



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

COUNSELING TO BETTER COPE WITH CAREGIVING

A caregiver is someone who is helping a loved one get through their cancer treatment by providing both emotional and practical support. Whether caring independently, with others or from far away, you can be considered a caregiver. Caregivers have their own unique set of needs, and although you do not have cancer, you are living with the disease everyday. A professional oncology social worker can provide emotional and practical support for those who are affected by cancer, including caregivers.

THE BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING FOR CAREGIVERS

Ways to 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 face.

Address the importance of self-care. In order to be a good caregiver, it's important to take care of oneself. When caring for a loved one with cancer, your own needs can be forgotten. It is important to keep yourself healthy, both physically and emotionally, through proper diet and exercise, as well as a good sleep schedule. Finding a strong support network is critical. Counseling can help you determine what you can do to successfully take care of yourself, as well as your loved one.

Help cope with loneliness.

Caregiving at times can be an isolating experience. Making time to talk with a social worker can lessen feelings of isolation and loneliness. Feeling emotionally well can help you better deal with your loved one's diagnosis.

Tools to stay organized as you help manage your loved one's care.

Caring for your loved one can involve managing appointments, medications and concerns. 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. You may also feel that you are overwhelmed with information. Through individual counseling, a social worker can help you and your loved one find the best resources for you, both locally and nationally.

Help manage practical concerns.

There are many other factors that a caregiver must consider when caring



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for a loved one with cancer. Oftentimes these factors include your usual responsibilities as well as filling in for some of the roles that used to be handled by your loved one. Some of these additional factors include paperwork, insurance concerns, and bills. At times, these concerns can feel overwhelming or daunting; however, individual counseling can help you find simple ways to manage.

Talking 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 when feeling overwhelmed. However, it is okay and important 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. Even 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.

Help you 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, find out 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 his or her 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 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)**.

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