Coping After Cancer

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Being finished with treatment is exciting, but it may also be challenging and even a bit frightening. During the last few months, or maybe longer, you have probably been focused on your cancer treatment and getting better. Returning to your normal routine after treatment will feel like a transitionâ€"you may need time and support to get used to physical changes, catch up with school, and make time for checkups. Learn more aboutreturning to school after treatment [2].

Emotional changes

Along with feeling happy, relieved, and excited, it's normal to experience mixed emotions. You may feel:

- Nervous about going back to school
- Embarrassed about how you look, possibly because of scars from treatment or hair that hasn't grown back yet
- Upset that you can't do some of the things you used to because of changes in your body
- Sad or lonelyâ€"you may miss the friends you made in the hospital, your doctors and nurses, and any support groups you joined.
- Guilty that you are recovering while some of your friends with cancer are not
- Uncertain about your future
- Scared that your cancer may come back [3]

Expect some changes

You'll probably find that you're not quite the same as you were before your cancer. Any major experience like cancer can make you look at your life in a new way. You may realize that you're more caring toward others or that you worry less about little things. You may find that your priorities and goals have changed, too. Sports may be less important to you, but you may be more serious about school. You don't have cancer anymore, but being a cancer survivor will always be a part of who you are.

Coping with these changes

Some teens find that they need help coping with changes to their lives after cancer. Here are some suggestions that have helped other teens:

- Keep talking about how you feel with a friend, parent, or counselor
- Keep in touch with other teens with cancer you've met, including friends you may have met in online support groups
- Keep going tosupport groups [4] and consider joining a support group just for teenage cancer survivors
- Keep writing in your journal, orstart a journal [5] if you don't already have one
- Do things you enjoy that help you relax

More Information

Recognizing and Celebrating Milestones [6]

Cancer in Teens [7]

Survivorship [8]

Additional Resources

Group Loop: Get in the Driver's Seat [9]

Look Goodâ€¦Feel Better: Programs for Teens [10]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us

[2] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens/Life+After+Treatment/Returning+to+School+After+Treatment
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Emotional+and+Physical+Matters/Fear+of+Recurrence/Coping+With+Fear+of+Recurrence
[4] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Publications+and+Resources/Support+and+Resource+Links/General+Cancer+Organizations+and+Resources/Support+Groups/Support+Groups
[5] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Quality+of+Life/Finding+Comfort+Through+Journaling
[6] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/After+Treatment+and+Survivorship/Recognizing+and+Celebrating+Milestones
[7] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens
[8] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Survivorship
[9] http://www.grouploop.org/content/takeaction.asp
[10] http://lookgoodfeelbetter.org/programs/programs-for-teens