

THIS IS **LIVING WITH CANCER**™

Discovering new ways to cope

We likely have all felt stressed, anxious or angry at some point in our lives. And we may have our own strategies for managing feelings. Some may be healthy, and some may be unhealthy.

This guide was created to help you **build on the healthy coping strategies** you're already using and **discover new tools** that you can use when you're experiencing difficult emotions.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR USING THIS GUIDE:

- **Take your time**
- **Reflect on the activities**
- **Share the activities with your loved ones**



GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS

When you see this icon, it means it's time for you to grab your pen and dive into an activity.

Write your answers, draw your answers—make it your own.

FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Each strategy will guide you to choose the answers that best fit your individual needs. **It's OK if some strategies work better for you than others**—it's all about supporting you and your loved ones. Keep in mind that you can go through this guide anytime you're dealing with difficult emotions, but **it's best to talk with your doctor** if emotions like stress, anxiety and depression are getting in the way of your daily life.



Create a ripple effect

Healthy coping skills can go beyond your ability to manage emotions. It's like a ripple effect. One positive change leads to more positive changes. So improved coping skills can affect other healthy habits.

HEALTHY COPING



Sleeping better



Healthy eating



Staying active



IF YOU CONTINUE BUILDING YOUR HEALTHY COPING SKILLS, WHAT ARE SOME OTHER AREAS OF YOUR LIFE THAT MIGHT IMPROVE?

YOU MIGHT ALREADY BE USING HEALTHY COPING SKILLS—AND THAT'S GREAT

But maybe there's an opportunity to strengthen your skills and learn some new things. While cancer may be one source of difficult emotions, life is complex. The strategies in this guide can be used in a variety of situations. So, let's dive in.

Find your spark

Before learning about healthy coping strategies, let's see what has worked for you in the past and **what you can do moving forward**.

DRAW ON PAST SUCCESS

Think back to a time when you successfully managed difficult emotions.



What were you doing that helped you cope? _____

Where were you? _____

What sights, smells or sounds did you experience? _____

Thinking about a strategy that has helped you in the past can be calming. You can build off those strategies moving forward.

RELAX IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

Bringing your full attention to an activity is another healthy coping strategy. It involves **sinking into the present moment to notice everything about it**—the physical sensations, sights, smells and sounds. You might draw, drink a cup of tea or take a warm bath.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

If you're unable to do one activity, **you can always try something else**. Now, let's bring it all together.



If I begin to feel _____, I will _____ to help manage

(eg, stressed)

(eg, take a walk, call Leslie)

my emotions. If I can't do that, I can _____.

(eg, practice yoga in my living room, write in my journal)

CONNECT WITH YOUR LOVED ONES

Ask the people in your life about the strategies they use to deal with difficult emotions. Try to brainstorm some activities that you can do together.

Make your space work for you

When you're dealing with difficult emotions, a calming environment can make a big difference. Let's look at some ways you can make the most out of your space.



IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A CALMING SPACE

Talk with the people in your household. Do they use it the same way as you? Or do they have a different place that brings them peace? Try to **come up with some activities that you can do together** to make the space even more relaxing.

If you live alone, **consider all the ways you could use this space**. You may want to invite a friend over to help you make the space even more relaxing.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A CALMING SPACE

Talk to the people you live with or, if you live alone, take some time to reflect. What's a good place to relax and work through emotions? It can be indoors or outdoors, big or small. **Consider the different elements of your space**, like the lighting, furniture and noise.

TIPS FOR SHARING YOUR SPACE

- Talk with the people in your home about how to respect your space
- Discuss what cues will let everyone know that you need some time alone
- Agree on how to keep the space clean and inviting
- Call a friend from your space, whether you live alone or with others

Choose your contacts

Cancer comes with challenges, but it doesn't have to be a solo mission.

Friends and family members are excellent support resources who can help in times of need. See how your loved ones can help, and determine the best people to turn to.

WE ALL NEED SOMEBODY TO LEAN ON

Discussing your feelings with the people in your life can help them better understand your experience. These conversations can help you work through your feelings, rethink the problems you're dealing with and feel a greater sense of support.

WHO CAN YOU LEAN ON?

Think of someone close to you who has helped you deal with difficult emotions in the past. This person might be a spouse, a close friend or anyone else you can rely on. Write down their contact information and how they have helped you in the past.



CONTACT 1

Name: _____

How they have helped: _____

How I can reach them: _____

Consider a challenge you might have to deal with in the future. Reflect on who could help you deal with that challenge. Write down their contact information and how they can help you moving forward.



CONTACT 2

Name: _____

How they can help: _____

How I can reach them: _____

TALK WITH THE PEOPLE WHO SUPPORT YOU

Discuss what kind of support you need from one another.

Appreciate the good

You appreciate your loved ones offering practical support, like help with grocery shopping. There are probably other things you value in your loved ones, like their dedication, honesty, courage or kindness. Take some time to reflect on the positive traits of the people in your life. **Expressing your appreciation is one way to support the people you care about.** Let's try it.

WHAT ARE YOU THANKFUL FOR?

Think about the contacts you chose on **page 5**. What are some traits that you value in each person? Use the space below to write down 2–3 specific traits that you're grateful for. You can thank them for past support or for the traits that make them a potential support resource in the future.



CONTACT 1

(eg, I appreciate Karl's honesty because it keeps me grounded)



CONTACT 2

(eg, I appreciate Mary because she's optimistic)



THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING

Maybe what you are grateful for goes beyond the people in your life. Use this space to write about anything you value and why you are thankful.

(eg, I am grateful for having a garden I can work in to help me relax)

HOW WILL YOU GIVE THANKS?

You might call your loved ones on the phone or thank them in person. And a handwritten note never goes out of style.

Points to remember

You can't avoid difficult emotions, but you can manage them. Throughout this guide, **you've learned about some healthy ways to cope**. Let's look at some of the highlights.

<i>Healthy coping can look different for each person</i>	page 1
<i>Healthy coping skills can have a ripple effect on other areas of your life</i>	page 2
<i>Reflecting on your past success is a healthy way to understand what works well for you</i>	page 3
<i>You can bring your full attention to any activity to help lessen stress</i>	page 3
<i>Healthy coping isn't just about what you do, but where you do it</i>	page 4
<i>Your loved ones can help you work through your feelings and solve problems</i>	page 5
<i>Showing appreciation for your loved ones helps you support them in return</i>	page 6

MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY MOMENT

You can use what you've learned in this guide anytime you're dealing with difficult emotions. Keep in mind that healthy coping skills can help, but it's best to talk with your doctor if emotions like stress, anxiety and depression are getting in the way of your daily life.