

Hope

What is hope?

Hope is the belief that a positive outcome lies ahead. Hope is a way of thinking, feeling and acting that may help you find ways to live with difficult situations. Many cancer survivors have faced difficult situations in the past and may continue to face challenges during post-treatment survivorship. This can make it tough to be hopeful. Even if some things about your future seem discouraging, you can choose how you will face these challenges.

You might find it easy to feel hopeful. You might never give hope much thought. Or you may think hope is important but aren't sure how to create hope in your life after cancer. Hoping is very personal and is different for every person.

Some people think hope and denial are the same thing, that to be hopeful, you have to pretend things are going well when they really aren't. Experts who have studied hope claim that while hope may help ease you of overwhelming doubts and fears, it is not denial. Hope is being honest with yourself about your situation in life while still looking forward to possible positive outcomes in your future. Survivors who are struggling with life after cancer may find that hope helps them remain positive during their survivorship.

What are different ways that survivors hope?

People hope for different things at different times in their lives. When you were first diagnosed with cancer, you probably hoped that your treatment would be successful and that your cancer would go into remission. You may have relied on hope to get you through the difficult days of treatment and the changes that came to your life.

Now that treatment is over, you have a new set of concerns about what life will be like after cancer and how you will deal with post-treatment changes. You can decide what role hope will play in helping you manage these changes and the uncertainty that can come with them. Hope can come to you in many ways.

You may find hope by talking with other people. You can work with your health care team to understand and make health care choices that will help you feel confident and hopeful about your future. Your family, friends, co-workers and others you know can also support you as you decide how to bring hope to your situation. Sharing your story with other survivors and learning about the challenges and joys they experience in their survivorship can be an important source of hope.

You may find hope by looking forward to planned events, like a child's graduation from high school or a gathering with friends. You may have work projects or hobbies that capture your attention and help you look to the future when they will be completed.

You may find hope through your spirituality or religion. Survivors using a spiritual or religious basis for hope may believe that a higher power is helping them through the ups and downs of their survivorship. You may find great help and comfort in talking with a spiritual leader or your clergy or by attending spiritual support groups.

You may use a more scientific or factual basis for hope. You may spend a lot of time looking for information about post-treatment cancer topics, getting additional opinions and scanning the Web for information.

Survivors usually combine many of these approaches to find hope. There is no right or wrong way to hope.

Does hope change over time?

Hope is flexible, and hope changes as your life changes. Only you will know the best way for you to hope. Sometimes others may tell you that your situation is hopeless. That can be difficult to hear and can make it more difficult for you to manage your current situation. At the same time, when others are telling you to be more honest about your situation, you might want to take some time to think about what is happening in your life.

If you realize that something you hoped for will definitely not happen, you might need to re-examine and refocus on other, more realistic hopes. You can't always change the outcome of a situation, but you can decide what part hope will play in helping you deal with that situation.

Hope may not be easy to find. The changes that come with cancer can sometimes be overwhelming and cause a great deal of uncertainty. Hope can help you move forward despite bad news and disappointments. Even if the challenges that you must deal with are large ones, hope can help you find the strength and courage to face them.

What are some suggestions for survivors who want to create more hope in their lives?

Below is a brief list. For more information, see Suggestions.

- Share your hopes with other people
- Write down your thoughts and feelings about hope in a journal
- Talk to other survivors about finding hope
- Talk to a therapist if trying to find hope causes depression, anxiety or overwhelms you in any way

Works Cited

Lance Armstrong Foundation Survivorship Topics
www.livestrong.org