

For cancer survivors, fear of the return of your cancer, also called recurrence, is a common worry. Another term for cancer returning is recurrence. There are many ways in which you can manage this anxiety every day and going forward. This fact sheet will discuss:

- How to find balance with negative and positive feelings
- Why staying informed is important
- The value of emotional support



Try to Keep Your Thoughts and Feelings in Balance

It is normal to be afraid that your cancer might return. Every check-up and appointment may bring fear of bad news. Some advice for finding balance in your thoughts:

Do not hide from strong emotions. Instead of running from fear and worry, try to accept them and find ways to balance them with happier feelings. Try to be kind to yourself and live in the 'now.'

Identify what events lead to negative thoughts. It is common that any pain, discomfort, or particular symptoms you may experience after completing treatment can cause negative thoughts about the cancer returning. Pinpoint specific situations when negative thoughts appear.

Fact check your thoughts. Ask yourself if there are ways you can test if your negative thoughts about the situation are accurate.

Find activities to relieve stress. Comfort can come from meditation, a yoga class, writing in a journal or spending time with your pet. Ask yourself what activities are soothing to you in times of stress.

Healthy choices can help you feel strong. Get enough sleep, maintain a healthy diet and engage in physical activities when you can.

Talk about your concerns. Even if there are just one or two people with whom you feel comfortable sharing your fears, this can be a powerful way to get some relief from your anxiety.

Reflect on what makes your life meaningful. What values and activities are important to you? Focusing on the bigger picture can help you live a full life in the here and now.

Try not to live through things before they happen. Sometimes, anxiety can make us 'live through' events that have not occurred. If possible, remind yourself that you are healthy and safe right now.

Give yourself grace. Navigating your life as treatment ends can be very challenging. Reaffirm yourself that you are doing the best you can and that some days may be more difficult than others.



Keep Yourself Informed

Stay active in your follow-up care. Ask your doctor specific questions about the likelihood of recurrence. You may want a **follow-up care plan**. This gives a summary of your treatment so far and recommendations for care going forward. Questions to ask your doctor include:

- A description of the state of your health at the end of treatment
- A future schedule of visits, including times and dates
- Who will deliver follow-up care, how, and where
- Tests that will be done and why they are needed
- What long-term effects may occur, including side effects like swelling in the limbs, pain, or depression
- Symptoms to watch for that might come from a return of your cancer
- Steps you can take to adopt a healthier lifestyle



Look for Emotional Support

Many cancer survivors find support groups very helpful. Support groups allow you to learn how others are coping with their fears of recurrence. They can provide you with a community of strength and understanding. CancerCare offers free support groups led by professional oncology social workers.

Individual counseling provides a safe space to voice concerns that loved ones may not fully understand. Openly exploring emotions with a professional counselor helps many people feel less anxious. An oncology social worker at CancerCare can suggest ways to manage your anxiety and help you process your feelings.

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.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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