

Coping With Post-Traumatic Stress After a Cancer Diagnosis

Both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrate that most cancer survivors experience post-traumatic growth, which is described as the personal growth that comes from experiencing a stressful, traumatic event. Post-traumatic growth is not necessarily a consequence of a traumatic event and to experience post-traumatic growth, survivors need to cultivate these feelings through personal development. Post-traumatic growth is being more appreciated as an approach to improve a survivor's mental well-being and recovery. Components of post-traumatic growth include:



RELATING TO OTHERS

Survivors find that their cancer diagnosis helped them prioritize and improve relationships and build stronger connections with those who are important to them. These experiences are attributed to increased willingness to express feelings, understand complex emotions, and better empathize with those struggling with similar challenges.



NEW POSSIBILITIES

Often described as a completely new lifestyle after cancer diagnosis, survivors may re-evaluate their career or life path and choose to spend more time with family and friends. Change of lifestyle can often lead to healthier behaviors such as smoking cessation, engaging in a healthful diet, and exercising.



PERSONAL STRENGTH

Living with and beyond a cancer diagnosis presents survivors with an immense challenge. While enduring such a difficult time, survivors may experience a belief that if they are able to defeat cancer, they can possibly manage any future challenge. This can prompt positive attitudes during times of stress or anxiety.



NEW APPRECIATION OF LIFE

Reevaluation of what it means to be in good health leads many survivors to describe feelings of appreciation of good health, a second chance at life, appreciation of the beauty in the world, and gratefulness for the small victories in life. Others report having the perspective of living in the moment.



SPIRITUAL CHANGES

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can lead to finding or strengthening of spiritual beliefs and a deepening of faith. Spiritual growth has also been shown to help survivors with their recovery and the ability to manage day-to-day challenges.