



Worry about Family, Children and Friends

Cancer impacts the entire family and in some ways, our closest friends and colleagues. People with cancer often worry about how people around them are coping with the changes that cancer often brings into their lives. It is normal to feel concerned and to think about ways that you can communicate your love and support to them at this difficult time. They may also be wondering how best to support you as well. Often, your worries about the impact of cancer on those around you will decrease over time as your loved ones adjust to the situation.

Relationship Stressors

The stress of cancer and its treatment can be magnified if you need to switch roles from caring for others to being cared for yourself; when you wish or desire to protect your children or other loved ones from your own fears and worries; or when you worry about things like the financial stress on your family. Find someone to share your worries and concerns. With support, you will find that while you may never be fully worry-free, you will begin to manage the stress of caring for family while caring for your own health and well-being.

Good Communication is Key

One of the most important things you can do to stay connected to family and friends is to be open and honest about you are feeling and ask them to do the same. People often don't know what to say so they may say the wrong thing or nothing at all. Tell them honestly about your diagnosis, how the disease and treatment might be affecting you, and how they can and cannot help you. Let them know if it's okay to ask you questions or if something they are doing is adding to your stress and anxiety.

Impact on Children

Children understand the world through their parents. How a child reacts depends very much on how the parents or other close adults are dealing with their own feelings. Difficulty in discussing these issues may create distance in relationships that were once close. It is helpful for parents to explain the facts in a way that allows children to understand and participate in what is happening in their lives. When speaking with your children let them take the lead. Answer their questions directly and with simple language. Try not to downplay their concerns and worries. Learning to cope with difficult situations will increase a child's sense of self confidence for the future.

Signs to watch for that suggest a child could use some additional help:

- Changes in a child's sleeping patterns
- A drop in school grades or unusual misbehavior in school or at home
- Getting in arguments or fights with friends
- Emotional withdrawal

How to Get Help

Attending support groups, workshops, family counseling, educational programs, and religious retreats can be very helpful. Your health care team can suggest some local resources. There are also many national non-profit organizations that can assist you in locating support for you and your family. The Cancer Support Community *Cancer Support Helpline*® can help get you connected to support no matter where you live. Visit www.cancersupportcommunity or call the toll-free helpline at 1-888-793-9355.