

People are under a great deal of pressure when coping with cancer. From the treatments, side effects, life changes, and anxiety that can accompany cancer. This can cause people to experience changes in their mood or emotions. Changes may be increased irritability, frustration, or anger. This can appear as being short or snapping at people in conversation, or not talking much at all. This is a common experience for many people with cancer and their families. Often, it's a short-term problem that resolves itself. Other times, it is helpful to get support in dealing with these changes.



[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)  
1-888-793-9355



Anger and irritability can be triggered by things going on around us. They are common responses to having a loved one with cancer. When a person is stressed, it can be the “little things” that cause annoyance, like someone talking loudly. Often, stressing out about how your loved one with cancer is doing can strengthen these feelings. At times, you might feel more sensitive than before. You may also feel criticized if people ask you to do something new or different. Lack of sleep or feeling very tired can also contribute to anger and irritability. Please know that you and your loved one are not alone.

For some people, irritability or anger can be a sign of depression or anxiety. Take note if your irritability or anger are lasting a majority of your days. Or if they are getting in the way of doing what you need to do or affecting your relationships. Your health care team can help connect you to support options.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE IRRITABILITY/ ANGER:**

- Recognize that some amount of irritability or anger is common.
- Talk with your family, friends, doctor, nurse, and/or oncology social worker about what you are feeling. Don't let things build up until you feel like you will explode with anger or frustration.
- Take a break. Find ways to relax and regroup. Learn to recognize the signs, so you can walk away or take a few deep breaths.
- Accept responsibility for your actions. While most people don't intend to be mean or hurtful, words and gestures can affect others.

- Join a support group to understand how others are managing their stress and frustration.
- Seek professional help from a therapist with experience working with cancer patients and caregivers.
- Talk with your doctor or therapist about medication that can ease depression and anxiety.
- Try stress relieving activities such as meditation, yoga, or Tai Chi.
- Use humor. Finding something to laugh about can help diffuse some of your frustration and anger.
- Consider prayer, meditation, or relaxation exercises (for example, breathing or stretching). Some people have found that these practices help them to manage difficult emotions.
- Keep a written journal. For some people, this can be helpful to understand stress and anger.

# General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

**Cancer Support Community** • 888-793-9355 • [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)

**American Cancer Society** • 800-227-2345 • [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**CancerCare** • 800-813-4673 • [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Cancer.net** • 888-651-3038 • [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net)

**Caregiver Action Network** • 855-227-3640 • [www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)

**Healthcare.gov** • [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

**Livestrong Foundation** • 866-673-7205 • [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

**National Cancer Institute** • 800-422-6237 • [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine** • 888-644-6226 • [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

**Patient Advocate Foundation** • 800-532-5274 • [www.patientadvocate.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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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