

Counseling to Better Cope With Post-Treatment Survivorship

The end of cancer treatment can bring conflicting feelings to those with cancer. While these feelings may feel isolating, it is important to discuss them with someone. Individual counseling can help. This fact sheet covers the following:

- The role of oncology social workers
- Responses to the end of treatment
- The benefit of counseling going forward



What Are Oncology Social Workers?

Oncology social workers work specifically with people who are impacted by cancer. They can help find resources and support groups. When they are accredited for your area, they can offer counseling. CancerCare has a staff of oncology social workers who can help. Call 800-813 HOPE (4673) for more.



Responses to the End of Treatment

You may feel a sense of relief or joy at the end of treatment, but these feelings may be mixed. You may also feel guilt, sadness, frustration and many other things. Conflicting thoughts can be hard to handle.

Give yourself space and time to reflect. Your cancer diagnosis likely changed your life. It required new habits and behaviors, brought on new treatments and fears. You may not have been able to stop to process any of these things. A counselor can help identify and work through these strong emotions.

Move forward into your “new normal.” Now that treatment is done, you may need time to re-think your purpose and priorities. You may question why the illness happened to you and search for meaning in the experience. Counseling can help process what life means to you now.



Counseling Can Help You Prepare for the Future

An oncology social worker can help guide you going forward into the weeks and months ahead. The subjects you can discuss include advice on how to:

Cope with any physical changes. Treatment may have caused changes to your body like weight loss, reduced fertility options, hair loss or new scars. You might not feel comfortable with yourself or conscious of the perceptions of others.

Manage fears of recurrence. Recurrence, or cancer coming back, is a very common fear. Others may be happy for you, but may not understand the stress of knowing that your cancer may return. Your worries may be stronger as check-ups approach.

Create a post-treatment survivorship care plan. This includes a summary of your diagnosis and all the treatments you received, as well as the steps you need to take after treatment, including appointments. An oncology social worker can help.

Recognize your progress. You may have changed or learned new things about yourself. What you need for self-care now may be different. You may have 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 discuss all of these concerns and issues going forward into your life ahead. It can give you the skills to remain open and understand how to react to changes that may still come.

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 resource navigation, 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)**.

Facebook: facebook.com/CancerCare | **Instagram:** @CancerCareUS | **Twitter:** @CancerCare



Edited by Sara Grisales Jaramillo, LMSW

This fact sheet is supported by the Anna Fuller Fund, Bristol Myers Squibb and a grant from Genentech.