

# The experience of family support among patients newly diagnosed with cancer

**Zeinab M Ibrahim**

Assiss. prof psychiatric / mental Health Nursing  
Faculty of nursing –MTI  
counsellor and Free therapist-NMHP

**Fatma M Ibrahim**

Assiss. prof psychiatric / mental Health Nursing  
Faculty of nursing- Ain Shams University




# Introduction

From initial diagnosis through treatment, the cancer trajectory is accompanied by many challenges. Patients report significant physical, psychological, and social problems such as anxiety, distress, and depression. During initial cancer diagnosis, patients may report feelings of helplessness, loneliness, uncertainty, and lack of resilience.

Family support is considered one of the main factors that help patients adjust to these challenges. Supportive family networks can assist patients in coping with a variety of psychological and emotional challenges, reducing anxiety and depression and providing company to counteract loneliness.



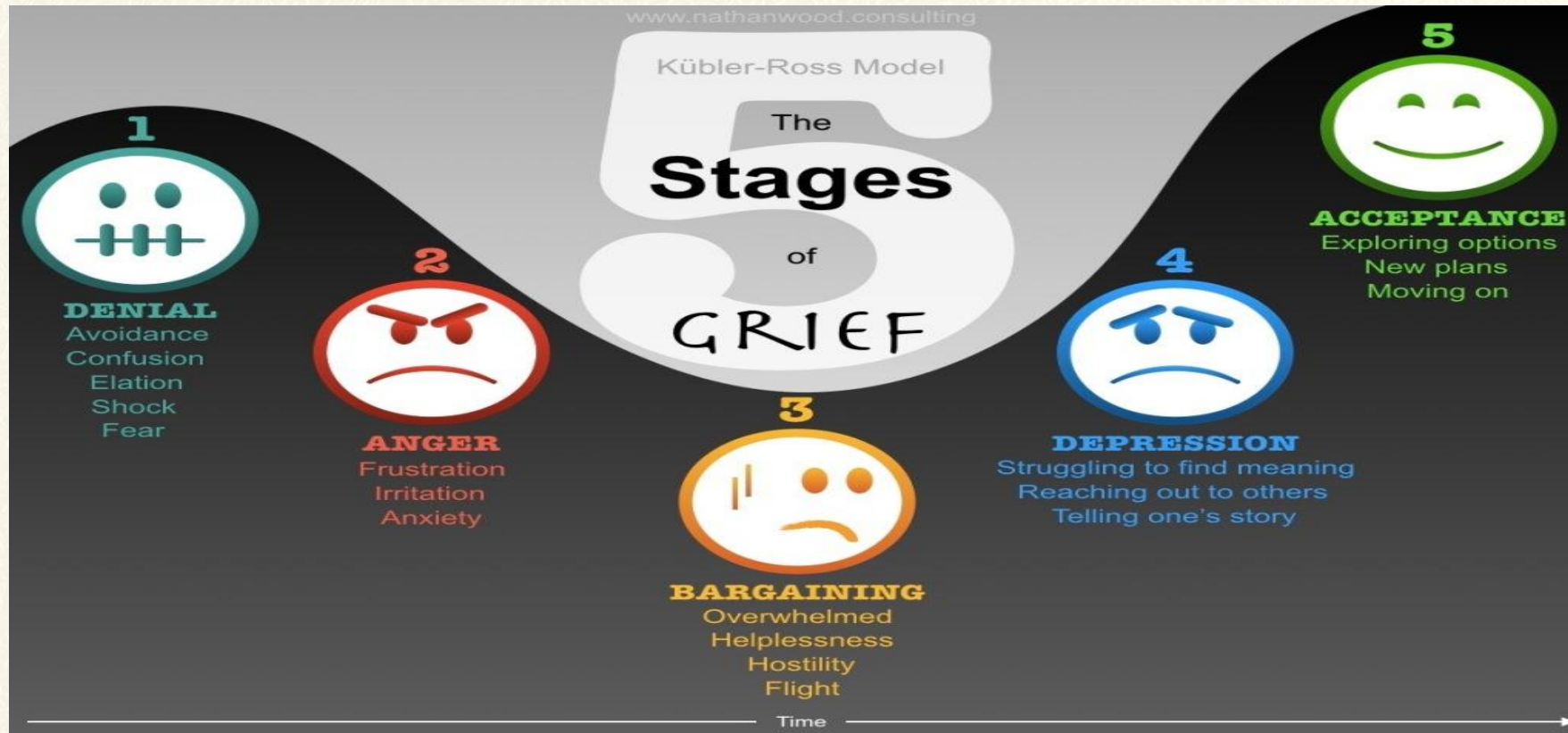


When a person has  
cancer, the whole family  
really suffers with her.

