

# 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.

You may feel guilty that the cancer will affect other people in your life. You may worry that they will find it difficult to cope. Try to tell them how this makes you feel. It may help you, your family and friends to talk openly about how you are feeling.

## Tips for coping with guilt

- Ask your cancer team as many questions as you like about the cancer. This may help to put your mind at ease.
- If you can, [talk openly about your feelings](#) with people you trust. You may feel more supported and less anxious. Knowing someone else understands and cares can reassure you that you are not alone.
- Talking can help you understand your feelings. When you keep everything inside, your thoughts often feel confusing. Talking can make your thoughts clearer.
- 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 work through 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 more 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 changes like [eating well and being physically active](#) can help them take control of their health and well-being.

## Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on [orders.macmillan.org.uk](https://orders.macmillan.org.uk) such as:

- MAC11593 [How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer](#)
- MAC12517 [Your feelings after cancer treatment](#)
- MAC11646 [Talking about cancer](#)
- MAC17229\_ER [Talking about cancer and your feelings](#) – Easy read

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line on **0808 808 00 00**.

## Further Macmillan 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](https://macmillan.org.uk) where you can [chat online](#) to one of our team.

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

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#). Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

## Other useful contact details

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) – visit [www.bacp.co.uk](https://www.bacp.co.uk)
- Mental Health Foundation – visit [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
- Mind – visit [www.mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk) or call **0300 123 3393**

## Notes and questions

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