



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)
info@cancercaare.org
www.cancercaare.org

fact sheet

WHY JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP?

A cancer diagnosis can be isolating and overwhelming. Whether you are a patient or a caregiver, you may find yourself struggling to adjust to various aspects of the experience. The responsibility to find, manage and pay for care can be hugely overwhelming. It can be tough to feel hopeful or have any sense of confidence in your ability to cope or make appropriate decisions, especially if you are feeling powerless and alone in the experience. Support groups can offer meaningful comfort and encouragement and be a place of support and recognition. They provide an environment where someone affected by cancer does not have to explain themselves because the other group members will understand.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PART OF A SUPPORT GROUP?

Support groups provide a chance to meet and interact with other people who can relate to your experience. While friends and family members might be uncomfortable discussing your experiences—they may feel scared or unsure of what to say or do—the members of a support group, with the guidance of a trained moderator, can help validate your emotions and process your concerns.

Give—and receive—support. In addition to lessening the sense of isolation, support groups can be a source of valuable information. Not surprisingly, members find that sharing resources and coping skills can be highly rewarding, whether on the giving or the receiving end of the transaction. Topics often include where to find reliable medical information, how to communicate with doctors, challenges of treatment and coping techniques.

Every support group is different. Much of the experience in a support group depends on the chemistry of who is in the group and how it is moderated. One thing common to most groups is the potential for strong emotional expression, which can be uncomfortable for some people.

Other factors to consider include how you feel sharing things about yourself in a group and whether or not you can meet the group's attendance guidelines, if any.

The group moderator is there to help. If you feel alone and need information and emotional support, a group might be a valuable way to connect with people to help you cope with your situation. If you have questions, reach out to the moderator so you can get the information you need to make an informed decision.



CancerCare's Online Support Group Program Director
Caroline Edlund, MSW, LCSW-R

WHAT ARE SOME TYPES OF SUPPORT GROUPS?

All of CancerCare's support groups are led by professional oncology social workers who counsel people affected by cancer, providing emotional support and help accessing practical resources.

Online Support Groups. At CancerCare, our online support groups take place using a password-protected message board format (not live chat) and are led by professional oncology social workers who offer support and guidance. Groups are held for 15 weeks at a time, and group members must register to join. After completing the registration process on CancerCare's website, members can participate by posting in the groups 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Telephone Support Groups. CancerCare's telephone support groups allow people from across the country in weekly, regularly scheduled, one-hour sessions.

Face-to-Face Support Groups. Face-to-face support groups are held at CancerCare's offices in New York City, Long Island and New Jersey. Don't live in those areas? We can help you find face-to-face support groups in your own community.

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.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

Facebook: facebook.com/cancercare **Twitter:** @cancercare



*Edited by Caroline Edlund, MSW, LCSW-R
This activity was supported by AbbVie.*



CANCERcare®

National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

© 2019 CancerCare®