

# Guilt

This information is about coping with feeling guilty about cancer. If you have cancer, it may mean you have to deal with difficult emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

People have different reactions and emotions at different times. You may have sudden changes in your mood and feelings. This is part of what many people go through when dealing with an illness. You may have these feelings at any time after your cancer diagnosis.

You may feel guilty or blame yourself for the cancer. You may want to find reasons for why it has happened to you. Most of the time, it is impossible to know exactly what causes a cancer. Over time, a combination of different risk factors may cause a cancer. Doctors do not fully understand all these factors yet. Try to focus on looking after yourself and getting the help and support you need.

## Tips for coping with guilt

- Ask your doctor or nurse as many questions as you like about the cancer. This may help to put your mind at rest.
- If you can, talk openly about your feelings with people you trust. Try to start a conversation and say how you feel. You may be surprised at how willing people are to listen and support you.
- Remember that your feelings are normal. Having someone listen to you without judging can reassure you.
- Talking can put things into perspective. It can be a big relief to say your feelings out loud.
- Do not feel you have to protect family and friends by always trying to be positive and look like you are doing well. The people close to you usually want to know how you are really feeling.
- Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. You may also feel able to discuss the cancer and how it affects you more honestly than you could with friends or family.
- Talking one-to-one with a trained counsellor can help you sort out your feelings. Your GP can give you details and make a referral.
- Although you would not have chosen it, having cancer may change you in positive ways. You may think again about what is important to you and focus on your relationships with family, friends or a partner. Or you may decide to do things you have always wanted to do.
- Doing something new can help distract and relax you. Some hobbies help you express your feelings, or you may decide to be more active.
- Many people find making a positive change like eating well helps give them back a sense of control. It can also help you feel that you are doing the best for your health.

**Local resources:**

Resource	Contact details

**National resources:**

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)</li> <li>• UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)</li> <li>• Mind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.bacp.co.uk">www.bacp.co.uk</a> Tel 0145 588 3300</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk">www.psychotherapy.org.uk</a> Tel 0207 014 9955</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a> Tel 0300 123 3393</li> </ul>

**Further information**

[www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions)

[www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups)

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk)

- How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer
- Your feelings after cancer treatment
- Talking about cancer

**More information and support**

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](http://macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.