

# DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

Will the  
treatment  
work?

What side-effects  
will I experience?

Will the cancer  
come back?

How long does living  
with incurable  
cancer give me?

## We Can Do It!



Worrying can't give you more control over uncontrollable events, it just takes away the enjoyment of the present, saps your energy and keeps you up all night.

While you can't control the cancer chaos, you're not totally powerless.

Try to refocus your mind from ineffective worrying into active problem-solving— taking action over the aspects that are within your control.

For example, if you are about to have your first round of treatment, take action by reaching out to loved ones for support and managing your symptoms.

If you have successfully finished treatment, take action and plan some days out with the kids.

If you are living with incurable cancer, take action by scheduling in the things you love to do.

## Take Action!

## ONE WAY TO COPE - ACCEPTING UNCERTAINTY

### IDENTIFY YOUR TRIGGERS

Are your uncertainties triggered by external sources, e.g. spending time on social media amid rumours, or communicating with anxious friends. Recognising your triggers mean you can take action to reduce your exposure to them.

### RECOGNISE AND PAUSE

Notice when you start to begin to worry about what-ifs, or feel like a situation is far worse than it actually is. Notice any tension in your neck or shoulders, shortness of breath, the onset of a headache, or an empty feeling in your stomach. Pause and recognise that you're craving reassurance.

### FEEL THE UNCERTAINTY

Let yourself experience the discomfort of uncertainty. Like all difficult emotions they will eventually pass. Focus on the present moment and take some slow deep breaths and allow yourself to simply feel and observe the uncertainty you're experiencing.

### LET IT GO

Respond to the what-ifs running through your head by acknowledging that you're not a fortune teller; you don't know what will happen. All you can do is let go and accept the uncertainty as part of life.

### SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION

Focus on solvable worries, taking action on those aspects of a problem that you can control. When your mind wanders back to worrying or the feelings of uncertainty return, refocus your mind on the present moment and your own breathing.

## ANOTHER WAY TO COPE - TAKE ACTION TO DEAL WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

**Headphones on & loud music; box of tissues and sobbing; moving, dancing, exercising; smashing things (in a safe way – not in front of children!), shouting and screaming (in a safe way – not in front of children!); being in water (bath, shower, sea, river, pool); karaoke/singing; being in the presence of animals (borrowing a dog or pet); make a duvet tent; comfort food; walking in nature**

## ANOTHER WAY TO COPE - CHALLENGE YOUR THOUGHTS

What would you say to a friend in your situation who had the same worry?

## HELPING YOUR KIDS WITH UNCERTAINTY

Provide security by ensuring they have a safe place for them to talk about their feelings and worries.

Provide security by reassuring them that you will inform them of any changes that happen to you (as the parent with cancer), or any other member of the family.



### THINGS THAT WE CAN HELP KIDS WITH:

- Manage the information your child hears, so that it doesn't lead to more worry.
- Contain your child's distress when things feel uncertain by asking them about their worries. They will feel that their worries have been heard, and that you are supporting them.
- It is important for your kids to learn that worry and anxiety are a normal part of life, and it is okay to feel these emotions. Sharing with your child that you feel worried or anxious about things can be helpful (but don't overwhelm them)

Avoid saying 'I don't know what I am going to do' as this can be very scary for them. Instead, admit your worries but provide an action, e.g. 'Yes, it's something I think about too and sometimes worry about, but when we know what the next step is, we can make the best possible plan together'.

### "PROMISE ME...."

Try not to make promises you can't keep. Simply say 'I will try my hardest, but....'

'I will try my hardest, but if I can't make it I'm going ask Grandma to go with you'

'I will try my hardest, but if the doctor says I need another operation, I think they know what is best for me so I will have one'

'I will try my hardest, but if the cancer comes back, it will have more treatment so hopefully goes away again'

Make sure they know it's not because you don't want to, or that it is anything they have done to make you not able to commit to their promise.

## SECONDARY CANCERS AND UNCERTAINTY:

**Talking to your kids about secondary cancer will help them understand what is happening with your ongoing treatment. Keep communicating as much information they want to know. You may feel like you will scare them but continuing the chats, normalising what is going on. Make sure you check in with them.**