Ann Jillian

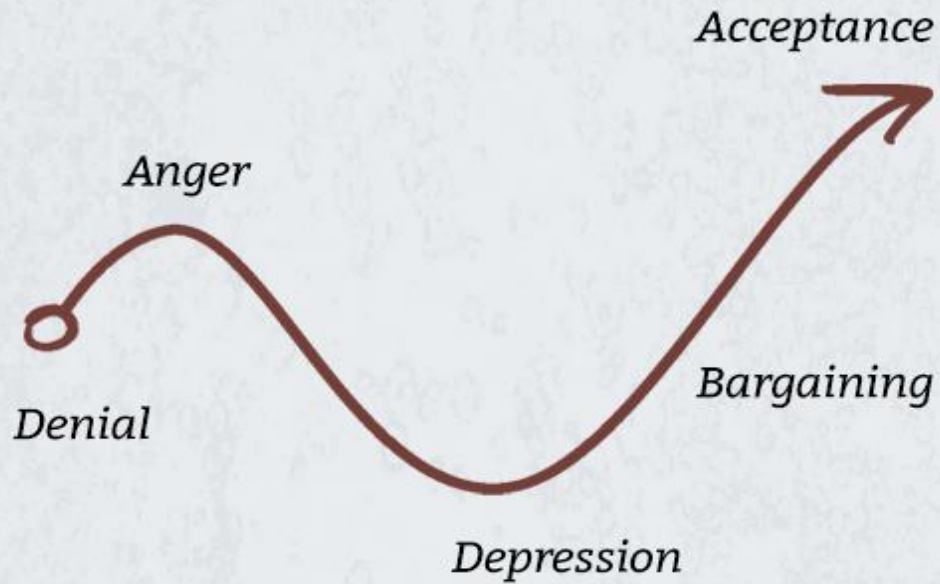
quote fancy

# The Kubler Ross Model Of Grief

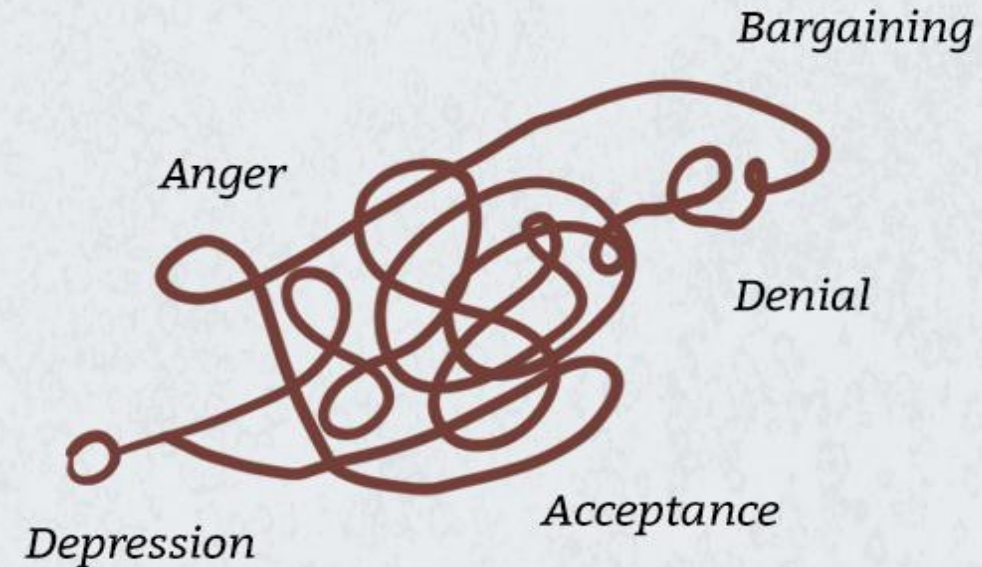


# Stages of Grief

The experience you expected:



