



## Emotional Health

A cancer diagnosis can have a huge impact on the emotions, mental health and mood of the patient as well as family, friends and caregivers.

It is **normal** to experience anxiety, depression and distress. This can be amplified if there are added stressors from work, family or financial concerns.

While there is no evidence that stress causes cancer, chronic stress can weaken the immune system which may lead to other health problems or decrease your sense of well-being. It is ideal to remove as many stressors as possible but in the setting of cancer, this is not practical or sometimes possible.

There are things you can do which have been shown to help reduce stress and improve coping. These include but are not limited to:

- Exercising regularly
- Spend time outside
- Social activities with friends or family
- Maintaining a healthy diet
- Schedule time to relax
- Join a support group
- Do things you enjoy
- Write in a journal
- Learn a new hobby

Consider classes to teach things such as relaxed or deep breathing, mental imagery/visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, biofeedback and/or yoga.

There are many resources in the community and through the cancer center including social workers specializing in the care of cancer patients as well as support groups through the American Cancer Society. Additionally, many of the organizations that support cancer patients and their loved ones have resources on their websites.

American Cancer Society

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/coping/adjusting-to-life-with-cancer.html>

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes.html>

ASCO (American Society of Clinical Oncology)

<https://www.cancer.net/>

<https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/managing-emotions/managing-stress>



It is important to reach out to your care team if you are struggling. In some instances, the above strategies may not be adequate to help you carry the burden. Your provider can discuss the possibility of referring you to a psychiatric professional (if you are not already under the care of one) or possibly adding a medication, even as a short-term intervention, to help support you while you adjust to your diagnosis and undergo treatment.

**\*\*\*If you find yourself in crisis and/or with thoughts of hurting yourself or others, you can report to your local emergency room, call 911 or reach out to a crisis hotline such as:**

**Suicide hotline – 988 (English or Spanish)**

**Up2SD.org (or you can call 888-724-7240)**