

Let It Out, Don't Keep It In
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When I was diagnosed with breast cancer 5 years ago, I did not wish to be a burden on anyone. I did not wish to have my family and friends worry about me, so I went out of my way to appear to be happy and told people I was feeling great even though inside some days I felt like crying and screaming.

I am not advocating that we should be absorbed by self-pity and continually whine and moan about our diagnosis, but I do think a bit of emotion is not a bad thing. I also feel that if I had let out some of my emotions I may not have ended up with a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/PTSD. According to the Mayo Clinic PTSD can occur with cancer survivors as they are dealing with a life threatening medical diagnosis. Mayo reports this is seen more in those who are survivors of childhood cancers, aggressive cancers and cancers that require intense treatments.

Let's take a look at the some of the signs of PTSD:

Insomnia, memory and concentration problems, feeling hopeless, feelings of shame or guilt, intense fear, irritability and anger, uncontrolled sadness and crying, hearing or seeing things that are not there, self-destructive behavior, avoiding activities you once enjoyed or no longer enjoying these activities.

As a cancer survivor it is normal to have some of these feelings. However, if you're having disturbing thoughts and feelings that last more than a month, if they are severe, or if you feel you are having trouble getting your life back under control, you need to speak with a health care professional.

Sometimes the thoughts you have appear to be unrelated to your cancer diagnosis, but you may be trying to control an area in your life that you feel is under your control. By the time I went to the doctor I was in a full blown state of anxiety. Without the support of my husband, I do not know where I would be today, as I couldn't see that I needed help. He prodded me to get the help I needed, and things are much better today. If you have to question if you need help, then you probably do. Get the help you need, so you can regain control of your life.