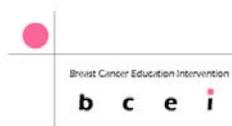




## WAYS OF DEALING WITH FEARS

Feelings of stress, anxiety and depression and having mood swings are common in people who have had cancer. These feelings are very unpleasant, and often go with fear of cancer coming back. They may be triggered by the anniversary of diagnosis or going for a routine check-up at the doctor's. These feelings may not always be easy to manage. There are ways to help you. Below we have listed some tips to help you deal with your feelings of fear and anxiety.

- **Add planned activities** to your daily life. Staying busy helps keep you from thinking about your fears.
- **Add in exercise** under planned activities to help decrease stress, anxiety and depression, walking, bike riding, etc.
- **Add in outdoor activities**, such as going to the park, beach
- **Distract yourself** from your fears or worries by watching TV, listening to music, reading, or anything else you enjoy. Something that you enjoy and that engages your mind can help distract you from your fear and anxiety.
- **Use a diary** to note stressful events – record the event, thoughts, and feelings that bring about the stress. As you come up with ways to reduce stress write about them in the diary and note how well they work. Some women journal through certain times, and then stop. Some go back to it, and others do not. Remember, this is about you, not anyone else.
- **Take medicine for anxiety** as directed by your doctor. Some women find that they can cope without medication, others need it for a short time, and still others need it long term. There is no right or wrong here, but finding something that works for you if your anxiety becomes more than you can handle.
- **Laugh.** Groucho Marx once said, “A clown is like an aspirin, only he works twice as fast...” When it comes to anxiety, laughter is the best medicine.
- **Don't deny your problems or fears.** It's O.K. to have fears and it's O.K. to cry once in a while. Make sure that these feelings don't keep you from



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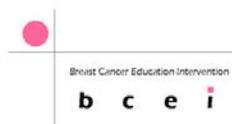
## WAYS OF DEALING WITH FEARS

enjoying the rest of your life. Identify what it is that is making you anxious or fearful. Sometimes just knowing what is bothering you can help.

- **Talk to family and friends.** Often times just getting fears out in the open helps to relieve them. Talking may help you to better analyze what is making you anxious and fearful.
- **Identify a support person** you can talk to. Everyone needs someone they can lean on. If you are not at ease sharing your feelings with everyone be sure to find at least one person to confide in and obtain some strength.
- **Attend support groups or online blog.** Talking to other breast cancer survivors and hearing their stories helps to keep your fears in check.
- **Talk to your doctor or nurse.** They can talk with you about your condition and your chances of the cancer returning. That will help you be less fearful.
- **Learn all you can and want to know about breast cancer,** its treatment and the survival rates. Being aware of the facts gets rid of fears and gives you a realistic look at the odds of the cancer coming back.
- **Decide just how much you want to know.** Some people want to know every detail about their condition, because it helps them deal with their anxiety. Others find too much information makes them anxious. Only you know how much you want to know. Think about it and tell your doctor or nurse if you want more or fewer details.
- **Try relaxation techniques** to help reduce stress and anxiety. If you would like to learn more about relaxation see our Relaxation Technique Tip Sheet.
- **Develop thought-stopping practices** when fears feel like they are getting the best of you. If you find yourself thinking anxious thoughts there are ways to make yourself stop.

### Start These Practices:

- Think or say, “Stop!” to yourself to interrupt the thought. Continue to think “stop!” until the unwanted thought stops.



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## WAYS OF DEALING WITH FEARS

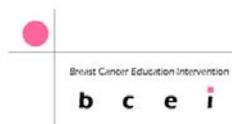
- Replace an unhealthy thought with a healthy thought. When an unwanted thought enters, replace the thought with a healthy, positive one right away. For example, if you find yourself thinking about your cancer coming back, replace that thought with the fact that today you are cancer free.
- If you have a tendency to see negative images, replace these negative images with positive, healthy images.
- **Know that fears may get worse** at anniversary dates or with regular doctor visits. Plan for these times by practicing how you will relieve your anxiety.

### When Do You Need To Seek Help?

Anxiety and anxious thoughts are also symptoms of depression. Call your doctor or nurse if you're anxious thoughts are interfering with your sleep, if you are crying all the time, if your fears keep you from doing things you used to enjoy or if you would like a referral to a counselor or support group.

### Useful Websites:

- <http://www.cancer.net/survivorship/life-after-cancer/coping-fear-recurrence>
- <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/facing-forward>
- <http://blogs.webmd.com/cancer/2011/11/dealing-with-the-fear-of-recurrence.html>
- <http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/cid/documents/webcontent/002014-pdf.pdf>



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