

Anxiety and Depression After Breast Cancer

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Anxiety and Depression After Breast Cancer...

- Is Common!
- Peaks at times which can be confusing to you and those around you
- Lessens over time but sudden re-experience is common with trigger
- Is characterized by multiple, often conflicting emotions

Survivors of Breast Cancer Live With Uncertainty

- The psychological and spiritual effects of pre-existing disease and its treatment
- The worry about long term effects
- The possibility of cancer recurrence

Emotional Responses to Uncertainty

- Obsessive Worry and Fear
- Anger/Disgust
- Apprehension
- Hurt
- Demeaned
- Guilty/Ashamed
- Hopeless/helpless

Triggers of Emotional Distress

- Tests/scans
- Waiting for results
- Appointments with oncology team
- Birthdays
- Anniversaries
- Holidays
- Hearing of other's recurrence or death
- Feeling pain or fatigue/developing cough



What are we afraid of?

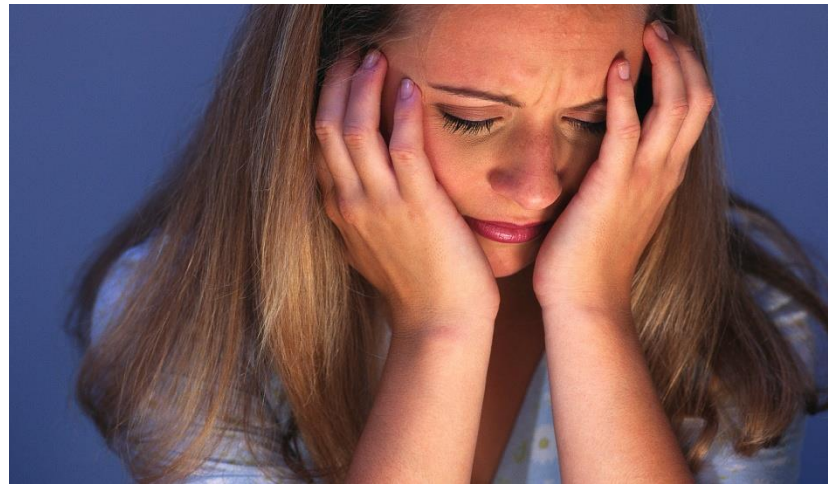
- Pain, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, hair loss and long term effects of resuming treatment
- Physical deterioration/body image
- Inability to care for family
- Family's responses
- Being a burden/dependent on others
- Helplessness
- Threat to financial stability

What is Obsessive Worry?

- “This is unbearable...I feel damaged/inadequate...Why do I have to feel this way...This is unfair...I can't cope with this”
- Negative spiral in which the longer you are in it, the deeper it gets and the more energy it carries
- Can feel like a trance
- It can feel compelling, like the path of least resistance and takes a *deliberate* effort to shift gears and get out of this spiral

Who is at risk for a psychiatric disorder?

- Those with history of mood or anxiety disorder
- Those who have experienced recurrence
- Those with a disease free interval of less than 24 months



What is an Anxiety Disorder?

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Panic Disorder

What is a Depressive Disorder?

- Dysthymic Disorder
- Major Depression
- Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood

How many people experience this?

- Prevalence psychiatric disorders following diagnosis is 14-38%
- Approximately 25% develop psychiatric disorder throughout course of illness
- Clinically significant psychological distress at recurrence is > 40%
- Prevalence of breast cancer is 2 ½ million

“Under Toad Days” ...

- Elizabeth McKinley, MD



What type of “coper” are you?

- Confrontative Coping
- Distancing
- Self-Control
- Seeking Social Support
- Accepting Responsibility
- Escape-Avoidance
- Planful Problem Solving
- Positive Re-appraisal

(Folkman and Lazarus)

Strategies for managing uncertainty

- Education
- Find safe place to share fears and distress
- Pace life to avoid being overwhelmed
- Treat pain and other persistent treatment related side effects to avoid demoralization
- Set short term goals
- Work on developing non-cancer identity

Friendship



Spirituality



More Strategies...

- Reinforce past adaptive strategies for coping under stress and uncertainty
- Support from family, community, health care providers: other's optimism can engender hope
- Writing



Taking care of yourself can enhance your sense of control

- Diet/Nutrition
- Exercise
- Meditation/Mind-body interventions
- Energy Therapies: Qi Gong; Reiki
- Relaxation techniques
 - Breathing
 - Muscle relaxation
 - Guided imagery



What is Hope?

- Belief that a positive outcome lies ahead.
- We can learn to see that a positive outcome can exist even if what we originally hoped for is not likely to happen.



Take comfort in knowing...

- Others have survived this treatment, this side effect, this waiting, this uncertainty about the future...I can too!



Where Can I Find Professional Help?

- American Psychosocial Oncology Society (APOS) Helpline:
 - 1-866-APOS-4-HELP
 - www.apos-society.org/survivors/helpline

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