

# Emotional and psychological effects of cancer

[Health & Medicine](#), [Cancer](#)



Nearly 11, 958, 000 people were living with cancer in the U. S. in the year of 2008. (“ Cancer Prevalence: How Many People Have Cancer? ”). It is the second-leading cause of death in the United States. Cancer is “ characterized by the development of abnormal cells that divide uncontrollably and have the ability to infiltrate and destroy normal body tissue. ”(Mayo Clinic Staff) It is caused by a simple DNA mutation that causes the body to create a cancerous cell.

It causes many physical complications including: pain, fatigue, difficult breathing, nausea, diarrhea, constipation, and difficult immune reactions known as paraneoplastic syndromes. The effects of cancer are not only physiological but also psychological and emotional. Cancer causes a number of psychological effects such as: stress, constant fatigue, depression, withdrawal, fear, and anger. When a patient is diagnosed with cancer, their reaction may vary depending on a number of factors such as the type and severity or stage of the cancer, and simply the patient’s personality.

In most cases, patients first experience shock or denial once they have heard the harsh news. This is followed, a few days or weeks later, by sadness and depression. Later on they will experience withdrawal, uncontrollable fear of what is to come, anger, and guilt. (“ Coping and Support. Emotional Effects of Cancer. ”) Some patients feel they have become lost and isolated from the world. For when they are undergoing treatments, they may be physically isolated for periods of time and must wear protective gear to simply exit their sterile room. Permitting contact with anyone or anything that is not necessary for treatment.

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This is an incredibly emotional taxing time for the patients, for this is the time that contact with family, friends, and the outside world are important for a person's emotional well-being. Extreme stress is always an effect on a patient, their family, and their friends due to the many complications outside of the patient's physical complications. This includes job concerns, financial instability, and what will happen to the family if the patient passes away. (Julia Beirut) Because cancer has affected so many people around the globe, it has become easier to find ways to cope with cancer than ever before.

Many websites, books, support groups, therapist specialties, and therapies have been created to help everyone affected by cancer to find coping skills that work best for them. Many people have suggested that patients and family members let out the bad feelings so that they may more fully enjoy the positive aspects of the situation. It is also important to stay connected with family, friend, and the community through social networks, visits, and participating in community activities such as yoga classes, swimming, book clubs, and religious activities.

It is also important to keep a positive attitude as much as possible without keeping the bad emotions balled up inside and pretending not to care. It is healthy to make peace with the unknown, or accepting that they do not know what will happen or if they will recover or not. This is said to be one of the hardest coping mechanisms, but also one of the most important. It is extremely important to seek professional care for psychological and

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emotional effects. Rarely can one deal with the pain and stress of cancer on their own and in their own way.

Refusing to receive guidance from a professional therapist is like refusing to go skydiving for the first time with a professional skydiver. (National Bone Marrow Transplant Link) Joey Call is a survivor of stage 3 leukemia as of this year. He was diagnosed in the fall of 2010, at the age of 24. He was treated with chemotherapy and radiation frequently and felt the effects immediately. After starting treatment he noticed a change in his personality as well as his body. He explains, " I felt like I was in a fog for the first few months. Like my mind and emotions just turned themselves off.

Then once I could really understand that I had cancer, I just exploded. I didn't know how to handle it. It was too much to take in. I was like a baby. I cried for days! " Joey continues to explain that after the depression and denial, he started to become so stressed. " The doctors said that I won't be able to have kids after the chemo. It made me even more scared and stressed out. How was my wife going to take this? I can't even give her a family the normal way. We have to do for the rest of our lives. That was the most stressful thing of the whole thing. " He and his wife also went through tough financial losses.

Without Joey working and his wife still in college, they were struggling to pay their bills. When Joey was younger, he was in prison. He was exposed to contaminated drug needles and other devices that had many diseases and viruses on them. He used his friend's needle once, and that one harmless choice would later help give him not only leukemia, but also hepatitis B.

Because of this one time action, he would later feel extreme guilt and regret, for he knew that that one “fix” was a huge factor into giving him great health problems later in life. “It was so not worth it,” he claims.

Even though Joey is cancer free, he is still struggling with depression, fear of returning cancer, and extreme stress. (Joey Call) Even though cancer is extremely hard on the body, mind, and soul; happiness can be achieved. It may seem too difficult to handle, but many survive and go on to living happy and successful lives. With the help of professionals and the support of doctors, family, and friends, survival is possible.

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