

Managing the Emotional Impact of a Metastatic Breast Cancer Diagnosis

The stress of a cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming for patients, families and caregivers. Mental health can often take a back seat when a person is prioritizing their physical health, but managing mental health is important and may even have an impact on survivorship. Studies have shown that a decrease in symptoms of depression was associated with longer survival in patients with metastatic breast cancer (MBC).

Many people with a cancer diagnosis experience feelings of distress.

- One in three people with cancer experience mental or emotional distress. It is most common (42%) in breast cancer patients.
- Up to 25% of cancer survivors experience symptoms of depression and up to 45% experience anxiety.
- One study found that only 40% of cancer survivors reported that their medical teams discussed the impact cancer could have on their relationships or emotional well-being and that a major barrier to getting support was lack of knowledge about resources.
- Research shows that anxiety and distress are more common in long-term cancer survivors than in their healthy peers with no history of cancer.



"Your community and loved ones can be valuable sources of support and light in your metastatic breast cancer experience." – Linda, living with MBC since 2006

Tips to manage the emotional impact of cancer for yourself or a loved one.

Each person's coping strategy is unique so it's important to find what works for you. Here are some tips for care:

Capture your experiences and feelings. Keep a journal to write down emotions and organize thoughts, record feelings in a video, or through music, photography, drawing or painting.

Accept help from friends and family. Ask for and accept help. Friends and family can be sources of support and help lighten the load with daily tasks. Letting them take the kids to school, pick up groceries or help out with other household chores can have a meaningful impact on emotional stress.

Seek out individual or group support. In-person or virtual support groups offer a space to connect with others experiencing something similar. Local advocacy groups can be a great resource to find group or individual therapy to cope with feelings that accompany a cancer diagnosis.

Be open with your healthcare providers and healthcare team. Have an honest, open dialogue with your healthcare team when making care decisions.

Emotional health is important at every stage of a cancer diagnosis and treatment journey, and there are a number of resources available to help. Many of Beyond Pink's community partners have mental health education resources available for patients and caregivers.

For a list of community partners, visit LifeBeyondPink.com.