

A cancer diagnosis can raise questions about spirituality, faith, or religion. These questions are normal for both you and your loved one.

Spirituality and religion have different meanings to many people. Religion typically refers to a specific set of beliefs and practices. Spirituality may be found and expressed through organized religion. Or people may find it in other ways, like meditation, teaching or volunteer work, or being in nature. You may think of yourself as spiritual, religious, both, or neither.

Regardless of how you define it, caring for a loved one with cancer may cause you to think more about what you believe. Caregivers often find that cancer prompts them to search for meaning in their lives or question their purpose in life. For some, turning to religion brings comfort, meaning, or hope. Some find that cancer leads to a new or renewed sense of faith in a higher power. However, other people may not feel a need to turn to religion. And others may find that this aspect of their lives causes distress as they struggle to make sense of their loved one's illness. Some find that a cancer diagnosis makes them doubt their beliefs or feel angry at God. And question the existence of a higher power or an after-life. Many people ask themselves, "*Why me?*" or "*Why my loved one, and not me?*" Some people wonder whether God or a higher power is punishing them. If you have had similar thoughts and feelings, you are not alone.

## FINDING WAYS TO COPE

**Explore what brings you comfort and meaning.** Some people find that going to a special place where they find beauty, or a sense of calm is helpful. Others find comfort in spending time with loved ones or reading uplifting stories about the human spirit. It's different for everyone. Take time to discover what activities, places, or people help you find comfort or meaning.

**Meditate or pray.** Sitting quietly may help you to create the mental space and perspective to answer your questions. You may have many questions about:

- The meaning of life
- The impact of your loved one's cancer on you as a person
- How you may be changing as a result of the experience



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



**Seek support.** Support groups, prayer circles, and religious or secular communities can help you connect with others. They may share ways that they have found meaning or coped with spiritual distress when facing cancer. These groups also frequently provide practical support, such as meals or rides to medical appointments.

**Seek out a hospital chaplain.** Are you struggling to make sense of your experience? A trusted clergy member or professional counselor may be able to help. They can help you think through your questions about the meaning of life and the cancer experience. However, it may be particularly helpful to talk with a chaplain about these topics. Chaplains are specially trained to give support to people coping with a serious illness like cancer. They help people of all different faiths, as well as those who don't consider themselves religious or spiritual. A chaplain can help you explore your thoughts.

Whether you have a broad question about the meaning of life or a specific concern about your religious beliefs, they are there for you. They are also there if you would like someone to pray with you. Many health care facilities employ hospital chaplains. Ask the health care team about how to get connected with one at your hospital or medical center.

# 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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