COPING AS A CANCER SURVIVOR: NEXT STEPS FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

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Coping as a cancer survivor:
Next Steps for Patients and Families

• The National Comprehensive Cancer Network defines cancer survivorship:

• “An individual is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis, through the balance of his or her life. Family members, friends, and caregivers are also impacted”
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The cancer continuum in regards to treatment consists of:

- Diagnosis
- Treatment (surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy)
- Post-treatment and remission
- Recurrence and palliative care
- Survivorship
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We need to understand the common emotional themes that patients and families experience along cancer continuum

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Increased sense of vulnerability
- Lowered sense of control
- Conditioned reminders of chemotherapy (smells, sights) that produce anxiety and nausea
- Post-traumatic stress like symptoms (such as persistent, intrusive thoughts; recurrent imagery associated with cancer treatments and feelings of estrangement from others)
- Concerns about body image and sexuality
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Common emotional themes of the cancer patient and family members

- Adjustment Issues
- Depression
- Anxiety and Panic
- Sleep Disturbances
- Social and Relationship challenges
- Intimacy issues
- Communication struggles
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Common emotions of the Cancer Survivor

- Worry
- Feeling Stress
- Depression and Anxiety
- Anger
- Grief
- Sadness
- Feeling alone
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Things that can help

- Talk to your doctor and providers about what to expect post-treatment
- Exercise (simple walking, yoga, cancer rehabilitation) at your own pace
- Get rest
- Counseling/support groups
- Consistent healthy nutrition
- Communicate with friends and family about what is common to expect in the cancer survivor post-treatment in regards to physical activity, fatigue, social activities
- Going back to work
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Keep in mind:

- Recovery takes time
- Everyone heals and recovers differently
- The length of time of your recovery will vary
- Rest and light exercise helps
- Talking to a counselor and/or friends or family relieves anxiety and stress
- It is common to feel less than happy after treatment ends
- Post treatment is a time for reflection and figuring out what you want for your future
- It is common to be unsure
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Things that you can do to ACTIVELY take control of your survivorship

- Take charge of your medical health
- Be consistent with your follow-up care
- Manage long-term side effects and late effects
- Consider cancer rehabilitation/exercise program
- Counseling – individual, family and couples
- Balanced nutrition
- Therapy (occupational, physical, speech)
- Support Groups
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Thank you

Questions?