



CSUS
Cardiovascular
Wellness Program

Dealing With Cancer Psychosocial Aspects

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Cancer

- Few people are ever ready to hear the word “cancer”
- Involves ongoing uncertainty
- Affects everything
- Changes the way you live your life
- People describe it as feeling like they have been “punched in the stomach”. Stunned. Hard to breath. Hard to hear, like I was in a tunnel. Room spinning.



Psychosocial Challenges Related Diagnosis of Cancer

Needs and issues vary depending on stage:

- Pre-diagnosis- Unknown, rumination, isolation, worry
- Post diagnosis before treatment-
 - Shock, overwhelm, feels surreal, may feel detached/numb
 - Worry and fear about treatment, side effects
 - Trying to understand test results and the long-term outcome
 - Worry about how the cancer diagnosis will affect family, work and other responsibilities
- Short term after treatment
 - Fear of the unknown, anxiety, isolation
- Long term after treatment- Do I make long term plans? Can I enjoy myself knowing it may come back?

Psychosocial Changes Associated With Having Cancer

- Self–concept
- Body Image/Loss of confidence in your body
- Feeling a loss of control- feeling powerless or hopeless
- Sexual dysfunction- fatigue, chemo may affect hormones, scaring, equipment...
- Change in social relationships
- Isolation
- Emotional distress

Emotional Distress Issues Associated with Cancer

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Panic disorder
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Bereavement and Grief
- Shame and guilt
- Anger
- Loneliness
- Difficulty concentrating

Depression in Those with Cancer

- Feeling sad after a cancer diagnosis is common. It is a natural response to loss and disappointment. You may be grieving the way cancer has changed your day-to-day life, your body or your future
- Depression found in 25% of individuals with cancer (general population rate is 8.1)
- Rate is varies depending on type of cancer
 - Oropharyngeal- 22-57%
 - Pancreatic 33-50%
 - Breast 1.5-46%
 - Lung 11-44%
- Depression found to be a significant predictor of dying
 - 26% greater mortality with depressive symptoms
 - 39 % greater mortality with Major Depressive Disorder
- Depression is NOT associated with faster cancer growth

Anxiety in Those With Cancer

- Anxiety is **what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid** – particularly about things we think are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future
- Anxiety 24 % in those with cancer versus 12.5 % in general population
- Prolonged and persistent anxiety can develop into an Anxiety Disorder
- Some people may have panic attacks. Sudden episode of intense fear or anxiety and associated physical symptoms
 - Might happen in a particular situation, such as having a medical test in an enclosed space but sometimes there is no clear trigger.
 - Can include symptoms such as shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, dizziness, sweating, shaking, chest pain, a choking feeling and overwhelming fear
 - Usually are short episodes, but can reoccur

Loneliness

- Cancer can be isolating, even with many people to support you.
- You might feel lonely if your family and friends have trouble understanding and coping with your diagnosis
- You might feel isolated and lonely if you are too sick to work, socialize with others
- Even without cancer, one-third of people over age 45 experienced loneliness.
- Loneliness raises the risk of premature death as much as smoking or obesity (2-3 fold increase)



Anger, Guilt and Blame

- When faced with a cancer diagnosis, it is common to ask, “Why me?”
- You may feel angry with your family or friends, health professionals, the world
- You may feel angry at yourself, especially if the cancer is diagnosed late
(Cancer often does not cause any symptoms in the early stages)

It is important to remember that no-one deserves cancer.



Difficulty Concentrating

- National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data from 2015 to 2018
 - Evaluated individuals with cancer (all types included) that were 8 years out from original diagnosis
 - Cancer survivors had a 38% increased odds of self-reporting problems with their concentration compared with participants without a history of cancer
 - Difficulty concentrating is associated with depression and anxiety
 - Difficulty concentrating may prevent you from taking your medicines correctly, keeping appointments, following up with plans, maintaining work and friendships



What Doesn't Help?

