



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

COUNSELING TO BETTER COPE WITH CAREGIVING

A caregiver is someone who helps a loved one get through their cancer treatment by providing both emotional and practical support. These efforts can bring their own set of difficulties for the caregiver. Counseling from a social worker can help.

THE BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING FOR CAREGIVERS

Learn ways to better cope with the stress of caregiving. Whether facing a loved one's cancer diagnosis for the first time or a recurrence of cancer, caregiving can be stressful. Face-to face or telephone counseling provides a safe, open space to share and discuss the variety of situations you may experience.

Address the importance of self-care. In order to be a good caregiver, it's important to take care of yourself. When caring for a loved one with cancer, your own needs can sometimes be forgotten. It is important to keep yourself healthy, both physically and emotionally, through proper diet, exercise and healthy sleeping patterns. Always remember to be gentle with yourself if you're having a difficult time some days. Finding a strong support network is critical. Counseling can help you determine what you can do to take care of yourself, as well as your loved one.

Get help coping with loneliness. Caregiving can be an isolating experience. Making time to talk with an oncology social worker can lessen feelings of isolation and loneliness. Feeling emotionally well can help you better manage your loved one's diagnosis and their care.



Explore tools to stay organized as you help manage your loved one's care. Caring for your loved one can involve managing appointments, medications and other concerns. You may also be learning a lot of new information regarding your loved one's diagnosis that can be overwhelming. Through individual counseling, an oncology social worker can help you find specific tools to manage your loved one's care and help you not feel overburdened.

An oncology social worker can also help you and your loved one find the best resources for you, both locally and nationally.

Get help managing practical concerns. There are many practical factors that a caregiver must consider when caring for a loved one with cancer. Being a caregiver can mean handling your usual responsibilities as well as tasks that belonged to your loved one, like paying bills or arranging child care. At times, these responsibilities may feel overwhelming. Individual counseling can help you find strategies and tools to better manage tasks and situations.

Learn how to talk to your loved ones about cancer. Cancer is a difficult subject to talk about. You may pull away from others and believe that you should be able to handle this on your own. Some caregivers feel like they do not want to burden others by asking for help. However, it is okay (even encouraged) to ask for help and keep open lines of communication. Caregivers often find that family, friends and neighbors are more willing to assist than they realized. Asking for help with small tasks can make a big difference in a caregiver's well-being, especially during the holidays or special events. An oncology social worker can guide you in ways to have these conversations with loved ones and can help you to maintain your support network.

Better understand HIPAA and important insurance information. If you think that at some point you need to speak with your loved one's health care team without your loved one present, ask your treating health care team about the rules of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). This law gives patients greater access to their own medical records and more control over how their health information is used. Your loved one will need to give written permission (by signing a consent form) before doctors can share information with you about their medical treatment. A social worker can help you better understand any other insurance concerns.



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 case management, 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.cancercares.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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