The experience you got:

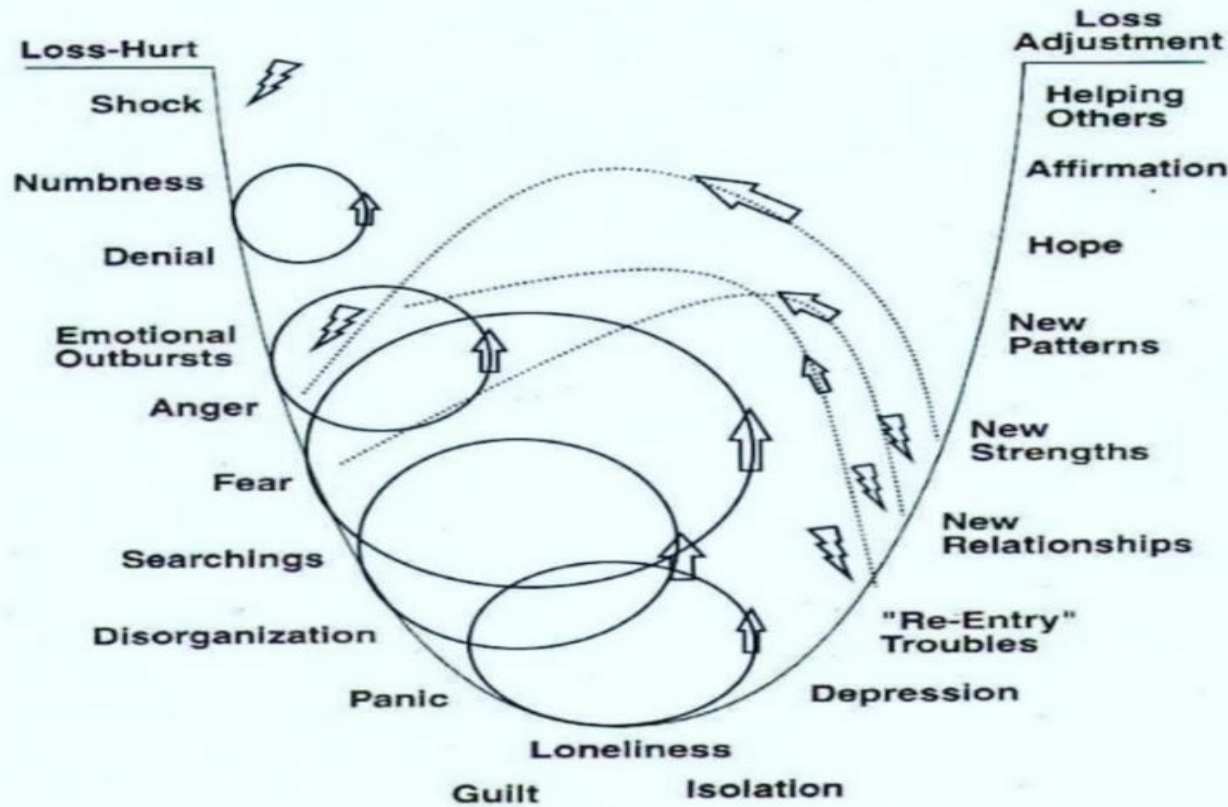


# Stages of Grief

Stage 1:  
Denial

Stage 2:  
Anger

Stage 3:  
Bargaining



Stage 5:  
Acceptance

Stage 4:  
Depression



## Balance factors availability

- Situational support utilization.
- Utilizing appropriate, adequate coping strategy or more constructive coping skills.
- Perceiving realistically the event.

**Absence of one or more balancing factors**



# Liaison Nurse (the missing team member)





# Direct the family or caregiver for



# Remember the core of distress tolerance



# IMPROVE The Moment DBT

**Distress Tolerance Skill**  
**I.M.P.R.O.V.E.**

Helps you to Improve The Moment, and make the situation easier to deal with when you can't escape



**I Imagery** - Visualize a relaxing place. What do you see, feel, hear, smell, and taste.

**M Meaning** - Find or make meaning from the difficult situation. What are you learning in this moment? Focus on the strength you will gain when you make it through.

