



CANCERcare®

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

# fact sheet

## COUNSELING TO BETTER COPE WITH SURVIVORSHIP

Cancer is not only a physical experience, but also a mental and emotional one. After completing treatment, it is common for survivors to have a variety of complex and often conflicting feelings about their diagnosis, treatment and remission. While these reactions may feel isolating, it is important to discuss them with someone. Individual counseling with a professional oncology social worker can provide a safe space to talk through what you are feeling and help you find ways to move forward.

### THE BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING FOR CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

**Gain a space to reflect on your cancer diagnosis and what you've been through.** The end of treatment can be a time to reevaluate purpose, direction and priorities. For many people, this is a time that can bring a sense of relief and joy. For others, there can be conflicting feelings about their diagnosis, treatment and recovery. Still others question why the illness happened to them and search for meaning in the experience. Individual counseling with a professional oncology social worker can help you process your cancer experience and cope with these different feelings.

**Discover how to move forward with a "new normal."** After surviving cancer, life is different. You may have new habits and behaviors that you adopted during treatment. You may also experience lingering physical and emotional side effects. It may be difficult to accept all these changes and overwhelming to process the emotions following the end of treatment. However, an oncology social worker can help you find ways to create your "new normal" over time.

**Find ways to cope with the physical changes that occurred during the cancer diagnosis.** While going through treatment, you may have undergone physical changes like weight loss, reduced fertility options, hair loss or

new scars from different surgeries or treatments. You might not feel comfortable with yourself or you might be self-conscious of others' perceptions of you. An oncology social worker can help you explore these feelings and move forward after treatment.

**Learn to manage the fear of recurrence.** It is common for cancer survivors to fear their cancer returning. While this fear is natural and understandable, it can be isolating and you may wonder if others truly understand. However, it is important to discuss these emotions with someone, whether it is a loved one, friend or social worker. A professional oncology social worker can help you find ways to cope with these challenges and any additional stress that comes with them. They can also give you the skills to manage these feelings in the future.



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**Create a survivorship care plan.** An important part of life after cancer is a survivorship care plan, which includes a summary of your diagnosis and all the treatments you received, as well as a follow-up plan of the steps you need to take post treatment. It may be daunting to create this on your own, but an oncology social worker can help. Counseling can help you process this information, as well as give you tools to manage your post-treatment care.

**Recognize what you've learned about yourself.** During and after your cancer treatment, you may have changed or possibly learned new things about yourself. What you need to do for self-care may be different, and you may have identified new skills or strengths that you had not previously seen in yourself. It is important to acknowledge these changes and realize how significant they are. Individual counseling gives you the space to recognize your strengths and how you can carry them with you post treatment.



### **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](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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

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