

How Well Are You Coping?

Everyone has a different way of coping with the feelings that come with having cancer. These checklists can help you learn whether your coping methods are healthy and helpful. It may also reveal strengths you can build on and areas where you can improve.

- [Healthy ways of coping](#)
- [Unhealthy ways of coping](#)
- [If you need support](#)

Healthy ways of coping

The statements below are linked to healthy coping. Which are true for you?

- I try to learn more when problems come up or I get bad news.
- I talk with others and share my concerns when I face a problem.
- I try to see the humor when things get tough.
- On some days, I just try not to think about my illness.
- I keep busy to avoid always thinking about being sick.
- If good information shows I need a change in treatment, I do it as soon as possible.
- Cancer has made me think about my life and the people and activities I enjoy the most.

The more of the above methods you can use, the better you will be able to deal with the challenges of cancer.

[The ACS Cancer Survivors Network¹](#) is a way to share how you are coping, get support, and find “real world” answers to questions about cancer, treatment, and relationships.

Unhealthy ways of coping

The list below includes common ways people deal with having cancer. But these are not the healthiest ways to cope. Sometimes these methods will drive people away from you just when you need them. If any of these statements are true for you more than rarely, it may be time to look for help with coping.

- When I'm upset, alcohol helps me calm down.
- I wish people would leave me alone.
- No matter what I do, I can't sleep.
- I can't help thinking I must have done something bad to deserve this.
- Having cancer is bad enough. To make matters worse, no one knows how to take care of me.
- I think cancer is my fate. What's the point of fighting it?

If you have painful feelings such as anger, hopelessness, sadness, emptiness, or worry for more than 2 weeks, you should find ways to [manage your distress](#)². [Anxiety](#)³ or [depression](#)⁴ can also happen in people with cancer and can be managed by the right steps. Keep in mind that emotional problems can and should be treated, just like physical problems.

If you need support

There are [people who focus on helping people cope with their cancer](#)⁵. In addition, [ACS support programs](#)⁶ reach cancer survivors and patients throughout the United States. Practical advice is available to help people manage day-to-day and cope with physical and emotional changes.

For more information and support, call our National Cancer Information Center toll-free number, 1-800-227-2345. We're here when you need us.

[For connecting and sharing during a cancer journey](#)

Anyone with cancer, their caregivers, families, and friends, can benefit from help and support. The American Cancer Society offers the Cancer Survivors Network (CSN), a safe place to connect with others who share similar interests and experiences. We also partner with CaringBridge, a free online tool that helps people dealing with illnesses like cancer stay in touch with their friends, family members, and support network by creating their own personal page where they share their journey and health updates.

Hyperlinks

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

References

Carver C S. You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the brief. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*; 1997, 4(1): 92–100.

García FE, Barraza-Peña CG, Włodarczyk A et al. Psychometric properties of the Brief-COPE for the evaluation of coping strategies in the Chilean population; *Psicol. Refl. Crít*; 2018, 31: 22.

Meyer B. Coping with severe mental illness: Relations of the Brief COPE with symptoms, functioning, and well-being. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment.*; 2001, 23(4): 265–277.

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