**P Prayer** - Pray to something greater, and ask for strength to bear the pain.

**R Relaxation** - Do a relaxing activity to calm your brain and body.

**O One thing in the moment** - Focus your entire attention on just what you are doing right now.

**V Vacation** - Practice mindfulness, take a break, or take a brief mental vacation.

**E Encouragement** - Be your own coach. Remind yourself, "I CAN stand it," "It won't last forever," "I will make it out of this."

© 2024 MHA



# Common themes of family support among patients newly diagnosed with cancer

- The patients expressed gratitude that their families were compassionate, active listeners, and willing to help, which helped them make decisions related to cancer treatment and overcome their fears.
- family members is normally like a shield that could protect the patient from fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Furthermore, cancer gets them to be close to each other and united again to overcome the difficult times during cancer treatment
- Great family assistance and intimate relationships represent core values among the Muslim Arab community.



- Family reunion and connectedness between both the patients and their families shared the concern and the burden of confronting cancer challenges during the initial cancer diagnosis.
- Family union rather than the patient is the core value of the Arab societies during the experience of illness, which shapes the collaborative role of both the family and the patients to face cancer  
The experience of illness reinforces family relationships
- Family prescription of some traditional remedies to treat cancer. For example, a commonly used traditional therapy in Arab communities is the use of holy water (Zamzam), camel milk, and black seeds , which are believed to improve patients' immunity



## Recommendation

- Family as an important aspect in accepting their illness and helping them confront the fears and anxiety accompanied by a cancer diagnosis. Based on the results, Healthcare providers should consider family presence during the declaration of the diagnosis and the discussion of cancer treatment modalities
- It is recommended to encourage family participation in the care plans for newly diagnosed patients with cancer. The cultural and religious aspects of care need to be emphasized while discussing the care and treatment plans since Islamic culture fosters connectedness and relations with the family member suffering.



- Understanding the experiences of family support requires nurses to provide comprehensive, culturally sensitive support for both the patients and the family.
- The family-centered approach to care is an effective way to overcome cancer care obstacles and decrease the cancer burden during the initial cancer treatment



**From receiving a cancer diagnosis to undergoing treatment, the experience can be stressful for both the patient and family.**





Cancer often involves a **series of losses**, such as the loss of good health, temporary or permanent changes to appearance, not being able to work or do normal activities, changed finances, a loss of independence, and a shift in how the patients see themselves.

