



CANCER SUPPORT
COMMUNITY
ARIZONA



You're a Cancer Survivor. Now What?

Managing your emotions after cancer treatment.

From the day of your diagnosis to the end of your treatment plan, you've been looking forward to this day. You have completed your cancer treatment. Your prognosis is good. You are moving forward.

And then, out of nowhere, these feelings hit you. Anxiety, grief, feeling overwhelmed, maybe even abandoned - where have all the people who were helping me gone? It can put you at greater risk of depression.

This is all normal. Remember, cancer didn't just do a number on your body; it took a toll on your mind and

feelings. You've spent weeks and probably months focusing primarily on regaining your physical health. Now your mind and soul are telling you they need some time to heal too.

This guide outlines some of the common emotions many cancer survivors feel post-treatment, and suggests strategies for addressing them and taking care of yourself during this time that is vital to your recovery.



What If It Comes Back?

That's often the number one fear people who have completed their treatment report feeling. And it's not just immediately after they are told they are in remission; fear of recurrence can remain for years. This is particularly true because we hear of people who are having their third and fourth and fifth battle with the disease. So what can you do to lessen that anxiety?

- ☐ **Keep up with your schedule of doctor appointments and tests.** It can be scary, but don't let that keep you from going to these vital appointments. Knowledge is power and being able to discuss the possibility of recurrence and the signs to look for will help keep you grounded.
- ☐ **Continue (or start) healthy habits.** If you have always been good about staying hydrated, eating the right foods and getting enough exercise and sleep, keep on keeping on. If you've let it slide, it's time to start again. Healthy habits will aid your recovery and help you feel more in control of your life.

Note: if you are embarking on a new diet or exercise plan, please talk to your care team first to make sure the changes you are planning are right for you in this stage of recovery.
- ☐ **Live Your Life.** Fear of recurrence can make your life small and confined. Anxiety can keep you from getting out of the house. Maybe it makes you less social. Certainly, it can be exhausting, which is a pretty good excuse not to do the things you did before cancer came into your life. But as much as you can, get out there and live your life. It will keep you busy and show that cancer does not get to define you.

What Do I Do Now?

Before, cancer was the center of your life. Your schedule, what you did, the food you ate, how you felt - all of it was dictated by the disease or its treatment. It's likely there were lots of projects or things on your to-do list that had to be put on hold. Going back to those activities can be both rewarding and overwhelming. Be kind to yourself and:

- ☐ **Don't try to tackle everything at once.** Give yourself time to settle back into your life. Prioritize those lists. Do you really need to repaint the whole house now? Probably not. Try not to put extra stress on yourself during this time.
- ☐ **Carve out time for rest and relaxation.** While all these tasks are competing for your attention, make taking care of yourself a top priority. You have to replenish your body (and your mind), otherwise tackling those projects will be more difficult and more frustrating.





Where Did Everyone Go?

When you were undergoing treatment, you were in a cocoon of people who were helping you battle cancer. Your doctors, your extended care team, friends and neighbors stopping by, support groups and more played prominent roles in your life. Once the treatment was finished, you saw many of these people less frequently. That's totally understandable to your rational brain, but it might be a blow for your emotions, leading to feelings of loneliness - or even abandonment. Keep those feelings at bay by:

- ☐ **Finding a support group of cancer survivors.** Let's face it; it takes a survivor to fully understand exactly what you are going through. They don't have to imagine walking a mile in your shoes; they've run the marathon wearing ones just like them.
- ☐ **Consider therapy.** If your emotions feel too overpowering, it might be time to turn to a professional. It's likely that your oncologist or care team can refer you to someone who specializes in helping you sort through your emotions and can help you determine ways to deal with your feelings.

What If People Stare?

Your treatment may have changed how you look. It could be changing of skin tone, loss of a limb, scars, weight loss or gain or other things that were the result of treatment. They might make you self-conscious about your body, which can affect your social life or even strain a loving relationship. Some steps to getting through this are:

- ☐ **Take time to grieve.** Yes, cancer has made a lasting change in your life. There is loss involved and it should be acknowledged.
- ☐ **But then focus on the future.** In many ways, you are probably a stronger person because of what you have gone through. Tap into that strength and draw from it. Once you are more confident about how you look, others will be more comfortable around you.





Where Can I Turn?

To the list of the people that you have cheering you on through recovery, we'd like to add one more - Cancer Support Community Arizona (CSCAZ).

Our mission is to ensure that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action and sustained by community.

We provide emotional and social support for anyone impacted by cancer through **more than 100 programs every month** that include support groups, social activities, mind/body therapies, nutritional counseling and educational seminars. All programs are offered free of charge and designed to support cancer patients, their families and caregivers throughout their cancer journey - including recovery. Cancer Support Community Arizona's programs are funded by individual, corporate and foundation donors with less than 1% of our revenue from federal or state partnerships.

To learn more, or register for one of our free sessions, please visit www.cscaz.org.

Locations

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