

With early detection protocols for all kinds of cancer, more people are coping with a cancer diagnosis in their lives. This brings fear, uncertainty, anger and physical challenges related to diagnosis, treatment and the impact of the disease itself on the body. A diagnosis of cancer can be one of the biggest challenges for the mind: how to stay centered and positive, while fighting a serious diagnosis.

Become your own healer and advocate: I know a woman that was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She blogs about her treatment and has consumed information about her disease. She has posted about the genesis and treatment of her type of cancer and has taken full responsibility for learning about it. While this approach requires time and dedication, it allows you to be an advocate for yourself, without abdicating all the decisions to your treatment team. This can bring you a sense of control, in a situation where much seems out of your control.

Meditate and visualize: Meditation as a tool is known to decrease blood pressure, stress, anxiety and depression; all positive affects for someone with cancer. However, during meditation, one can use visualization techniques targeted towards the disease to relieve specific stress related to cancer. These techniques might include bringing your attention to the affected area and sending healing thoughts to that part of the body. Other images might include thoughts of “good” cells taking over “bad or cancer” cells.

Reach out: While it may be tempting to isolate yourself, reaching out and building connections with others is critical to maintaining a positive outlook and helping you build a support team. During those times when you are not feeling well enough to see friends in person, use the many electronic means to stay in touch. Find others that have been through your kind of diagnosis and learn what worked and did not work for them. Share your fears and refrain from “putting on a happy face.” Be honest and open to receiving love and support from others.

Use yoga as a tool: Yoga is a wonderful form of exercise for anyone managing cancer as it is for both the body and mind. All yoga poses can be modified to meet the physical capabilities of the practitioner and many poses can be modified to someone seated in a chair. As deep breathing is an essential aspect of yoga’s ability to stimulate the relaxation response, which calms the nervous system, any movement coupled with deep breathing will decrease stress and anxiety. To develop a modified practice, work with a yoga teacher one-on-one in few private sessions.

Have faith in the unknown: Depending on your background and personal belief system, you may or may not rely on traditional religion as a source of strength and faith during times of challenge. Regardless, look to develop a sense of faith in the unknown. This may require regular meditation, visualization, the use of mantras (repeated phrases that emphasize a particular feeling you wish to embrace), carrying a reminder token (beads, shells or anything meaningful from a healing perspective) or journaling about your fears.

Experience the scary emotions: Let yourself cry. Get out the frustration and anger by doing anything you can physically handle that is a physical release. Sit with your feelings and notice them and acknowledge how you feel out loud. No one expects you to be happy during this time and faking it will seem unnatural and take more energy than letting it go. Envision the scary emotion as a drop of dark blue ink. If you put that drop of ink in a small container of water (holding in the emotion), the water will turn dark blue. If you put the same drop of ink in a lake (giving the emotion space) the ink (difficult emotion) will dissolve.

To get started with a mindfulness practice, visit mindfulhub.com.

We wish you 20 minutes of mindfulness every day!

By contributing writer, Karen Fabian, Certified Baptiste Yoga teacher, founder,
www.barebonesyoga.com.

