may worry about losing control over their life. Financial concerns and other worries add to the stress.



Long-Distance Caregiving

If you are caring for someone over a long distance, there are added difficulties. Here are ways you can be supportive and involved in your loved one's care regardless of the distance between you.

Call. Talking on the phone is a great way to connect with loved ones.

E-mail or send texts. E-mail messages and text messages provide fast and easy communication.

Video chats. Most smart phones and computers provide video calling for free. Platforms like FaceTime, Skype, Zoom and WhatsApp provide video calling services. Each person needs a web camera that is connected to the internet through their smartphone or computer.

Record special occasions. Consider recording friends, family and special events as a way to bring the celebration to your loved ones. Many cell phones have a built-in camera that allows you to film any event and then send it to friends and family.

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 resource navigation, 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 master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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