



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## COUNSELING TO BETTER COPE WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

The death of a loved one can have a profound influence on your life. Grief is a natural reaction to loss and its impact can be felt physically, emotionally and spiritually. However, everyone copes with the loss of a loved one differently. People usually grieve in their own way and in their own time. Oncology social workers can listen and assist individuals in discovering new ways to cope with loss and the array of emotions that accompany grief. The support you receive from a professional oncology social worker can help you in your healing process.

### THE BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING FOR THE BEREAVED

#### **Help understanding the grief process and coping with the feelings that are evoked by grief.**

After the loss of a loved one, you may discover yourself experiencing an array of unpredictable and unfamiliar emotions which may include numbness, denial, disbelief, anger, sadness and fear. Although these emotions may feel strange, they are also quite normal. Grief can be difficult to understand at times, and it often takes time to process the myriad of emotions we feel. An oncology social worker can offer a safe space for you to discuss your loss and grief.

**Validation of your feelings.** After experiencing the death of a loved one, you may find yourself isolated from family and friends. You may feel that others do not understand the feelings and emotions you are experiencing. Although this is common, it is important to find an opportunity to talk about your grief and find someone who will listen to and understand your story. Counseling can provide a safe space for you to process your emotions. In speaking to someone who understands what you are experiencing, you will feel less alone and more connected to hope. Oncology social workers can help you connect with others and build a social network that is supportive and affirming of your experience.



**Help finding a way to cherish your memories.** Whether you experienced the death of a parent, partner or friend to cancer, your memories of that person are important. Grief can be overwhelming and you may fear that you will forget or lose the memories of your loved one. By talking about your grief and your feelings, you can begin the journey of remembrance. Counseling can help you recall the positive times you shared with your loved one and creating a legacy for your loved one can help you heal. An oncology social worker can help you discover special ways to help you cherish the memory of your loved one.

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**Help focusing on self-care.** It is important to take care of yourself while you are grieving. This means identifying your personal needs and taking the necessary steps in order to meet them. Engage in activities that are nurturing and offer you a feeling of peace and calm. Remaining mindful of the need for self-care strengthens your ability to cope with grief and heal. An oncology social worker can help you prioritize your needs and offer suggestions and tips for self-care that could be beneficial to you.

**Tools and resources to cope.** Oncology social workers can provide you with tools and resources that may foster your ability to cope with grief. Counseling can help you process your feelings and take meaningful steps toward healing.



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

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This fact sheet is supported by Takeda Oncology.*



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