

## More Information:

Learning that you have breast cancer is a difficult experience. After your cancer diagnosis, you may feel anxious, wondering how you will survive. Sometimes, you may feel like you cannot face the situation adequately. For a breast cancer survivor, coping is dealing with the diagnosis, treatment side effects, and fear of recurrence.

This brochure offers 10 suggestions for coping with breast cancer.

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# SISTAAH Circle

## Coping



**SISTAAH Talk!**

Women of Color Breast Cancer Support Group

## 10 Suggestions for Coping with Breast Cancer

**Learn about your diagnosis:** Visit our Resources page ([www.sistaahstalk.net](http://www.sistaahstalk.net)) to access reliable sources of information related to breast cancer. Next, write your questions down before you visit the doctor and take them with you. You will want to know basic information, like: *What is the stage of my breast cancer? What are my treatment options?* The doctor may also have questions for you, like: *Has any one in your family been diagnosed with breast cancer?* For your first few doctor visits, bringing someone with you (for example, a family member) to take notes. This will allow you to concentrate on your questions/responses while your supporter captures the doctor's responses.

**Communicate openly:** It's easy to go into a shell—to isolate yourself—when you hear the words, 'you have breast cancer.' To cope with your diagnosis, it is important to talk and to listen. Keeping the lines of communication open with your doctors, family members, and supporters is important.

**Understand what to expect:** Changes to your physical image (due to surgery, chemotherapy, and/or radiation) maybe temporary and often disappear. Some chemotherapy may cause hair loss. Seek advice from image experts about clothing, makeup, wigs, and hairpieces to help you feel more comfortable and attractive, will help you cope. Other scars, which are often invisible, are not so easy to fix. Participating in a support group, such as SISTAAH Talk, will help you adapt to the physical and emotional changes faced with a breast cancer diagnosis.

**Stay healthy:** Fatigue is the most common symptom of breast cancer treatment. Healthy eating and physical activity is key to coping with this diagnosis.

**Get help:** A breast cancer diagnosis affects the entire family and adds stress, especially to primary caregivers. For women of color, traditional thought of a 'helpers,' accepting help may not be easy. Yet, assistance is important to meeting the physical and emotional challenges of breast cancer treatment.

**Set goals:** Decide what's important to you. Make sure that your goals are realistic and achievable. Do activities that give meaning to your life.

**Stay grounded:** "One day at a time..." is important in coping with changes that come with breast cancer. Too much change, too fast can add to the stress of treatment and recovery. Try to maintain your normal lifestyle, making changes as needed.

**Consider the financial impact:** Doctor visits, hospital stays, and time off work can affect your finances. Seek financial help early in the process by consulting resource lists from hospitals, clinics, and support groups (visit the Resource Page @ [www.sistaahstalk.net](http://www.sistaahstalk.net)).

**Join a support group:** A friend or family member who has had breast cancer is a good source of information. It can also help to talk with other people who have been through what you are going through. Finding a support group that is a good "fit" may take time.

**Develop a breast cancer care plan:** Most clinics and hospitals will work with you to develop a cancer care plan. While an outline of your short-term and long-term health care is important, developing a coping strategy is also needed. Decide what you need--learning relaxation techniques, sharing your feelings, keeping a journal, finding spiritual support, setting goals, or making time to be alone--should be a part of your coping strategy and cancer care plan.