

# Coping with Cancer-Related Worry and Sadness

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Having cancer can be very stressful. It may cause changes in your health, your relationships and your finances. It can change how you relate to your friends and family—both now and into the future.

Sometimes, people feel sad and anxious when they deal with stress or uncertainty. Fear of the unknown can cause these feelings, for example, not knowing what to expect or a sense that something bad is going to happen. Some people worry about the future or how the cancer journey will affect their life and the life of their family.

If you have cancer-related worry or sadness, we can refer you to a team that specializes in counselling and support. Team members include a psychologist, a psychiatrist, social workers, nurses and spiritual care providers. There is sometimes a wait time to see someone, so we have provided you with this handout to help you while you wait to be seen.

## How can I Cope with Worry or Sadness?

Coping is anything a person does to feel better. Some of the ideas listed below may help you.

- **Get more light.** It may help your mood if the rooms you are in are light and airy.
- **Take care of yourself.** Make sure that you eat regular, healthy meals and be as active as you can.
- **Express your feelings/let go of your tension.** Try writing down how you feel. Maybe have a good cry, throw a pillow, or turn on loud music and scream. Try not to hold your feelings in.
- **Pay attention to what triggers your anxiety.** Once you know your triggers, you can try to plan ahead and avoid what makes you anxious.
- **Exercise.** Take a short walk. Do some simple stretches. Moving can help ease aches and pains. It will also free chemicals in your body that help your mood.

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**

- **Do things that you enjoy.** You may not “feel like it” but doing activities that you have always enjoyed will help your mood.
- **Make plans.** Having things to look forward to will help you enjoy life more.
- **Try to relax.** Do whatever you find relaxing. Some good ideas might be: listening to soft music, doing yoga or meditation, or getting a massage.
- **Talk to someone you trust.** Having someone in your life to share your feelings with can give you a great sense of comfort. It can help you get through this hard time.
- **Religion or spirituality.** If religion or spirituality are important to you, practice your beliefs and seek support from faith or spiritual leaders.

### **Group Learning Sessions for Cancer Patients and Families:**

You may go to a group teaching session in the Bethune Building, at the VG site (QEII Health Sciences Centre) in Halifax, near the Cancer Centre. At other hospitals you can also participate by video conference. These sessions provide education on taking control of your cancer-related sadness and depression, as well as your cancer-related worry and anxiety.

For more information or if you would like to register for an upcoming session, please call 1-866-599-2267 and select option 3.

### **Videos**

If you are unable to join a group session but have access to the internet, we have video segments of each group learning session available online. These can be found by visiting [library.nshealth.ca/cancer](http://library.nshealth.ca/cancer) and clicking on Cancer Patient Education Videos.

### **Other Services:**

#### **Private Medical Insurance and Employee Assistance Programs**

Counseling is covered under some private insurance plans (i.e. Blue Cross). There may be a yearly maximum as to how much your plan will pay. Contact your insurer for the details about your plan.

You can find private services in the phonebook or an online search for therapy/counselling. If you live outside of Halifax, your Cancer Patient Navigator may be able to direct you to local community groups or resources. To reach the Navigator in your area call 1-888-524-1234.

Many employers offer Employee Assistance Plans which offer a limited number of free counseling sessions. Please contact your Human Resources Department for information.

### **Support Groups**

The Canadian Cancer Society may be able to help you find support groups in your community. They also have a peer support program. Call 1-888-939-3333 or visit [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca).

Many people choose online support groups. These groups help people who may not wish to attend a face-to-face group. Be careful when looking for an online group. Anyone with internet access can create an online group, even if they do not have any real experience.

If you are interested in online groups, contact Cancer Chat Canada by visiting [cancerchatcanada.ca](http://cancerchatcanada.ca). Canadian cancer care professionals lead these groups. Most of these groups are available in all provinces and territories.

### **Online Resources**

There are many online, evidence-based, self-help tools to manage sadness and anxiety.

Visit: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/emotional-support](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/emotional-support)

### **Crisis Line**

If you are having difficulty coping because of feelings of worry or sadness and the above resources have not helped, there is a Mental Health Crisis phone line you can call: 1-888-429-8167, toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Looking for more health information?**

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>  
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.  
For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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**Nova Scotia Health Authority**  
[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

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NSCCP-1681 Updated November 2018 ©Nova Scotia Health Authority