

Caregivers of cancer patients can feel alone even around people who care about them. They may feel separated from their usual work or social activities. This could be because their loved one's illness or treatment keeps them from their usual life. This sense of sadness or separation from others who appear to be going about their everyday lives as normal. These feelings can occur during treatment and even after treatment ends.

You may feel that no one understands what you are going through. This is often one of the most difficult emotions for caregivers to cope with. You love the person you are caring for, but you may feel that you had little choice in becoming a caregiver. It can feel like you are doing everything possible to care for your loved one, yet you both feel lonely. This is common and you are not alone in these feelings of frustration or helplessness. It is important to keep supporting them, while seeking out resources that help you connect and find common ground.

People who lack a support network may be at greater risk for mental health and stress-related illnesses. If you feel that you do not have enough support, talk to your health care team for help. Feeling lonely is a normal reaction to being under stress and supporting a loved one with cancer. Many times these feelings fade with time. Extreme or prolonged feelings of loneliness or social isolation can lead to depression. This can affect your ability to participate actively in your daily life and support your loved one.

HOW TO MANAGE FEELING LONELY OR ISOLATED

- Find someone to talk to such as a family member, friend, social worker, or support group.
- Let the health care team know if you do not have a support system to help you cope with your loved one's cancer. There are many community programs that can help you feel less isolated as a caregiver.



www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

1-888-793-9355



- Seek help from a therapist with experience working with cancer. There is nothing shameful about receiving counseling. Thousands of cancer survivors and their caregivers participate in counseling. Many find it to be helpful in reducing the stress that cancer brings into their lives.
- Consider prayer or spiritual support. Many people find prayer and religious/spiritual guides to be a useful support tool.
- Keep a journal to record and release your feelings.

If you feel so lonely and isolated that you have thoughts of suicide, please call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) to be connected to help in your area. You can also call 911 or go to a nearby emergency room.

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • www.patientadvocate.org

Cancer Support Community Resources

Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.

MyLifeLine — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at www.MyLifeLine.org.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate.

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org.

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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