How to Cope With Anger During Cancer

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Coping With Cancer and Anger

Since your cancer diagnosis, you have been feeling sadness, regret, guilt, confusion, and surprise. These feelings swirl your mind as you try to make sense of your situation. Anxiety, worry, and fear are constants as you wonder what toll treatment will take on you and your family. Have you felt angry?

Some recent studies suggest a link between repressed or suppressed anger and cancer diagnosis as well as cancer prognosis.

Repression moves feelings, in this case anger, to the unconscious. In repression, you are not even aware of the feelings because the process is all automatic and unconscious. In suppression, you have the awareness of the feeling but actively work to push it out of consciousness.

Either situation is undesirable as these feelings negatively contribute to physical and emotional health.

Dealing With Cancer and Anger

Anger is usually seen as a stereotypically male emotion but that does not mean that women should avoid it. When it comes to cancer, anger is not the enemy; repression and suppression are. Follow these tips to effectively express anger and feel better. Here's how:

- **Accept and acknowledge.** Admitting to yourself that you have the right to be angry is the first step. Cancer is a terrible diagnosis but cancer seems to target who you are as a woman. Cancer is attempting to change your job, your relationships and your self-image. Visualize cancer being an object or a person you detest. Putting an image with the word provides separation.
- **Track your anger.** At various times of the day, check in with yourself. Ask yourself how you are feeling and what thoughts are going through your mind. Begin to expand your emotional vocabulary to include feelings of anger, rage, fury, annoyance and frustration. After you identify the feeling, list what specifics triggered that feeling.
- **Engage supports.** Some people have lived many years with repressed feelings of anger. The notion of "uncorking the bottle" can be confusing and challenging. Do not regard this as something you must do alone. Supports may be better at identifying your anger than you are. Ask for signs that you are unaware of.

Expressing Your Anger

Now comes the fun part. Acknowledging and tracking is half of the equation. Finding appropriate ways to release the anger is the second. Here's how:

- **Hit** – Maybe an investment in a punching bag or kickboxing classes is beneficial for you.Balloons are great

options as they are readily available and clean up easily. Hitting something can inspire a feeling of empowerment against cancer.

- **Yell** – Yelling at people is usually not productive but yelling at cancer might be. Yell at the wall or into a pillow. Say everything and anything you need or want to say. Hearing the words come out of your mouth provides a sense of relief.
- **Break** – Visit a local thrift store or yard sale to find unwanted dishes, records, vases or anything else that looks like fun to break. Store them in a dedicated place in your home and when you feel anger building, seek them out. Of course, safety is important. Think about wearing safety glasses and gloves. Break the items in a spot where there is no risk of injury to others. Visualize cancer-shattering like an old plate.

Conclusion

Too much anger is bad but it seems that too little anger might be worse. If anger is not a part of your life take the steps above to add balance. The process will seem uncomfortable but the outcome will be worth it.