

Keeping an Anxiety Diary

People with cancer understandably have many worries. Even if they learn that their cancer is not going to be fatal, they worry about how they will react to various treatments, they worry about missing work, and, of course, they worry about how their children and other loved ones will be affected. The list of things that cancer patients worry about may seem endless, although it is not the quantity of worries that bothers most them as much as it is the seriousness of their concerns.

No one is going to tell a person with cancer not to worry. However, there are some things you can do to keep your worrying under control so that it doesn't trigger other problems, such as depression or a long-lasting anxiety disorder that can cause even more stress in your life as well as additional physical problems.

Does This Sound Like You?

Marianne was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 52. The surgeon who was going to perform the lumpectomy told her that this was the "best kind of breast cancer to get," and that her treatment after the lumpectomy would likely be minimal. However, this didn't keep Marianne from worrying. She had teenagers who would be going to college in a few years. As a single mother, she worried about what would happen to them if she didn't survive the cancer. She worried about missing so much work that she'd be unable to keep up with the bills, and she doubted that she could keep saving for her children's college. Marianne had recently divorced, and she worried that having breast cancer would make it harder for her to date. She thought, "What man would want to get involved with someone who is sick?" Marianne wanted to talk about her feelings with her friends and her sister, but she usually felt they just wanted to say a few kind words and change the subject. So most of the time Marianne kept her thoughts to herself.

Try This

You might have heard about various "thought stopping" techniques that people try in order to control their worrying, like putting a rubber band around your wrist and snapping it every time you have an unwanted thought. These techniques have been around for many years, but they don't really work. In fact, many times the more you try to stop thinking about something, the more you can't help but think about it. Most people find that when they try to push a thought out of their minds, it just finds a way to creep back in. Professionals who specialize in anxiety disorders believe that you shouldn't fight to stop thinking about what worries you, but rather just experience these thoughts, understand that they don't have any power over you, and then let them go.

For many people who have cancer, keeping an anxiety diary is a good solution to deal with the inevitable worries that accompany this diagnosis. An anxiety diary can help you acknowledge your recurring and intrusive worries without dwelling on them unnecessarily.

Use the next page to write down your worries whenever you have them. You can make as many copies of this page as you like, or you can use the same format to keep an anxiety diary in a small notebook you can keep with you. It's up to you whether you want to share your diary with someone who is giving you support.

Write down what you are worrying about.

Rate your worries from 1 (They are not too bad) to 10 (They are really disturbing me): _____

Write down all your feelings.

Write down ways that your body is reacting to your worries.

Write down what you are worrying about.

Rate your worries from 1 (They are not too bad) to 10 (They are really disturbing me): _____

Write down all your feelings.

Write down ways that your body is reacting to your worries.

Write down what you are worrying about.

Rate your worries from 1 (They are not too bad) to 10 (They are really disturbing me): _____

Write down all your feelings.

Write down ways that your body is reacting to your worries.

Write down what you are worrying about.

Rate your worries from 1 (They are not too bad) to 10 (They are really disturbing me): _____

Write down all your feelings.

Write down ways that your body is reacting to your worries.
