Managing Stress and Distress

Distress—a mix of anxiety and depressive symptoms—may cause sleeplessness, lack of appetite, trouble concentrating and difficulty carrying on regular activities. Although some distress is normal, about a third of cancer patients experience significant distress. Only about 5 percent of those with cancer seek psychological help. While distress doesn’t affect the cancer itself, it affects how patients cope with their cancer and their ability to follow treatment recommendations.

TIPS TO MINIMIZE DISTRESS:

LOOK WITHIN:
Really get in touch with your inner spirit and who you were as a person before your cancer diagnosis. Take deep breaths and practice other relaxation techniques, such as journaling, meditation, yoga, prayer, massage or Tai Chi.

REACH OUT:
Connect with loved ones who care about and uplift you. Try to be as open and honest with them as you can. These could include family, friends, clergy, pastor, church members, co-workers or neighbors/community members. Also take advantage of your navigation team that was created to support you (Social Worker/Nurse Navigator and other healthcare staff).

REFLECT:
Many people say “leave the past behind you,” but it is good for the soul to reflect on the POSITIVE memories from your past. These memories could include accomplishments, vacations, adventures and good times spent with loved ones. You can reminisce alone or with the loved ones you share these wonderful memories with.

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