



**The  
National  
Children's  
Cancer  
Society**

25 years of serving kids and their families

# EMOTIONAL CONCERNS WITH CANCER

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### Holding on as the ride gets bumpy.

A cancer diagnosis brings with it a roller coaster of emotions for everyone in your family. As treatment continues, emotions quite often stabilize, but life is never quite the same. Welcome to the “new normal.”

During this difficult time, the way you handle stress will affect your ability to manage your constant emotional changes. Good coping skills can help you integrate the cancer experience into your life, instead of being ruled by it. Here are some ways to help you cope with the stress.

- 1) **Give yourself permission to feel.** Whether positive or negative emotions, all feelings are normal.
- 2) **Become your child’s advocate.** No one knows them better than you, so be an active part of the treatment team.
- 3) **Educate yourself.** Learn as much as you can comfortably handle about your child’s diagnosis and treatment.
- 4) **Be realistic.** Recognize which areas of your child’s life can be controlled and which cannot. Understand that some questions do not have answers.
- 5) **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep, eat properly and exercise. Make time for yourself with hobbies or other things you enjoy.
- 6) **Accept help.** Learn to take support when people offer it.
- 7) **Get emotional support.** Join a support group, talk to friends, a counselor or clergy. Or connect with other parents at the NCCS online community at [nccsonlinecommunity.ning.com](http://nccsonlinecommunity.ning.com).
- 8) **Keep a journal.** Record special moments, both happy and sad.

### Just Between Us | Survival Tips from other Survivors

“I learned that each day, each hour would change. So, in order to be able to deal with the stress, I had to take each minute as it came.”

- Tina, mother of Kenton (Liver Cancer)

“I realized that I shouldn’t squander our time together on needless concerns - like a clean house. I promised myself for those summers together, I would only clean my house on rainy days. The other days were for spending time together.”

- Carrie, mother of Spencer (Leukemia)

“Parents should know that after 5 years, the emotional roller coaster still exists. These 5 years have been the most dark and traumatic, but at the same time the most beautiful and joyous time of my life. It’s very bittersweet.”

- Shannon, mother of Olivia (Retinoblastoma)

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### When the bad feelings don't get better.

Sometimes, managing the emotional toll of a child's diagnosis and treatment can become too great for a parent. If you find yourself having trouble coping, speak to a healthcare professional at your child's hospital. A counselor can help you sort through your feelings and offer you ways to manage the stress you're under. The following organizations can help you locate a professional near you:

The National Association of Social Workers: [naswdc.org](http://naswdc.org) or 800-742-4089

The American Counseling Association: [counseling.org](http://counseling.org) or 800-347-6647

How do you know if you're depressed? Sometimes it's hard to tell. Symptoms of depression include:

- Depressed mood every day or most of the day
- Difficulty sleeping
- Ongoing lack of interest in anything, including things you enjoy
- Constant lack of energy
- Excessive irritability or constant worrying
- Persistent feelings of helplessness, worthlessness or guilt
- Change in appetite or a noticeable weight loss or gain
- Change in alcohol or drug habits
- Neglecting your own health needs
- Difficulty concentrating

Should you need additional emotional support, call us at 800-532-6459.

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# RESOURCES

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## Help for the climb

For additional resources, visit [beyondthecure.org](http://beyondthecure.org) or talk to a member of your child's medical team.

### Medical

#### National Cancer Institute

800-4-CANCER [cancer.gov](http://cancer.gov)  
Provides state-of-the-art information about the treatment of individual types of cancer, clinical trials and late effects.

#### CureSearch

800-458-6223 [curesearch.org](http://curesearch.org)  
Funds research and provides information to those affected by childhood cancer.

#### Chemo Care

[chemocare.com](http://chemocare.com)  
Provides information about chemotherapy and side effects.

### Insurance/Legal

#### HealthCare.gov

[healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov)  
A government sponsored web site on healthcare information.

#### Patient Advocate Foundation

800-532-5274 [patientadvocate.org](http://patientadvocate.org)  
Solve insurance and healthcare access problems.

#### Social Security Administration

800-772-1213 [ssa.gov](http://ssa.gov)  
Provides answers to questions regarding social security benefits.

### Support, Advocacy and Financial Assistance

#### The National Children's Cancer Society

800-5-FAMILY [theNCCS.org](http://theNCCS.org)  
Emotional support, advocacy, education, and financial assistance to parents of children with cancer and an online community for parents and survivors.

#### American Cancer Society

800-ACS-2345 [cancer.org](http://cancer.org)  
Information on parental issues such as coping with diagnosis, understanding the health care system, financial and insurance information, and transitioning your child back into school.

#### Association of Cancer Online Resources (ACOR)

[acor.org](http://acor.org)  
Electronic support groups to patients, caregivers, and survivors.

**Cancercare** 800-813-HOPE [cancercare.org](http://cancercare.org) Individual and group counseling both on-line and via their toll-free counseling line.

#### Supersibs

888-417-4704 [supersibs.org](http://supersibs.org)  
Support for brothers and sisters of children with cancer.

#### First Hand Foundation

816-201-1569 [applications.cerner.com/firsthand](http://applications.cerner.com/firsthand)  
Financial assistance for treatment, equipment, displacement and vehicle modifications for children with health problems.

#### United Healthcare Children's Foundation

952-992-4459 [uhccf.org](http://uhccf.org)  
Financial help for medical services such as speech, physical or occupational therapy, prescriptions, and medical equipment such as wheelchairs, orthotics and hearing aids.

### Healthy Living

#### American Institute of Cancer Research

800-843-8114 [aicr.org](http://aicr.org)  
Offers specific nutrition information for the cancer survivor.

#### SmokeFree

877-448-7848 [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov)  
Help for those who want to quit smoking

#### Sun Safety Alliance

703-481-1414 [sunsafetyalliance.org](http://sunsafetyalliance.org)  
Provides information on sun safety.

### Learning Disabilities

#### National Center for Learning Disabilities

888-575-7373 [nccd.org](http://nccd.org)  
Solutions and opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities.

### Survivorship

#### Beyond the Cure Survivorship Program

Sponsored by The National Children's Cancer Society  
800-5-FAMILY [beyondthecure.org](http://beyondthecure.org)  
Information on all aspects of cancer survivorship, a late effects assessment tool and college scholarships.

#### Livestrong

866-673-7205 [livestrong.org](http://livestrong.org)  
Awareness, advocacy and support for the cancer community.