



# Coping with Anxiety During a Health Crisis

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## **Andrew Schorr:**

Hello and welcome to Patient Power. I'm Andrew Schorr. Well, any of us with cancer knows, it produces anxiety—not just at the initial diagnosis—but when you go to the doctor, when you worry about test results, when you just plain worry. How do you deal with anxiety and maybe even depression? Well, we're joined by Yolanda Patton who's a clinical social worker at City of Hope to give us some guidance on that.

## **Yolanda Patton:**

Common symptoms could be fast heartbeats become panic attacks, so patients can be walking around their rooms a lot of the time if they're in the hospital, just feeling as though they can't control anything, shaky, things like that. They can't sleep, because they're overthinking—whether it's treatment or even some of the information they found online.

Those are kind of some of the things that come up. It's just an elevated stress. Some of us have various stress, and it can range. But with anxiety, it becomes to the point where you can't function doing normal things throughout the day, which can turn into depression, as well, where you just want to lay in bed all day; you have no appetite, things like that.

And that's when it's prevalent that their interventions should be taken into patients seeking mental health professionals. And even when there are side effects to treatment, sometimes doctors have the opportunity to wean out if this is a psychosomatic issue, which is when it becomes not so much a side effect of the medication.

But the patient is overthinking or becoming anxious or depressed that it becomes they're blaming it on their physical ailments.

So, if they say they have a side effect, which is fatigue, which is common if you're in any type of chemo, well if the doctor is giving you things to help or they're making suggestions, walking, yet this still becomes a persistent issue, then a lot of times it can be more of a psychological issue.

## **Andrew Schorr:**

So it sounds like getting to the root of the problem is really critical to understand what is going on. When do you get a social worker involved?

## **Yolanda Patton:**

They usually contact the social worker to come and provide support to the patient and also education. I think a lot of times patients don't have a term for things. And so, as far as social work is concerned, we also like to make sure we come from a cultural standpoint.

So, depending if anxiety or depression, those terms are not used, we use other things. Are you worrisome? Are you very sad? Are you upset? And we kind of delve more into that and assess it further to decide from our clinical standpoint if this is anxiety or depression.

**Andrew Schorr:**

Great information from Yolanda Patton from City of Hope. Yolanda, thanks for being with us. Remember to be signed up for alerts on our website, so you know whenever we post something new. I'm Andrew Schorr. Remember, knowledge can be the best medicine of all.

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