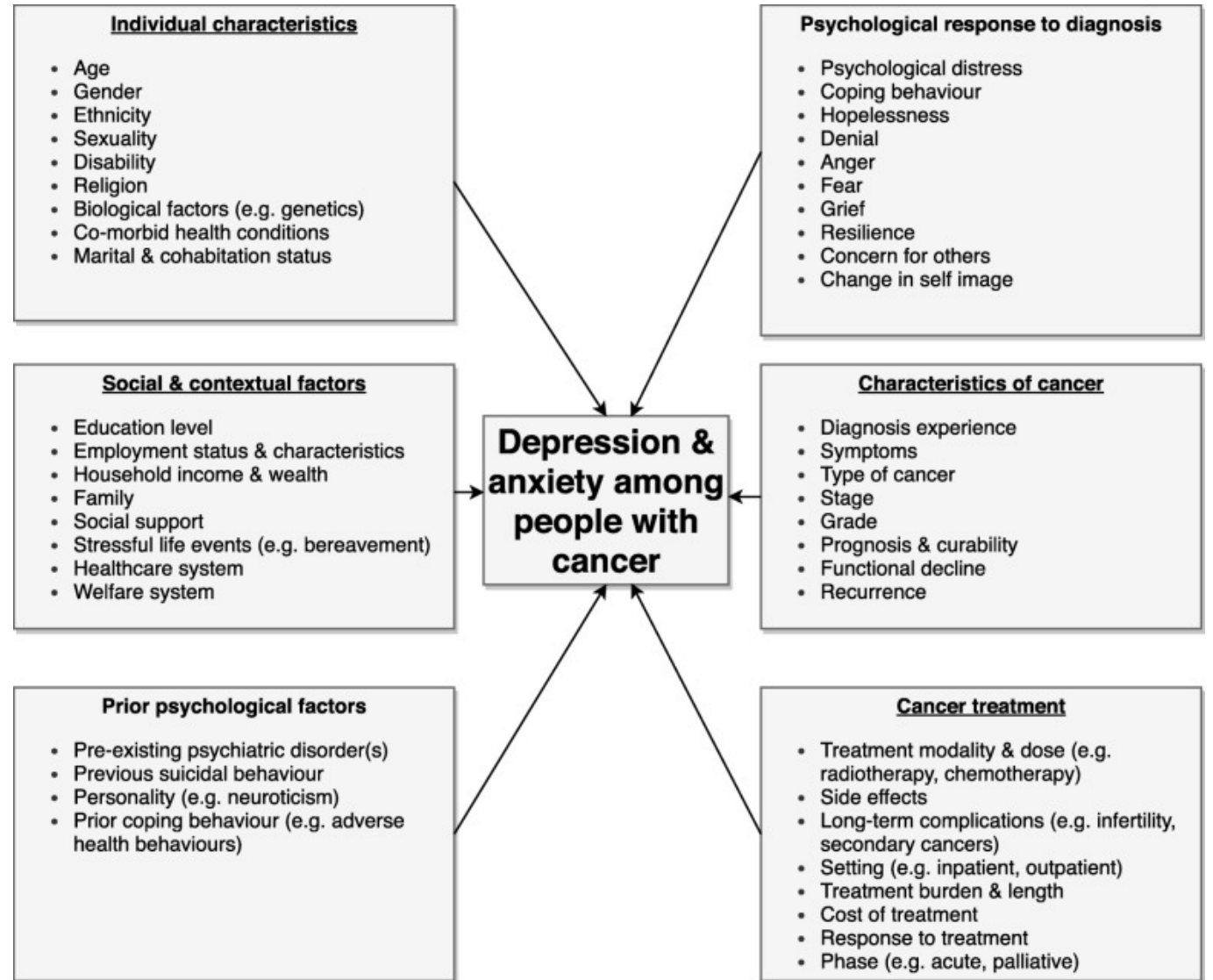
- Certain questions are likely not helpful:
 - Did you smoke or drink?
 - I know how you feel
 - Things could always be worse
 - My neighbor had the same thing and she's fine
 - Everything happens for a reason
 - You'll be fine

* At the same time, do not be so afraid of saying the wrong thing that you do not do not call or visit.

What Helps?

This may be different for different stages of cancer treatment and the different factors and characteristics of the individual:

- Initial Diagnosis
- Treatment decisions
- During treatment/ side effects
- After treatment
- Advanced cancer



What helps?

