

# 10 Tips to Mental Wellness



Experiencing a cancer diagnosis as a patient, caregiver, or loved one is difficult to manage. You are likely to have feelings of anxiety, worry, or sadness at different points. If you are a patient, taking time to care for your mental wellness may feel difficult. Your treatment plan may require multiple doctor visits and can cause some treatment-related side effects. If you are a caregiver, focusing on your mental health may feel challenging as you care for your loved one. You may be helping to manage a lot of your loved one's care. It is always important to pay attention to your emotional health needs to provide your best care. Caring for your mental wellness in your own way will also be a top priority. This is important regardless of the seriousness or type of cancer. You may hear that you need to maintain your mental health but feel uncertain about how to accomplish that.

**This guide has been created for patients, caregivers and additional loved ones. It offers 10 things that you can do to improve your mental wellness while navigating cancer treatment.**



**Speak to your care team early and often** about any concerns you may have about your mental health. They can recommend support resources that you may find helpful. **You may also refer to Cancer Support Community's webpage on Mental Health for more information and resources: [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Coping-Mental-Health-Concerns](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Coping-Mental-Health-Concerns).**

**1**

**First, try to notice how and when you feel a certain way, both emotionally and physically.**

This may include feeling overwhelmed, worried, anxious, or angry. You may also notice symptoms such as tense shoulders, a clenched jaw, changes in appetite, or trouble sleeping. Knowing your stressors or “triggers”, and the way they show up in your mind and body, will help you learn how to cope with them. This could be through either problem-solving, or through self-care. You can also share your symptoms with your doctor, nurse, or social worker, as they may be related to your treatment.

**4**

**Focus on things within your control and appreciate the “small wins”.**

Achieving even one simple task or goal each day can put you on a positive path toward emotional wellness. This could simply be having a meal with a friend. Try making a list of your stressors, separating them into the things that feel within versus outside your control. Each day, consider a small goal that is within your control and try to achieve it.

**2**

**Focus on your physical wellness. This includes improving your sleep habits, diet, and physical activity levels.**

Reducing substances, including alcohol and tobacco, is also important for your wellness. Walk regularly or speak with a registered dietician about how you can improve your eating habits.



**3**

**Speak with someone outside of family and friends about the emotional aspects of coping with cancer.**

This could be a therapist, counselor, community leader, religious leader or faith-based mentor, social worker, or nurse. Take time to find the people and types of support that work best for you. Many options exist, so do not be afraid to try different things. Do not give up if you don't find the right fit right away.







# 5

**Practice regular moments of gratitude.** Notice things you are thankful for or what went well that day or week. It may not feel natural to “stay positive” all the time. However, it is important to recognize when your worries are leading to negative patterns of thinking. Your thoughts can also affect your emotions and behaviors, positively or negatively. When this happens, reflect on things in your life that are positive and meaningful, even as you cope with this life challenge.

# 6

**Take time for self-care.** Do something for yourself that makes you feel calm and brings you joy. Prioritize doing things with the people you love. Find a healthy way to reduce your stress such as walking, meditating, journaling, or talking with a friend or loved one.

# 7

**Ask your care team early on about all your options for mental health support and resources.** Consider local support groups or meeting with a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counselor. Do your own research on therapists or counselors in your area. There are likely options for virtual therapy or counseling to help alleviate the challenge of travel. Ask your insurance company about providers and coverage options for therapy or counseling.

**8 Plan ahead for upcoming appointments and family or life responsibilities.** When you have scheduled appointments, try to write all the details for them in one spot. This could be a calendar (print or electronic) or planner. Consider sharing this with a caregiver, family member, or loved one, especially when there are competing demands or multiple appointments.

**9 Do not be afraid to ask questions or for help.** Ask whatever questions you have in order to feel confident with your care. Your care team is aware of the emotional challenges that come with a cancer diagnosis. Your team can be an excellent source of support and information. Do not feel that your question or concern is too small or insignificant to ask.

**10 Try to stay open to accepting help from others.** It can feel difficult to either ask for help, accept help, or both, without feeling like a burden. You should not go through challenging times alone. Accepting help can provide you with a sense of relief, support, or peace of mind that you may have been seeking.

Caregiving for someone diagnosed with cancer brings its own challenges. While caregiving, it is important to focus on your own physical and mental health. Addressing your own needs will allow you to provide optimal long-term caregiving.

For more information and tips on caregiving, visit [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Caregivers](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Caregivers).



The items listed above are just a small selection of things that can support mental health. Find the tasks and resources that work best for you. Your care team can refer you to mental health professionals who can help you develop coping skills that are best for you. Find a person(s) in your life that you trust and can turn to in times of struggle or worry. **Know that you are not alone.** Seeking support early and often will benefit you and your loved ones as you navigate cancer treatment and beyond.





## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

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### **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-Thurs 11am-8pm ET and Fri 11am-6pm ET.

[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Cancer-Support-Helpline](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Cancer-Support-Helpline)

### **Cancer Support Community**

1-888-793-9355

[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)- Mental Health Resources**

[www.SAMHSA.gov/Mental-Health](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/Mental-Health)

### **National Alliance on Mental Illness**

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

[NAMI.org/Help](http://NAMI.org/Help)

### **National Alliance for Caregiving**

[www.Caregiving.org](http://www.Caregiving.org)

### **National Cancer Institute**

[www.Cancer.gov/About-Cancer/Coping](http://www.Cancer.gov/About-Cancer/Coping)

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline**

1-800-662- HELP (4357)

[www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov)

### **National Suicide Prevention Hotline**

(U.S.) 800-273-8255 or 988 (text or call)

## Cancer Support Community Resources

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**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.

**Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs** — With the help of nearly 200 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:  
**[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Find-Location-Near-You](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Find-Location-Near-You)**

**Cancer Experience Registry®** — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at **[www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org](http://www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org)**.

**MyLifeLine®** — CSC's secure, online community welcomes anyone impacted by cancer to easily connect with community to reduce stress, anxiety, and isolation. Create a personal network site and invite friends & family to follow your journey. And participate in our discussion forums any time of day to meet others like you who understand what you are experiencing. Join now 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)**.

This publication is available to download and print yourself at **[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Coping-Mental-Health-Concerns](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Coping-Mental-Health-Concerns)**

For print copies of this publication or other information about coping with cancer, visit **[Orders.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://Orders.CancerSupportCommunity.org)**

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