



IF YOU HAVE JUST RECEIVED A DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER

Being told that you have cancer generally puts people in a state of shock. Everything you have taken for granted is suddenly placed in question. Your plans for the next day and the next year are now uncertain. You don't know where to turn next. Here are some tips to help you get through this very difficult time.

1 Feeling shocked is a normal reaction to being told you have cancer. You have just received overwhelming news. As with any other unexpected bad news, it is normal to find yourself in a state of shock. Don't expect yourself to be operating at full capacity.

2 Don't be surprised if you have difficulty thinking clearly. Not being able to think clearly is part of being in shock. You are not going crazy. Your ability to think clearly will return. Your mind is simply trying to cope with overwhelming news.

3 You may be in a state of disbelief. Don't be surprised if your mind begins to play games with you. One minute you may be thinking that this is just a bad dream. The next you may be in a state of grief. These kinds of alternating thoughts are completely normal.

4 This is not your fault. When people receive a cancer diagnosis, they often feel that they are to blame. It is normal to try to figure out why you got cancer. For the vast majority of people who develop cancer, however, there is no clear reason. It is not because of something you did or did not do.

5 What if you are a smoker and you develop lung cancer? Although there is a clear connection between smoking and lung cancer, try not to blame yourself. Whether due to the need to have something in your mouth, out of habit, or because

of an addiction to tobacco, you smoked for a reason. You did the best you could in your life. Please try to let go of the feeling that this was your fault. You need to focus on your strengths as a person. You are going through enough as it is.

6 Try not to torment yourself with blame. We all like to think that we are in control of our destiny and of our health. Many people believe that if they eat the right foods and exercise regularly, they will be protected against cancer or other serious diseases. The sad fact is that getting cancer is random. You can lead a perfect life and get cancer. You can be a heavy smoker and not get cancer. You are going through enough as it is. You don't need blame on top of everything else.

7 There is nothing shameful about having cancer. Gone are the days when it was believed that having cancer was something to be ashamed of. Approximately three to four thousand Americans are diagnosed with cancer every day and over ten million Americans are already living with cancer. Cancer is not the rare disease we once thought it was. It is just another serious disease. There is nothing shameful about having cancer.

8 Are there people in your life who try to make you feel that you are to blame? If people try to make you feel at fault for getting cancer, tell them to read this booklet. People have all kinds of ideas that are just plain wrong about why someone gets cancer. There is no reason for anyone to make you feel guilty about your having developed cancer.

9 Start making a list of questions. Your mind is likely to be swirling with thoughts and questions. The more questions you can write down, the more easily you will be able to get the answers you need.