

APRIL 2018



TESTICULAR CANCER
AWARENESS

Testicular Cancer Awareness Month

To learn more,
visit:
[https://
www.cancer.net/
cancer-types/
testicular-cancer](https://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/testicular-cancer)

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Healthy relationships are the cornerstone of our daily lives. They make us feel hopeful, supported and appreciated in a way that can directly impact our physical and emotional wellbeing.

Having relationships with others that are positive and supportive, reduces stress which, in turn, diminishes the negative impact disease can have on our immune system. This is in contrast to how unhealthy relationships and social isolation worsen our health over time.

People in our social support networks can help us manage the side effects of treatment, emotional distress and uncertainty often experienced as we cope with a cancer diagnosis. They can also be essential “team members” who can help us heal—physically, emotionally and spiritually— even after treatments stop as we learn to cope with changes that can occur over the course of the disease and treatments.

Often, it is difficult for family members, friends and colleagues to fully understand what a person with cancer is experiencing. They may feel confused, angry, worried and uncertain as to what to do or how to help. They may also need help themselves in order to cope with a situation in which they feel powerless.

Frustration, stress and anxiety may set in for both the person with cancer and potential support team members. When this happens, patients may be unable to articulate what they need and others may withdraw.

For good relationships to thrive, it is important to have realistic expectations about cancer recovery—for both the patient and his or her support team. Good relationships start with open communication, self-reflection, self-awareness and, sometimes, acceptance.

Good communication comes from being aware of one’s own needs and expectations, and then verbalize those to others.



Self-reflection and personal discovery happen as one comes to terms with what a “new normal” after cancer means.

To get to this point though may mean reevaluating pre-cancer goals, hopes and dreams. It means figuring out what is most important in order to achieve the quality of life we expect.

It might also require deciding which activities and environments are essential to our wellbeing. Learning how to reprioritize may mean learning how and when to set personal boundaries, - or to simply say, “no”. Sometimes this means redirecting commitments, obligations or work assignments to others or reassessing where to direct time and resources.

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Why Support Groups?

Receiving a cancer diagnosis often triggers a strong emotional response. Some people experience shock, anger, and disbelief. Others may feel intense sadness, fear, and a sense of loss. Sometimes even the most supportive family members and friends cannot understand exactly how it feels to have cancer. This can lead to loneliness and isolation.

Support groups allow people to talk about their experiences with others living with cancer in a safe and respectful way. Group members can share feelings and experiences that may seem too strange or too difficult to share with family and friends.

Support group members may also discuss practical information. This may include what to expect during treatment, how to manage pain and other side effects of treatment, and how to communicate with health care

providers and family members.

To decide which type of support group may fit you best, consider your needs and personality:

- Do you need emotional support, information and education, or a combination of both?
- Do you prefer sharing your experiences with a group in person? Or, do you prefer an anonymous environment, such as an Internet support group?
- Do you prefer personal counseling?
- Do you prefer just talking to a trusted friend?

To find the resources that fit you best, go to:

<http://cancercenter.uab.edu/why-choose-the-uab-comprehensive-cancer-center/patient-and-family-resources/>

“She gives me so much hope.”

Woman-to-Woman Support: here’s what they are saying.

- “I was afraid to ask my care team about what I should expect with treatment because I wasn’t sure I really wanted to know. Talking with someone who’s been there just makes me feel stronger by the day.”
- “I just didn’t know how my surgery and treatment would affect my work, social and family life. It was good to hear how someone else is coping.”
- “I didn’t know where to turn for information or what to read. I was even afraid to get on the internet because there’s just so much scary stuff out there. My mentor suggested I just wait until I’m ready to know more. And, she let me know that what I was feeling was perfectly normal.”
- “It was so inspiring to have someone who has been where I am right now and to see them doing so well. She gives me so much hope.”

To learn more about this resource for women with gynecologic cancers, email: a.sharma@thinkoflaura.org



UAB’s Comprehensive Cancer Center. Visit us on the web at: <http://cancercenter.uab.edu/>

Supportive relationships *Continued from Page 1*

Figuring out our needs and expectations might also mean identifying which relationships are most essential to our recovery and wellbeing and which are not. We want to nurture those relationships that fulfill or support us physically, emotionally, spiritually and practically. We want to limit the time spent with those who do not.

Finally, and most importantly, we want to put space between ourselves and those who have a negative or harmful affect on us. To do this, we may need help with grieving and accepting what we can't change.

Taking charge of your relationships after a cancer diagnosis.

- Ask yourself which relationships are most important to your recovery, health, wellbeing and quality of life.
- Determine your needs and prioritize them.
- Figure out who will be most responsive in meeting those needs.
- Get help, if needed, in learning how to communicate your needs.
- Be understanding when people are not able to live up to expectations and ready to accept that there may be others who are.
- Don't sweat the small stuff.
- Ask for or accept help when it is needed.



“Is my relationship breaking down?”

Some of the warning signs that a relationship in your network may not be providing what you need can be:

- Frequent misunderstandings or disagreements.
- Use of criticism, sarcasm or name calling.
- Fewer expressions of love and affection.
- Feeling hurt by things that person says or does.
- Feeling overwhelmed by the emotional needs of others.
- Physical and emotional withdrawal by you or your loved one.

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[We're on the Web!](#)



*We would like your
suggestions*

*Please let us know the
topics you would like us to
include in our newsletter
and programs you would
like for us to offer.*

Email your suggestions
to:

tgw318@uab.edu

UAB COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER
Knowledge that will change your world

Living with Cancer

“Why has my relationships changed since my cancer diagnosis?”

Join us for a discussion with Sylvia Huang, PhD, MA, Med, Clinical Psychologist with the UAB Supportive Care Clinic, to talk about fostering healthy family and social relationships after a cancer diagnosis.

Please note that there are a limited number of seats available for this roundtable discussion. **Lunch will be provided.** Registration is required.

When: Monday, April 23 | 11:30—12:30 pm
Where: UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center
Patient and Family Resource Center, WTI 220
Register: tgw318@uab.edu



6th annual Young Breast Cancer Survivors Workshop

This event is free and features sessions for young women facing breast cancer on what to expect after treatment, important tips on nutrition, surviving with focus and stress management using meditation. Breakout sessions will include how to talk to children and teenagers about breast cancer, and how to deal with financial distress and budget for expenses related to cancer treatment and staying healthy. In addition, male co-survivors will find a session just for them to share their stories about caring for a loved one with breast cancer.

A highlight of this 2018 Workshop is Don Dizon, M.D., FACP, sharing his expertise on “After Breast Cancer: Perspectives, Problems and Promises.

When: Saturday, April 14, 10:00 am—2:30 pm
Where: UAB Alumni Society House
Register: [https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/
eventReg?
oeidk=a07ef38limrc65ee463&oseq=&c=&ch=](https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07ef38limrc65ee463&oseq=&c=&ch=)