

# 6 EMOTIONAL HEALING

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It is normal to have trouble coping with a diagnosis of breast cancer. Some women feel fear, anger, denial, frustration, loss of control, confusion, and grief. Others feel lonely, isolated, and depressed. Women also have to deal with issues about their self-image, future priorities, sexuality, and possible death.

Each woman has to deal with these issues and her diagnosis of cancer in her own way and on her own time schedule. Many women find that it helps to talk about their feelings with their loved ones or close friends. When you reach out, you are giving loved ones and friends the chance to show their support during this difficult time.

As much as you feel comfortable, talk about your concerns with members of your health care team. Many women are helped by talking about their feelings with other women



*“Cancer might rob you of the blissful belief that tomorrow stretches into forever. In exchange, you are granted the vision to see each day as precious, a gift to be used wisely and richly. No one can take that away.”*

National Cancer Institute

who have had breast cancer. You may want to talk to the friend or family member who can just listen and allow you to sort out your feelings without giving any advice.

Hospitals often offer a support group or meetings with counselors as part of standard treatment. Ask your doctor if your hospital has this service. You also may want to look into family or individual therapy. Growing numbers of therapists offer services to individuals, families, and friends affected by cancer.

## **Complementary Therapies**

Persons living with cancer sometimes want to explore complementary therapies in addition to their medical treatment. These therapies are often not proven by scientific studies. Some women feel that they have benefited from some of these therapies.

Complementary therapies include acupuncture, herbs, biofeedback, visualization, meditation, yoga, nutritional supplements, and vitamins. If you decide to try these therapies, discuss the side effects and data on their value with your doctors. Also be aware that these therapies may be expensive and most are not paid for by health insurance.

## **Living with Cancer**

Concerns and fears about breast cancer are likely to stay with you. A new ache or pain, a medical test, or the anniversary of your diagnosis may unexpectedly get you down or worried. These feelings are part of being a cancer survivor. But the emotions will be fewer and farther between as you return to your regular activities.