Article Series Mental Health

Managing “Scanxiety” After Treatment

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For cancer survivors, the end of treatment marks a major milestone and usually comes with a sense of relief. It’s a time for hope and new beginnings.

But there may also be fear and anxiety. Regular check-ups, bloodwork, and imaging scans often become part of life, and there can be worries and stress about being or staying in remission.

This unique kind of anxiety is often known as scan-associated anxiety or “scanxiety,” which refers to worries leading up to scans and fear of a cancer recurrence.

These concerns are common, but they don’t have to become overwhelming. Here are some **Microsteps** you can take to help you manage your stress and stay calm as you keep track of your health after treatment ends.

Pausing for a few minutes before an appointment or scan for slow deep breathing or meditation. Practices like meditation, deep breathing, or simply focusing on the present moment may help quieten racing thoughts and bring a sense of calm before appointments or test results. Consider building a meditation practice into your daily routine.

Watching a funny television show before or after an appointment. Slowing down for a moment of laughter can support you in staying present and calm. Listening to or watching comedy may help lower your stress.

Planning an enjoyable activity with a friend after each appointment.

Schedule a walk, or perhaps a coffee with a friend, after your scan to give yourself a moment of connection and something positive to look forward to.

Tracking how you are feeling in a journal, app or tracking tool.

Writing down or tracking how you are feeling may provide comfort, and help you feel more in control of your care. It can also be helpful to prepare questions in advance of your appointments.

Arranging for a friend or family member to accompany you to check-ups and scans.

Knowing that someone who cares about you will be in the waiting room can be comforting and help you stay calm.

Joining a cancer support group or scheduling an appointment with a therapist.

Participating in an in-person or online community can be a helpful way to share your feelings and emotions while hearing from others who are going through similar experiences. You can offer your own suggestions and tips to others too. If you experience ongoing anxiety, consider seeing a therapist.

Reaching out to a faith-based community if you have a spiritual practice.

Prayer or connecting with a religious or spiritual community may provide comfort and reassurance, as you move on with life as a cancer survivor, helping you deal with emotional upset and worries.

Moving your body through an activity you enjoy, like taking a relaxing walk in nature.

Whether it’s going for a walk in nature or on a bike ride, or dancing or gardening, exercising can reduce stress and may improve your mood. If you’re after social connection, consider planning exercise with a friend.

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