



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## CAREGIVING: PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Going through cancer is often described as an emotional roller coaster, with many ups and downs. As a caregiver, you may see your loved one go through a wide range of emotions. While this can be difficult for both of you, your willingness to listen and offer support will make a difference.

### WAYS TO COPE WITH CAREGIVING

**Listen to your loved one.** It is important to listen without judging or “cheerleading.” We are often tempted to say “you will be fine” when we hear scary or sad thoughts. But simply listening to those feelings can be one of the most important contributions you make.

**Do what works.** Think about how you’ve helped each other feel better during a difficult time in the past. Was a fun outing a helpful distraction? Or do the two of you prefer quiet times and conversation? Do whatever works for you both, and don’t be afraid to try something new.

**Ask questions.** It is okay to ask loved ones for guidance as to how they want to be helped. Don’t make assumptions about their wants and needs. This allows your loved one to be involved in their care.

**Get information about support groups.** Joining a support group gives your loved one a chance to talk with others coping with cancer and learn what they do to manage difficult emotions. Sometimes, support groups are led by social workers or counselors. Ask a hospital social worker for a referral, or contact CancerCare. We offer face-to-face, telephone and online support groups for people with cancer and for caregivers.

**Support your loved one’s treatment decisions.** While you may be in a position to share decision making, ultimately it is the other person’s body and spirit that bear the impact of the cancer.

**Continue your support when treatment is over.** This can be an emotional time for many people. Despite being relieved that the cancer is in remission (has stopped growing or disappeared), a person may feel scared that it will return. The end of treatment also means fewer meetings with the health care team, on which the person may have relied for support.



**Recommend an oncology social worker or counselor specially trained to offer advice.** If you think your loved one may need additional support coping with his or her emotions during this time, suggest speaking with a professional such as an oncology social worker.

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## COPING WITH DIFFICULT FEELINGS

People with cancer often feel emotions such as:

**Sadness.** Sadness can come and go during treatment and after treatment. For some people, it can be more constant or last longer.

**Anger.** For example, people can be angry about the way treatment and its side effects make them feel or about the changes their diagnosis has made in their lives.

**Worry.** Cancer can be one of the most stressful events a person experiences. Common worries include fear of treatment not working, of cancer returning or spreading and of possibly losing control over one's life and future. Other worries that existed before the cancer diagnosis, such as work or financial concerns, can add to the stress.

## 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 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 professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/cancercare](https://facebook.com/cancercare) | **Twitter:** [@cancercare](https://twitter.com/cancercare)

## LONG-DISTANCE CAREGIVING

Being a “long-distance” caregiver is a unique experience that can be especially challenging. Working to find balance between your own needs and the needs of a loved one with cancer can feel overwhelming for anyone in the caregiver role. Here are ways you can be supportive and involved in your loved one's care regardless of the distance between you.

**Calling.** Talking on the phone is a great way to connect with loved ones.

**E-mailing or texting.** E-mail messages and text messages provide fast and easy communication.

**Video Chatting.** Most smart phones and computers provide video calling or conferencing for free. Platforms like FaceTime, Skype, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp provide video calling services. Each person needs a web camera that is connected to the internet through his or her smartphone. Services like Skype, FaceTime and Facebook Messenger are also available on a computer.

**Recording special occasions.** Consider recording friends, family and special events as a way to bring the celebration to your loved ones. Many cell phones have a built-in camera that allows you to film any event and then send it to friends and family.

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