

# Relationship with your partner

This information is about managing your relationship with your partner when one of you has cancer. Cancer and its treatment can put a lot of strain on relationships. Even couples who have been together for a long time can have problems. However, some changes will be positive. Going through an experience like cancer can make relationships stronger.

How a relationship changes can depend on what the relationship was like before, how treatment has changed your daily life and each person's personality.

Some couples find their relationship changes after cancer and its treatment. These changes may be:

- Practical – your roles and responsibilities at home and work may be different now. For example, you may have new ways of managing housework, childcare or finances.
- Emotional – your feelings about each other may change. Your relationship may be stronger or more complicated.
- Physical – you may be coping with side effects or physical changes after treatment. Having sex or how you both feel about sex may be different. Some cancer treatments can affect your fertility. This might change any plans to have children.

You may be facing challenges as a couple that you did not expect. Each couple will cope with these in their own way. Think about how you have coped with challenges in the past. It usually helps to be open and honest with each other about how you feel.

## Tips for managing your relationship

- Talk to each other about how you feel and what is important to you. Some people find this easier to do while doing another activity such as going for a walk.
- Be aware that you may both have many difficult feelings and that these are all normal.
- Make time for each other. Do things you enjoy and talk about things other than cancer.
- Work out how you cope as a couple. Some people find that after laughing or crying together, there is less tension.
- It may help to write down a list of priorities. Together, you can plan what things are most important and what help you might need.
- Ask for support and accept help from friends and family members.
- Try to keep to a routine. This can help life feel more normal.
- It is important to make time for doing things you enjoy and can remind you what brought you together as a couple.
- Remember that there may be times when you or your partner may want some time on your own to sort out thoughts and feelings. Be open with your partner about this.
- Often partners will dismiss their own problems. You can help by encouraging them to get help if you think they may be struggling.
- [Sex](#) and being intimate can feel less important, for lots of reasons. What is important is that you talk about it together and listen to each other.
- If you do not feel like being intimate, hugging and holding hands can help you feel close.
- Having something to look forward to can help you feel less worried and more positive about life.

## Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk) such as:

- [Cancer and relationships](#)
- [Looking after someone with cancer](#)
- [Talking with someone who has cancer.](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

## Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk) where you can [chat to us online](#).

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls or visits with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

## Other useful contact details

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – visit [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk) or call **0145 588 3300**
- Relate – visit [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)
- Relate NI – visit [www.relateni.org](http://www.relateni.org) or call **0289 032 3454**
- Relationships Scotland – visit [www.relationships-scotland.org.uk](http://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk) or call **0345 119 2020**.

## Notes and questions

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