

FINDING A COUNSELOR

Surviving cancer treatment means taking care of your emotional health as well as your physical health. Some cancer survivors may experience fear, depression, and anxiety and/or stress once treatment ends. All of these feelings are understandable and normal. What is not normal is when the emotions begin to affect your everyday outlook on life, when this occurs it maybe time to seek counseling.

WHAT IS COUNSELING?

Counseling is a service that is offered usually by a trained professional. The objective of counseling is to help you learn how to manage and cope with any concerns that you may have. There are different types of counseling services. These include:

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Group Counseling

Group counseling and support groups are not the same. Support groups meet to discuss one particular topic of concern such as prostate, breast, ovarian, etc. This type of group usually consists of individuals that meet to talk about the similar experiences they have in common.

HOW DO COUNSELORS HELP SURVIVORS?

Counselors provide a neutral environment where the survivor can openly and honestly discuss their concerns and stresses. Counselors guide the survivor through their emotions and help them find a way to relieve and manage stress. Counselors can also help in these ways:

- Identify steps you can take to solve your concerns
- Find resources
- Prevent any future problems
- Learn how to communicate with others such as family, friends and other survivors

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I NEED COUNSELING?

If you experience any of the following you may benefit from counseling:

- Sadness, depression or anxiety take control of your life
- Difficulty sleeping
- Confused
- Difficulty focusing
- Finding it hard to reconnect with family and friends

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COUNSELORS?

Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists are medical doctors and can prescribe medication for anxiety and depression.

Psychologists

Psychologists are trained in human behavior and mental health problems. They can provide individual, group, couples and family therapy.

Social Workers

Social workers depending on which license they hold can assist with individual, group, family counseling and also assist with difficulties such as financial or health insurance concerns.

Family Therapists

- focus on marriage and family issues

Pastoral Counselors

- provide counseling matters from a religion or spiritual context

HOW CAN SURVIVORS KNOW WHICH COUNSELORS ARE RIGHT FOR THEM?

Feeling comfortable with someone you do not know well is very important. A counselor should be non-judgmental, knowledgeable, experienced and able to guide you through your distresses. If you do not feel comfortable, it may be good to seek another counselor.

HOW MUCH DOES COUNSELING COST?

Counseling can be costly. Find out the cost for sessions by asking the counselor or your health provider. Some hospitals and cancer clinics offer free services because that is part of their cancer program. You should also contact your health insurance provider to see what coverage you are eligible for and the number of sessions they will pay for. There are also some clinics that will offer the sessions on a “sliding fee scale” which means that you could possibly be eligible for a discount on sessions. There are a few organizations that will offer counseling over the telephone. Quite a few of these organizations can be found in the Survivorship Directory.

Works Cited

Adapted from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
www.fhcrc.org