



# Mental Health in Survivorship

Congratulations! You have completed your cancer treatment, and now you (as well as your family and friends) are looking forward to putting all of this behind you and figuring out what life after cancer treatment looks like. While many patients transition from the active treatment phase to the survivorship phase without much difficulty, many experience anxiety, stress, and a different perspective on life. If this is you- know that you are NOT alone. Cancer is more than one stressful event; it is a journey through diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. Throughout this journey, it is not uncommon for patients (and their caregivers) to experience trigger reactions and other symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress (which is not the same as PTSD). Sometimes, cancer patients, survivors and caregivers report experiencing these symptoms for months or even years afterward. It is important that you or your caregiver receive support for these symptoms.

## Types of triggers during the cancer journey may include (but are not limited to):

- Diagnosis
- Testing/ waiting for test results
- Procedure days
- Receiving treatment
- Learning of recurrence

## Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) include (but are not limited to):

- Anxiety with or without panic attacks
- Feeling irritable (short-tempered), defensive, or overwhelmed.
- Feeling “brain fog” - unable to think clearly
- Isolating from family and friends, or unmotivated to participate in activities you used to enjoy.
- Sleep changes
- Feeling unsure of your place in your life or as though there is a shift in the lens through which you look at life, unsure how to adjust to that.

## Treatment for Post Traumatic Stress (PTS)

The most helpful way to address PTS symptoms and improve the overall quality of life is to seek counseling from a trained professional. Some of the techniques that can help treat stress-related disorders can include:

- One on One counseling with specific techniques that can help
- Relaxation training
- Being able to learn about triggers and trigger responses, as well as how to manage them
- Become aware of thought patterns that increase feelings of distress and how to replace them with more balanced thoughts.

## Other Ways to Access Help

**Support Groups** An opportunity to meet others with similar experiences and hear how they have coped. NYOH offers support groups for patients and caregivers.

**Medication** Sometimes medicine can help with managing symptoms. Please speak to your provider about medication options.

**One-on-one Counseling** Reach out to your NYOH provider for options or a referral

It is important to have open and honest conversations with your health care team regarding any difficulties you are having. Reach out to your NYOH provider to connect with individual or group support.