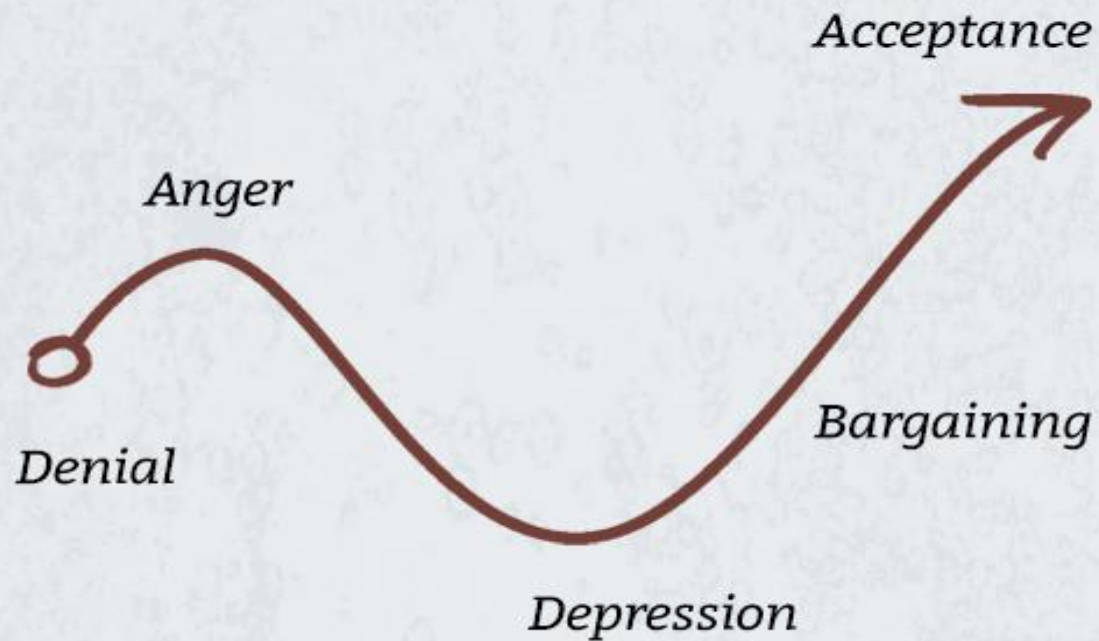


There is no right or wrong way to react to these changes,  
but it usually takes time to adjust.

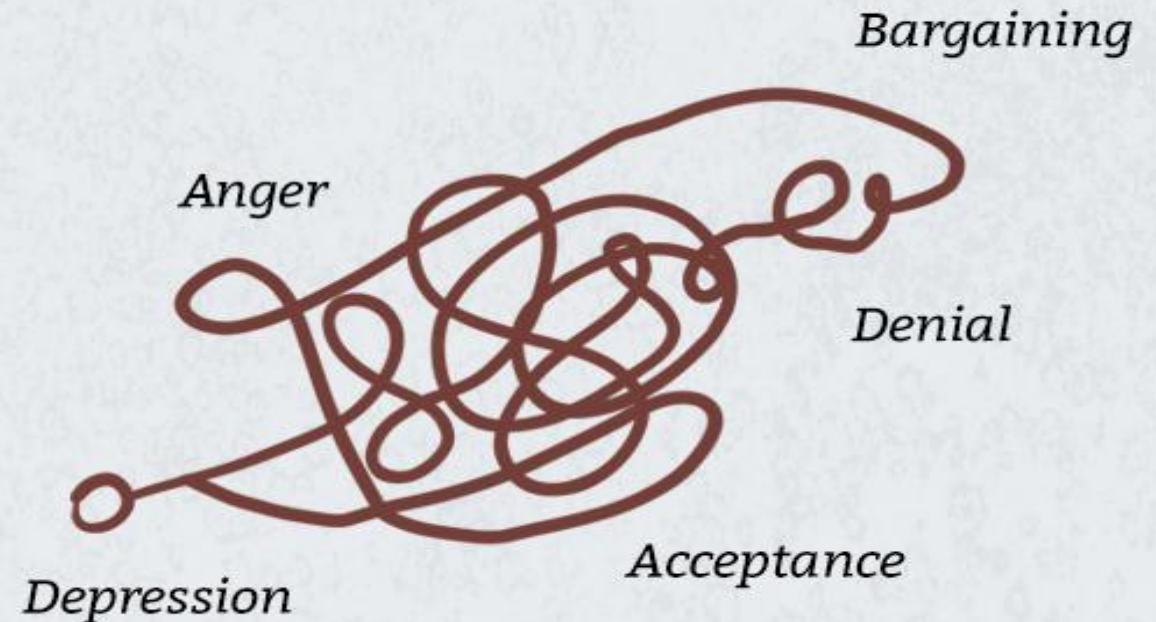


# Stages of Grief

The experience you expected:



The experience you got:



# Emotional rollercoaster during treatment

“Having cancer is like riding a roller coaster in the dark. You don’t know when the next turn is coming. You don’t know how long the next dip will last or how high the next high is. Sadly, you don’t even know how close to the end you are.”



# Emotional rollercoaster during treatment

Treatment is often associated with several physical **side effects**. As a result, one's **mental health may suffer** and make it difficult for patient to maintain their usual social calendar and relationships

