
Effect of Attitudes and Feelings on Cancer

When someone is told they have cancer, they might find themselves thinking:

- Did I bring the cancer on myself?
 - Can having a positive attitude improve my quality of life and chance of surviving cancer?
 - Can support groups and counseling help me?
 - Can I control the cancer by thinking myself well?
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- [Did I bring the cancer on myself?](#)
 - [Will a positive attitude improve my quality of life and chance of surviving cancer?](#)
 - [Can support groups and counseling help me?](#)
 - [Can I control the cancer by thinking myself well?](#)

Research has looked at these topics. The information below describes what current research shows.

Did I bring the cancer on myself?

Your personality, thoughts, and emotions did not cause your cancer. Research on this topic has not shown a link between personality, thoughts, and overall cancer risk.

Will a positive attitude improve my quality of life and chance of surviving cancer?

People with cancer might hear from others that they should stay positive. But there is no right or wrong way to live with a cancer diagnosis, because it affects everyone differently.

It's important to remember that feeling [distress](#)¹, [depression](#)², fear, or [anxiety](#)³ is normal when learning to deal with a serious illness such as cancer. It's also important to recognize and talk about these feelings with someone. Maybe this is a friend, family member, or clergy member. Many people find it helpful to [join a support group or seek counseling](#)⁴.

More research is needed to know how a person's attitude might affect their cancer experience. Some studies have shown that keeping a positive attitude does not change a person's chance of survival or the course of their disease. But, there are studies that have shown being optimistic and having a positive attitude can lead to a better quality of life for people with cancer. Many cancer survivors and thrivers believe being optimistic and positive makes their outlook on life better. Some also believe their disease, treatment outcomes, and survival do benefit if they are optimistic and positive.

Can support groups and counseling help me?

Research has not shown that support groups or counseling help people with cancer live longer. However, there are many benefits for people with cancer who participate in support groups.

Research shows that giving people with cancer information in a support group helps reduce tension, anxiety, and tiredness, and may lower the risk of depression. Sharing experiences with others can also improve feelings of well-being and overall quality of life.

Can I control the cancer by thinking myself well?

Research has not shown that techniques like guided imagery, relaxation, or meditation can control cancer growth. However, these techniques can help manage some side effects and emotions related to cancer and cancer treatment. Pain, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, distress, anxiety, and depression can be helped with these and some other techniques. Managing these side effects and emotions may also improve quality of life.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes/distress.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes/depression.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes/anxiety.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/coping/understanding-psychosocial-support-services.html

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