

# 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' or '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.

## 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 [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) to [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.

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 or visits 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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