- Information seeking ?
- Sharing diagnosis with others ?
- Looking at the bright side?
Positive statements? Glass half full/half empty



Does Thinking Positively Help?

- A common belief is that people with cancer need to stay positive. Trying to put on a brave face all the time can feel very draining
- The reality is that cancer and its treatment can be unpleasant and frightening, and it is okay not to feel great about that.
- The pressure to be positive can sometimes make it hard for people to discuss their feelings and reach out for support.
- It's ok to have whatever feelings you are having. *You are not hurting yourself by having your feeling
- Try to be realistic about what is happening. It is often a good idea to talk to someone about your fears and concerns and how you feel you are coping.

Activities/Support That May Help

- Exercise- Immune system, depression and anxiety. Feeling better physically can help you feel better emotionally
- Meditation and/or prayer (can be individually, with others, or both)
- Yoga
- Laugh therapy
- Pet therapy
- Music therapy
- Keeping track of and expressing feelings (writing in a journal, poems, or many other ways)
- Seeking counseling
- Joining a support group
- Make a plan- this will change throughout the cancer journey
- *Hope*

Hope

To look forward to with desire and reasonable confidence. To believe, desire, or trust

The feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it could happen : a feeling that something good will happen or be true



Hope

- A review of 33 studies of patients undergoing cancer treatment found positive associations between hope and quality of life, social support, and spiritual and existential well-being, as well as negative associations between hope and symptom burden, psychological distress, and depression
- Currently not enough literature to show association between hope and reduced mortality from cancer.

How Does Hope Fit In?

- To have hope is to believe in your ability to have some control over your circumstances
- Hope can arrive only when you recognize that there are real options and genuine choices
- You are no longer entirely at the mercy of forces outside your self
- True hope is not unrealistic. It takes into account your current situation and options
- Truth and hope can reside in a middle ground

Nurturing Hope- What Helps Give People Hope?

- Strengthening and noticing their sense of competence
- Experiencing acts of love, goodness and kindness
- A good relationship with a close person
- Possibility of achieving even partial meaningful life goals
- A positively assessed life- asking people to share some stories from their life with you
- Spiritual practice or support
- Being able to notice their own strengths. When you work on your strengths you become stronger, when you focus on your weaknesses you become weaker.
 - I admire your ability to...
 - Can you name 3 traits you admire about yourself? Or if not can I share some first
- Look back at your life-what have you done in the past to get through really hard times? How have you dealt with a crisis?

Nurturing Hope

- Help the individual to notice their self worth by appreciate what is good in them
 - Sometimes people give up on hope because they don't feel of value.
 - May feel there is something "bad" about them because they got cancer.
 - May feel they are bad or weak in some way an less deserving of health and happiness
 - Use genuine praise- acts of genuine praise creates hope.
 - Don't use flattery
 - Express your love and affection
- Having plan helps nurture hope. No matter what stage one's cancer is, setting short-term and long-term goals will help define and achieve life's purposes.
- Not always hoping for a cure, but can hope for no suffering, time and quality time with family and friends, bucket list items. These are an individual's personal goals

Nurturing Hope

- Acknowledge and support where the person is right now
 - There is no right or wrong way to go through this
- Listen intently- helps them feel of value and important
- What do you need right now? Right this moment?
- Be with them where THEY are
- Believe in their dreams
- Overall feeling of hope may change from day to day depending on:
 - Current physical status
 - Current psychological outlook (depression or elation)
 - Treatment success or failure

“You have to be willing to give up the life you planned, and instead, greet the life that is waiting for you.”

-Joseph Campbell

Challenges Encountered by Caregivers

- The role of the caregiver is physically, emotionally, socially, and financially demanding
- Burnout of caregivers- occurs due to chronic stress
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Depersonalization
 - Low personal accomplishment

Burnout results in depression, anxiety, anger, interpersonal aggression, and poor health

Important for caregivers to take care of themselves.

Support groups, exercise, having a friend you can talk to about your feelings.

