

Excerpts

The Breast Cancer Care Book by Sally M. Knox, M.D.

Emotional Recovery: Anger, Fear, Depression and Grief

Anger, p. 155

Emotional recovery is much more complicated than physical recovery; it's part of breast cancer most women feel least prepared to face. After the initial shock, anger may creep right in and settle down next to you. ... Anger is part of the response associated with serious loss or illness. But a more focused anger might occur as a result of something someone said or did.

Fear, p. 156-157

Anger may be rooted in fear—the fear of losing your life and the fear of what this intruder will mean to your relationships, finances, and your own expectations. Once again, you're besieged with questions: What will happen to my children? to my husband? to my marriage? ... Fear cripples the ability to fight. Conquer fear, and the biggest battle is won. That isn't to minimize the physical aspect of healing, but much of the physical battle will be affected by the mind and the presence or absence of fear.

Depression, p. 158-161

Depression is another unwelcome guest that may be heightened or instigated by fear. ... Antidepressants exist to aid you through times like this. But they aren't the ultimate solution for everyone. Once again, there is no "normal" response; each patient is unique, and what brings resolution to the depression can be different for each person. ... Refuse to let depression control your behavior.

Grief, p. 161

Grief is part of the healing process, but no one way to grieve is the correct way. Give yourself permission to experience your losses at your own pace and in your own way. Tears don't need to be explained or justified. Grief can't be denied away or forced into a timetable. The best way to get through it is to accept the process rather than push it away.

Your Spouse, Your Biggest Supporter, p. 176-177

When your husband hears your diagnosis of breast cancer, a pain stabs his heart, just as it does yours. ... How can the two of you walk through this unfamiliar, uncomfortable territory? How can you come through the journey more of a team and closer to each other than when the trip began? ... What about *his* fears? What about the demands this places on him? These are the questions we'll look at in this chapter.

Helping Children Face the Challenge, p. 185

Ultimately, if you allow your children to be a part of your healing process, everyone—you and your children—will far better. Once they understand that you will share honestly with them about your treatment and what means, they feel more secure. Your openness gives them permission to ask questions that you would never have anticipated they were thinking. Children react differently to the news of their mother's breast cancer according to their age and maturity as well as their unique personalities.

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What Loved Ones Can Do, p. 24-26

Becoming a support person for a woman with breast cancer can be as challenging as having breast cancer yourself. ... Perhaps the best overarching principle is that your presence is the most valued contribution you can make to your loved one during this time.

Tell Her You Care, p. 25

Your friend with breast cancer doesn't necessarily need you to understand what she is feeling or to do anything about the details of her struggle or her treatment. Perhaps the most important thing to communicate is simply that you care about the woman and her loved ones.

Allow Room for Silence, p. 26

No two people are alike, so be sensitive to how much conversation, if any, is wanted. Be comfortable with silence and realize that you have no idea what a deep ministry your presence is for a friend, even with nothing said. Sitting in a waiting room with your friend can be an act of caring with few or no words required, because waiting to see a physician can be scary and lonely. Your friend gets the clear message that you are there for her.

Be Emotionally Present, p. 26

When we "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep," it creates a bond that gives strength to the one suffering. Advice, even good advice, is not nearly so empowering. But a friend willing to stick close by will be deeply valued.

Keeping Your Records Straight—Set Up a Three-ring Binder, p. 39-40

- **Questions** to ask at your next appointment with each doctor.
- **Test results.**
- **Prescription records.** List drugs, dosages, and dates of prescriptions and refills.
- **Resources** (home-care nurses, medical supply stores, ect.).
- **Phone list** of medical personnel and directions to each location.
- **Phone record.** List to whom you talked, what was communicated, and the date.
- **Funny things.** This list will help to remind you that even in dire circumstances, humorous events can provide relief from the intensity of the situation.
- **Medical history.** Writing out your history will help you to recall details you might forget when you meet with new members of your team.
- **Instructions.** When a number of instructions or complex instructions are given, you'll feel more secure if you write down the information rather than rely on your memory. This section also provides a reference when you are attempting to apply a medication or treat a side effect from home.
- **Doctor visits.** In this section, you'll record what transpired at each doctor's appointment. It will free you from having to try to recall dates or the order in which procedures were undertaken.
- **Finances.** Keep invoices, reports from your health insurance, and other aspects of the financial side of your journey in this section.