

Regret about the past

This information is about coping with regret. Some people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer. They may worry there are things they should or should not have done. This is normal. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

You may feel guilty or blame yourself for the cancer. You may want to find reasons why it 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.

Some people look back on their life and wish they had done things differently, such as spend more time with their families. You may have different reactions and emotions at different times. This is part of what many people go through when dealing with an illness. Try to focus on looking after yourself and getting the help and support you need.

Coping with regret about the past

- Ask your doctor or nurse any questions you have 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.
- Talking puts things into perspective. It can be a big relief to say your feelings out loud.
- Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. You may find it is easier to talk with people who are going through the same thing. You can be honest about your feelings about the cancer and how it affects you.
- 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.
- Think 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, such as painting or playing music. You may also 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"> • British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) • UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) • Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.bacp.co.uk Tel 0145 588 3300 • www.psychotherapy.org.uk Tel 0207 014 9955 • www.mind.org.uk Tel 0300 123 3393

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions

www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on 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

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 or call our support line.