COPING WITH THE FEAR OF RECURRENCE

For cancer survivors, fear of recurrence (the cancer returning) is a common concern. There are many ways in which you can manage this anxiety in order to live a full and meaningful life.

**FIND BALANCE**

Around the time of your check-up, blood tests, or when a milestone or anniversary is approaching, you may feel sad, irritable, or anxious. Allowing yourself to acknowledge and accept your feelings is the first step. Developing ways to manage these feelings is extremely important and a way to be kind to yourself. An important act of kindness to yourself is to live in the now and find ways to balance your fear of recurrence with enjoying your life, and the hope for continued wellness.

**Relieve stress.** Find things to do that are comforting such as meditation, a yoga class, writing in a journal, or spending time with your pet. We all have activities we find soothing and it is important to develop these and do them when you need to.

Making healthy choices can help people feel emotionally and physically strong. Getting enough sleep, maintaining a healthy diet and engaging in physical activities can also provide a sense of control.

**Talk to your friends or family members about your concerns.** Even if there are just one or two people with whom you feel comfortable sharing your fears, this can be a powerful way to get some relief from your anxiety.

**Reflect on what makes your life meaningful, both before and after cancer.** What values and activities are important to you? How can you continue to honor those things you hold dear? Focusing on the bigger picture can help minimize anxiety and remind you what you can do in the here-and-now to live a full life.

**BE INFORMED**

Stay actively involved in your follow-up care by asking your doctor specific questions about the likelihood of recurrence. Discuss what you can do to minimize your chances of recurrence. You should also discuss with your doctor what your follow-up care plan will be. This should include:

- A description of your state of health at the end of treatment
- A future schedule of visits (time and date)
- Who will deliver follow-up care (and where)
- Tests that will be done and why they are needed
• What long-term effects might occur (such as swelling or numbness in the limbs, pain, or depression), how to watch for them, and how they will be treated
• Symptoms to watch for that might signal a return of your cancer
• Steps you can take to adopt a more healthy lifestyle

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Many cancer survivors find support groups very helpful. Support groups allow you to share your feelings and learn how others are coping with their fears of recurrence, which can provide you with a community of strength and understanding. CancerCare offers free face-to-face, telephone and online support groups led by professional oncology social workers.

Individual counseling provides a safe space to voice concerns. Cancer survivors have fears of recurrence and other anxieties that friends and loved ones may not fully understand. The process of openly exploring emotions with a professional counselor helps many people feel less anxious. An oncology social worker at CancerCare can suggest ways to manage your anxiety and help you process your feelings.

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

RESOURCES

National Children’s Cancer Society
314-241-1600
thenccs.org

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
888-650-9127
canceradvocacy.org

The SAMFund for Young Adult Survivors of Cancer
866-439-9365
thesamfund.org

This fact sheet was made possible by Takeda Oncology.