

Unable to express your feelings

This information is about not being able to talk about or show your feelings. If you have cancer, it may mean you have to deal with things that frighten and challenge you. Sometimes you can feel overwhelmed by your emotions. They can start to affect your everyday life.

Many people used to think cancer should not be talked about. But things have changed and now talking about cancer is widely accepted. Talking about cancer can still be hard.

At first, talking about it might make it feel very real. You might be afraid that talking will make you lose control of your feelings. You might also feel embarrassed or self-conscious talking about your health.

Sometimes people do not want to talk about their feelings in case it upsets others. But it is okay to be sad or upset. This is a natural reaction when you are coping with cancer. Not talking about the cancer at all can cause problems after a while. It may become hard to make decisions about treatment or about work. This can delay the start of treatment and cause problems with your finances and relationships.

Tips to help you express your feelings

- Do not feel there is a 'right' way to talk about cancer. It can be hard. You do not need to put any pressure on yourself to have the perfect conversation.
- If you do not feel ready to talk, you could practice what to say when people ask how you are. For example, you could say, 'Thank you for asking how I am'. 'I'll let you know when I feel ready to talk.'
- Talking to someone about how you feel can help you cope with your emotions. It is often the first step in helping you feel better.
- 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.
- 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. Then they can support you.
- It may be easier to talk with someone you do not know. You may feel less pressure to behave a certain way. You may also feel safe knowing they will not share the conversation. If you feel this way, there are different groups, organisations and healthcare professionals that can help you.
- Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. You may feel able to discuss the cancer and how it affects you more honestly than you could with friends or family. You do not have to talk about anything you do not want to. It can take a few visits before you feel comfortable enough to talk about personal things.
- 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.

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 01455 883300 • www.psychotherapy.org.uk Tel 020 7014 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.