



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

COUNSELING TO BETTER COPE WITH A CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Cancer affects a person physically and emotionally. Feeling stressed, anxious or depressed is common during a cancer diagnosis. Individual counseling with a professional oncology social worker can provide emotional and practical support for those who are affected by cancer. Oncology social workers are experts in helping people find new ways to cope with the stress of a cancer diagnosis while providing guidance and support to people living with cancer and to their loved ones.

THE BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH CANCER

Seeking professional counseling is a positive coping behavior when you are feeling overwhelmed or are adjusting to a cancer diagnosis. Face-to-face or telephone counseling provides a safe space to share and examine various situations and challenges that you may face.

Learn new ways to cope with cancer. It can be devastating to hear the words “You have cancer” from a doctor, and the period immediately following a diagnosis can often be chaotic. Managing doctor’s visits, organizing your finances and understanding treatment options can be overwhelming. Individual counseling can help you prepare for what’s ahead and identify ways you are already coping. An oncology social worker can help you identify your feelings and explore new ways to cope with the anxiety and stress that often accompany a cancer diagnosis.

Manage financial challenges. Cancer is an expensive illness and can magnify any financial burdens you are already facing. Even with health insurance, most people will have out-of-pocket costs for their medical care. Oncology social workers can help you research financial assistance options that are available and that best fit your needs.

This can include co-payments for medications, transportation assistance and help with living expenses such as rent or mortgage, utilities, car payment, insurance and food.



Talk to your loved ones about cancer. Cancer is a difficult subject to talk about. You may feel that the diagnosis is yours alone to cope with or feel the need to isolate yourself from others. Recognize that confronting a cancer diagnosis may bring you and your loved ones closer together. Keeping the lines of communication open with the people in your life can allow you to feel more connected to a network of support. Identify family and friends who are supportive and be open with them about your needs as you go through treatment and after.

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For parents coping with a diagnosis, some may try to avoid the topic in fear that they will upset their children. What to say about cancer, how to say it and how much information to share with a child are common concerns. Counseling can help you understand how you are reacting to cancer, how you feel, what you are doing (or not doing) and how to talk to your children about your diagnosis.

Improve communication with your health care team. The relationship you have with your health care team can make a big difference in how you cope with these challenges. The more you feel that you can openly discuss any matters of concern to you, the better you are likely to feel about your care over the long term. An oncology social worker can provide guidance and tips on ways to improve communication with your health care team to ensure your needs are being met and help you become an active participant in your treatment and care.

Find reliable information. One of the biggest challenges for people with cancer is sorting through different treatment options. There is a vast amount of information available on the internet, some of it unreliable. Oncology social workers can help you find trustworthy materials from reliable sources.

Understand your rights as a patient and your insurance. It's important to have the contact information of the individual you should call in your doctor's office or hospital when your insurance company has a question. There are also rights you should know about if you want to continue working during your cancer treatment like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

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

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