

## 46. Loss of Meaning or Purpose of Life

Many people, when diagnosed with cancer, can feel as though the future has been taken away and that many of the things that had meant a lot to them in the past now have little meaning or purpose. No matter what prognosis has been given, cancer forces people to examine the possibility that they may not live as long as they had once assumed. In fact, many people with cancer react to their diagnosis by preparing for the possibility of their death. Furthermore, the side effects of cancer treatments and sometimes effects of the illness itself severely challenge people's ability to stay involved with activities that would normally have motivated them in the past. It can be difficult to plan things for the future when one feels tied down by pain, nausea, weakness and fatigue, not to mention hospital appointments. Yet having a sense of purpose and direction are vitally important to our mood and sense of well-being.

### How can I manage these feelings?

- It can take considerable time to adjust to a diagnosis of cancer, particularly if your illness and its treatment are limiting what you feel you can do. You are certainly not alone in feeling this way and talking to others who have some understanding of how you feel, such as a support group, can be helpful.
- It is vitally important to stay involved with activities that provide you with a sense of achievement and/or pleasure (pleasant things to look forward to). Although there may be some things you are no longer able to do, there will be many other activities that you can still do successfully. For example, being a supportive parent or friend can be achieved with a smile and a thoughtful listening ear.
- Think about things you have always enjoyed doing or been good at; which of these can you perhaps still do? On the other hand it may be time to try something new. In the end it doesn't matter how good we are at something (e.g. art, music, crafts), the important thing is that we enjoy the experience of doing it. Even achieving a little bit of housework (peeling the potatoes!), while not glamorous, can lead to a sense of satisfaction that one has achieved something and made a contribution.
- Setting yourself some sensible goals for each day can be very helpful – even something as simple as having a chat with a friend or family member, taking some exercise, doing something pleasurable like having a bath
- You might find it helpful to discuss your feelings with a counsellor. Several counselling services are available offering free, confidential sessions, to anyone affected by a cancer diagnosis. See local and national resources.
- If you feel entirely hopeless about the future it is very important you speak to a healthcare professional like your doctor or nurse. Depending on what you are feeling, they may be able to refer to a clinical psychologist or a hospital chaplain.

Living With and Beyond Cancer Information Sheet

# 46. Loss of Meaning or purpose - Resources/Information

## Local Resources:

<p>Cancer Care Counselling Service The Fern Centre North Devon District Hospital Raleigh Park Barnstaple</p>	<p>Jess French, Lead Macmillan Cancer Care Counsellor Tel: 01271 334472 (ext. 5672) Email: <a href="mailto:ndht.cancercarecounselling@nhs.net">ndht.cancercarecounselling@nhs.net</a> Web: <a href="https://overandabove.org.uk/fern-centre/">https://overandabove.org.uk/fern-centre/</a></p>
<p>Hospital Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Chapel, Level 1 NDDH There is also a small courtyard garden that can be accessed via the chapel. There is a prayer room for groups. Volunteers visit each ward including Seamoor Unit, during the week and chaplains are available from 8.00-4.00pm and on Sunday mornings.</p>	<p>Whether a patient, or relative, the chaplaincy team are here to support you. They focus on the wellbeing of the whole person and seek to engage with people of all faiths or none, respecting your uniqueness, integrity and confidentiality. Please ask the ward staff if you would like to see a chaplain or a chaplaincy visitor, or you can let them know by telephoning 01271 322362 and leaving a message for the team.</p>
<p>Talkworks <a href="http://talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk">talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk</a> Call 0300 555 3344</p>	<p>Talk through your worries and anxieties with a team of professional counsellors</p>

## National Resources:

<p><b>NHS 111</b></p>	<p>Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.</p>
<p><b>NHS Website</b></p>	<p>Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health &amp; wellbeing.</p>
<p><b>Macmillan Cancer Support Line</b> <a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk">www.macmillan.org.uk</a> Call 0808 808 00 00 — Monday – Friday 9am—8pm</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. Please note that calls to this number are not free when made from outside the UK. If you are calling from outside of the UK call on <b>+44 207 091 2230</b></p>
<p><a href="#">Macmillan on-line Community</a></p>	<p>Online support— to share experiences or vent your emotions find others who understand—join today!</p>
<p><b>Marie Curie Support Line</b> — Living with a terminal illness and looking for support <a href="http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support">www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support</a></p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. The Support Line is open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 11am – 5pm Saturday</p>

## Other Resources :

<p><b>Macmillan Booklets:</b></p>	<p>Cancer and relationships— <b>MAC17643_E01_N</b></p>
	<p>Managing the symptoms of cancer <b>MAC11671</b></p>
	<p>How are you feeling? PDF— <b>MAC11593_E05_N</b></p>
	<p>Talking about Cancer</p>