Coping With Liver Cancer: Don’t Forget to Take Care of Yourself

by ERIC PATTERSON

Coping With Liver Cancer

Cancer has a way of taking a lot from your life. As the condition progresses, it can rob you of your physical health. It can steal away your mental health. It can even deplete your social and spiritual health.

Cancer accomplishes all of these negatives by drastically changing you, your routine, and your interactions. The condition leads towards you feeling poorly, and the treatments seem to be hurting more than they are helping.

Appointments with the doctors and trips to the pharmacy take up plenty of time that you would usually be spending with your family and friends. You are too sick to attend events, and your constant stress is influencing your emotions. At this point, it feels like cancer is winning.

There might be an answer, though. If you are looking for ways to improve all of these aspects of your life, changing your level of self-care could be the solution you seek. By engaging in activities and processes that put the focus on taking care of yourself, you can offset the unwanted influence of liver cancer.

Self-care cannot cure cancer, but it can add a sense of quality to your life.

What Is Self-Care?

Luckily, the concept of self-care is as simple as it sounds. Anything and everything you do to take care of yourself counts as self-care.

This includes very simple behaviors like eating and cleaning yourself, to sophisticated issues like using cognitive behavioral therapy techniques to shrink your stress and improve your wellbeing.

Self-care incorporates relaxing and pampering yourself when you need to, but these types of self-care are more passive. Passive self-care is valuable but less productive and impactful compared to active self-care. Types of passive self-care skills include:

- Taking a nap
- Watching a marathon of your favorite TV show
- Listening to music
- Scrolling through social media on your computer or phone
- Playing a video game

It most cases, passive self-care is positive and helpful. When taking to an extreme level, though, these actions and activities can stand in the way of active self-care.

For example, if you are binging on 13 hours of your beloved crime show, you will not have the desire to

accomplish active self-care skills. Because of this, passive self-care skills should be done only in moderation.

Finding the Desire

Before you can focus on the appropriate self-care skills, you need to find and foster the motivation to complete self-care skills.

Many people fresh off of a cancer diagnosis may experience some level of sadness, anger, and anxiety. You may feel hopeless and helpless to control any part of your life. It seems that cancer is taking over your life.

It is easy to see that this mindset puts you into a dangerous cycle. You feel hopeless and lose motivation, so things don't get better. Hopelessness and depression increase as the cycle repeats.

There is a way out of the cycle, though. It involves you seeing yourself as a powerful person that has control over their destiny. Acknowledge that your behaviors and thoughts can lead to improved feelings. When you can find hope, you can find motivation for self-care.

Finding the Best Self-Care Techniques for You

Many of the basic self-care techniques will apply to everyone. Whether you have a liver cancer diagnosis or not, you will feel better when you eat well, get plenty of quality sleep, and find ways to exercise that are within your abilities.

Cancer will impact these issues by making them more challenging to complete. That is why self-care focuses on flexibility and experimenting with new approaches to find success. The self-care of yesterday may not work today or tomorrow.

Next page: More coping with liver cancer techniques to try.

Finding the Best Self-Care Techniques for You

These basic techniques illustrate the biggest difference between passive and active self-care. Passive self-care is eating whatever is easy and available. Active self-care is choosing healthy foods and drinks that fuel your body in its battle against cancer.

Active self-care techniques are more complicated but much more rewarding.

The self-care tips related to diet, exercise, and sleep are examples of improving your physical health. Other options include:

- Pay attention to your liver cancer symptoms and track them for your doctors.
- Attend all of your appointments and treatments.
- Communicate your symptoms clearly and effectively to your treatment team.

Since cancer affects more than just your physical health, you need self-care techniques that target the other parts of your life. Consider these options for mental health:

- **Acknowledge the impact of cancer on your mental health.** Before any progress can be done, you must note the changes that came from the condition like sadness, worry, or anger.
- **Think about your condition.** Some people with cancer or other health conditions try to ignore their state as they hope the symptoms will simply disappear.
- **Change your thoughts.** Since hope is a centerpiece of self-care, prompt yourself to think more positive and hopeful things. It may feel uncomfortable or seem untrue at first, but in time, changing your thoughts will change your feelings.

- **Start therapy.** There is perhaps no better way to practice mental health self-care than talking to a therapist. She can help you learn new types of self-care and perfect the ones you already use.

Social self-care:

- Communicate your needs clearly to your family members.
- Engage friends in new activities and events when possible.
- For days when you aren't feeling well, employ social media to stay connected.
- Experiment with support groups for people with cancer or other medical conditions.

Spiritual self-care:

- Return to church; a medical diagnosis has a way of making people think about religion.
- Seek religious guidance from an informed support or religious official.
- If organized religion isn't for you, explore aspects of your unique spirituality you have not thought about previously.

You are a multifaceted, multidimensional person, and cancer will attack every part of you. By practicing self-care, you can do well to prevent and limit the harms that cancer causes.

Use passive self-care sparingly as your symptoms dictate. When feeling better, do all you can to care for yourself. Self-care equals hope, and hope equals self-care.