Summary

- Provide practical help. Offer to go to appointments etc.
- Listen to their concerns and hopes and dreams
- Be able to say nothing and just be with person
- Talk honestly about your feelings
- Be around
- Ask them what would be helpful
- *Support person in having hope*

Other Supportive Programs: Palliative Care and Hospice

- Hospice care focuses on the care, comfort, and quality of life of a person with a serious illness who is approaching the end of life.
- Palliative Care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness, such as cancer or heart failure. Patients in palliative care may receive medical care for their symptoms, or palliative care, along with treatment intended to cure their serious illness.

Cancer Resources in Sacramento and Yolo Counties

- **Cancer Support Groups and Resources**

- **Adolescent and Young Adults Support Group**

Please forward your registration request to the following email address to join the group and receive the virtual meeting link.

Date/Time: Third Tuesdays of each month, 6:15 – 7:30 p.m., meets virtually

Contact: Jaelyn Rice at [916-734-4366](tel:916-734-4366) or [Email](#)

- **Sacramento Area Brain Tumor Support Group**

Lawrence J. Ellison Ambulatory Care Center

UC Davis Health

4860 Y St., Room 3015B

Sacramento, CA 95817

A group offering emotional support and educational programs for brain tumor patients, their families and friends.

Date/Time: First Wednesday of each month, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Contact: Breana Sanchez at [916-734-6948](tel:916-734-6948) or bnsanchez@ucdavis.edu

- **Breast Cancer Support Group**

11815 Education St.

Auburn, CA

Date/Time: Second and fourth Wednesday, 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Contact: Ellen Carlson, [530-886-6712](tel:530-886-6712)

- **Breast Cancer Support Group**

Dignity Health, Mercy San Juan Medical Center

6501 Coyle Avenue, Carmichael CA

Date/Time: Third Thursday, 4:30 to 6 p.m.

Contact: [916-962-8892](tel:916-962-8892)

- **Breast Cancer Support Group**

Faith Fellowship Community Church

5937 Watt Avenue

North Highlands, CA

Date/Time: Third Wednesday, 6 to 7 p.m.

Contact: Jeanette Cash, [916-339-9156](tel:916-339-9156)

- **Breast Cancer Support Group**

Kaiser Permanente Medical Center South in the D.B. Moore Building

6600 Bruceville Road

Sacramento, CA

Date/Time: Last Tuesday, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Contact: Virginia Pier, [916-688-6605](tel:916-688-6605) (please call to confirm meeting)

Breast Cancer Education Program

"Breast Cancer Network of Strength"

University Covenant Church

315 Mace Blvd

Davis, CA

Date/Time: Second Monday, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Contact: Sandy Walsh, [530-304-2746](tel:530-304-2746) or swalsh@networkofstrength.org

Breast Cancer Support Group

681 Main St.

Placerville, CA 95667

Date/Time: Second Monday of each month, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Contact: [Charlie Hall](#), [530-644-3963](tel:530-644-3963)

Breast Cancer Support Group

Sutter Roseville Medical Center

One Medical Plaza Drive

Roseville, CA 95661

Date/Time: First and third Tuesday of each month, 6 to 7:30 p.m., and second and fourth Thursday of each month, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Contact: C.J. Doran, [916-781-1634](tel:916-781-1634)

Breast Cancer-Recurrent-Metastatic

Sutter Roseville Medical Center

One Medical Plaza Drive

Roseville, CA 95661

Date/Time: First and third Thursday of each month, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Contact: C.J. Doran, [916-781-1634](tel:916-781-1634)

ENCORE Plus (YWCA)

An exercise and peer support group for women who have breast cancer.

Date/Time: Call for specific dates and times.

Contact: Sarbjit Kaur, [916-264-8066](tel:916-264-8066) ext.32

Save Ourselves/Breast Cancer Support Group - Including LGBT Cancer Support

A breast cancer support group for breast cancer patients.

Groups are available for women who are newly diagnosed, in treatment, or those living with metastatic disease. Group size is limited to ten participants. To facilitate group cohesiveness, participants are encouraged to commit to attend eight consecutive meetings.

Date/Time: Groups meet twice a month on Thursdays 10 a.m., noon and 6 p.m. and Mondays at 7 p.m.

Location: Locations vary

Contact: [800-422-9747](tel:800-422-9747)

Resource sheet of questions and supportive statements