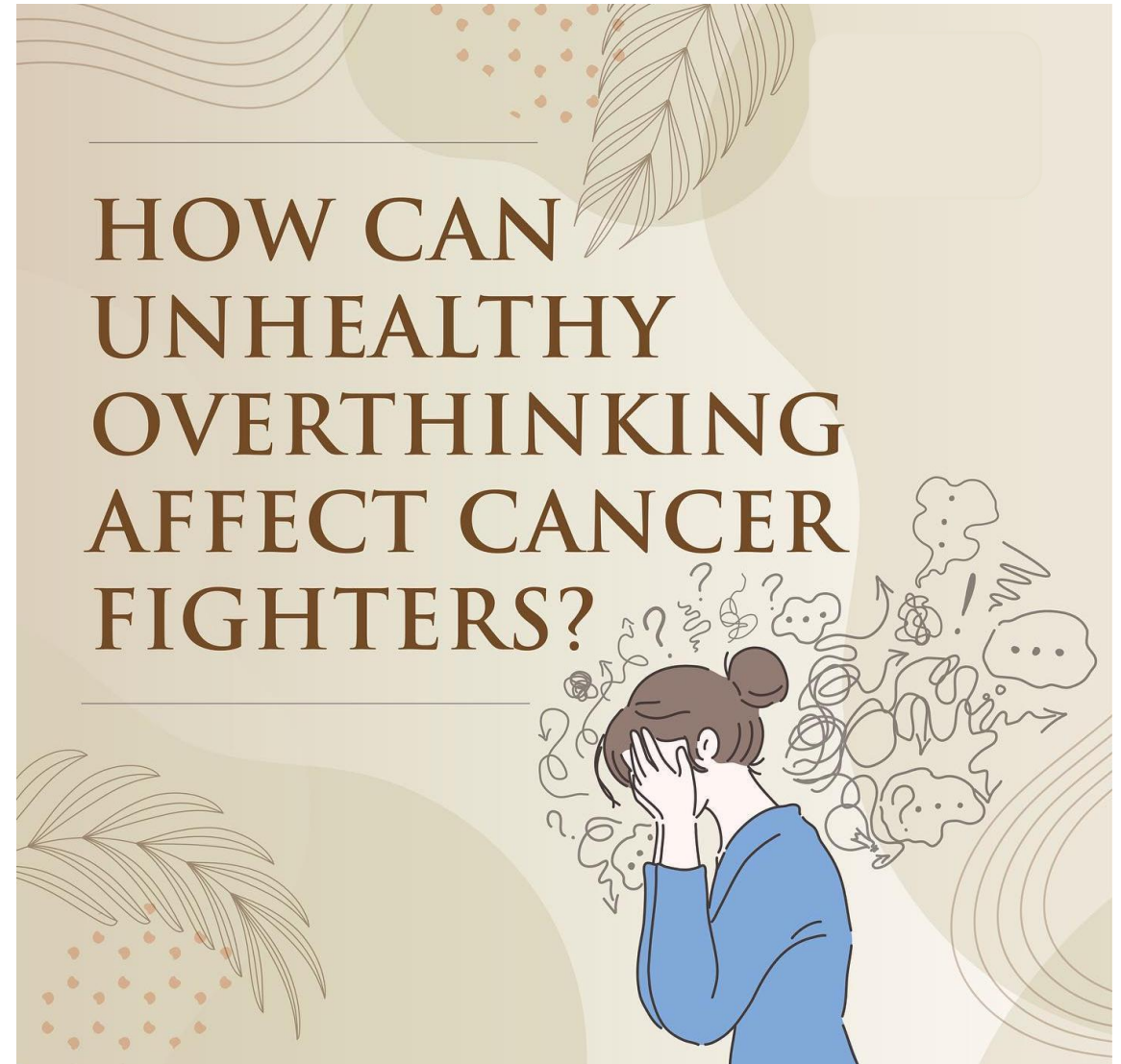


# Reaction to initial diagnosis

## Unhealthy thoughts

---

- I see no reason to try to fight cancer
- I just want to be left alone
- Nothing good can come from this
- I deserve this fate
- I don't want to burden my family and friends with my fears and struggles.



# Cancer is a life-altering journey that takes an emotional toll

- Whether the patient is newly diagnosed, in treatment, or a cancer survivor, support from family and friends is not a “nice to have.” **It’s a necessity.** you don’t have to face it alone.



Family support starting at the time of diagnosis when the patients feel their worlds crashing down.

When the emotional health needs are met, the patient is in a better position to manage the demands of treatment.

The experience after a cancer diagnosis also includes feelings of hope and connection. For some, it can be a time of reflection and lead to new goals and priorities.







**“I am very grateful for my family and support network, and needed their love to help me through the journey”**