



Cancer Q & A

with Kathy Kanavos

Ask Me Anything!

KATHY O'KEEFE KANAVOS ADDRESSES YOUR
CONCERNS ABOUT CANCER

Dear Kathy,

I am new to cancer. I am waiting for my last in-hospital chemotherapy as my blood counts were too low for me to go this week. My anxiety level is high and my tears keep falling. I have leiomyosarcoma and had a double mastectomy in September.

I can tell myself this is normal, the depression and fear of the last treatment before I start radiation in February, but I hate being trapped by fear. Any more advice about dealing with anxiety attacks?

Linda

Dear Linda,

I had the same problem with my blood counts, except that it started after my second treatment. I was taking A/C (Adriamycin/Cytoxan.) Now there are medications that your doctor can give you to speed up the recovery process between treatments. But since this is your last treatment, you may be past the need for that.

It turned out that my body was "crashing" later - feeling the effects of the chemo as my blood counts dropped. Therefore, it seemed to take longer for me to recover, when in fact it was the same amount of time.

It was actually reaching the "crashing point" that took longer. You may be experiencing the same thing. My treatments had to be postponed for a week until my blood levels recovered enough for me to safely have the next treatment, too.

The chemical reactions in our body because of the chemotherapy can cause us to become depressed and cry for no apparent reason. The reason is treatment. The chemicals mess with our hormones, and the illness messes with our emotions. Don't hold back - cry. Get it all out. It's okay.

In the end, I still finished chemo and moved on to my radiation therapy. Yes, you do get anxious because you want it all to be over as quickly as possible, so you can get on with your NORMAL life. Then you have to deal with the anxiety of the next step: radiation. I heard the same delayed chemo treatment stories and unexplained crying episodes from many of my friends in Radiation.

The friendships you make during radiation may last a lifetime. You will meet other women who will understand your fear because they will have experienced it themselves. Having friends in the same "fox hole," who understand our trepidations, is priceless.

Fear of the unknown is something that haunts many of us in treatment. Just remember, the greatest fear is the fear of fear itself.

If you are struggling with your own diagnosis, or know someone who is, please email Kathy with your questions and concerns at: katkan@comcast.net

I found my escape in the calming effects of meditation, a warm bath with soft music, and positive affirmations like, "I am number one, nothing is more important than me!" Hold tight to your belief system. Your Higher Power already knows how big your troubles are. Tell your troubles how big your Higher Power is. Good luck. You are almost finished. Stay in touch

and let me know how you are doing. I care.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Hi, Kathy,

I was just diagnosed with breast cancer on November 4th. This is the thing: ever since I was told that is what it is, I really can not connect with having cancer. It is like, okay, what are we doing to fix this and when? I really do not feel like it's a part of me. I know that somehow I will be okay through this. The problem is, I'm spending a lot of time reassuring everyone else that I'm okay. I don't know why, but I am. Is this normal?

I am not in denial. I accept that I have breast cancer, but I refuse to let this be the focus of my life. I want treatment and then I want to keep it moving. I just want to be normal, so I do not focus on it. I think people don't understand this, and so, I was wondering if you can tell me is this normal?

Carla

Hi Carla,

You're right not to want to let this be the focus of your life. You may need to focus on it right now, until you have completed treatment, but then you move on.

Yes, telling people you have cancer can illicit unusual reactions from them. It scares them even though you are the one seeking solace. Unless they have gone through cancer themselves, they can sympathize with you, but they do not have the empathy to know what you are experiencing. They mean well, but may not always have the appropriate response for you.

That is why contacting groups or people who have survived cancer are so important. We have walked that mile in your shoes and are here to take your hand. Don't wait for friends to ask you if you need something. Tell them. They will appreciate you helping them help you.

People say and do unusual things when they don't know what to say and do. (I had people tell me I needed to embrace my cancer as a part of myself. Yeah, right! I would only embrace it to squeeze the life out of it.)

Cancer is an illness, just like a cold. You get it, deal with it, get over it and move on. Find it-Fix it! If cancer defines us at all, is only as Warrior Princesses. Embrace your inner warrior and beat cancer.

Ask me anything!

Kathy

Dear Kathy,

ringing in the ears- Is it permanent? Has anyone experienced any of these types of side effects from chemo?

My brother is in a lot of pain from it. He's called the doctor and the doctor said it may subside soon or I guess they will have to change his medication. What can I do to help him be more comfortable?

Thanks,

Jody

Dear Jody

You are a wonderful sister. Yes, I had severe ringing in my ears. And it took about a year to go away. I found it very difficult to get any rest with the constant ringing and buzzing.

Three things helped me:

1. My 27-year-old Siamese cat named Baby Cakes would climb up on the bed next to me at naptime, lay his head on my head, wrap his paws around my neck, and purr so loudly that it drowned out the ringing so I could fall asleep. Animals are incredible healers who always seem to know our problems.

2. Turning a radio to white noise (the static between stations) while sleeping helped to override the ringing in my ears.

3. I took CLEAR TINNITUS capsules, a homeopathic/herbal formula that is aspirin free, side effect free, and non-habit forming. It started to work for me within five days of taking it. It is available in CVS and Walgreens pharmacies. It is distributed by CLEAR PRODUCTS, Inc. and if you have any questions, their toll free number is 1-888-257-2532. I hope this helps your brother.

Ask me anything.

Kathy

Follow either of these links to listen to her interview about Healing Dreams:

[HealthyLife.Net with Bernie Seigel, MD](#)

[Direct Link](#) to Kathy's Interview

Kathleen O'Keefe-Kanavos is a two-time breast cancer survivor who penned **SURVIVING CANCERLAND: The Psychic Aspects of Healing**.

She is represented by Scovil, Galen & Ghosh Literary Agency & **Steve Allen Media**. She's a phone counselor for R.A. BLOCH Cancer Foundation, Q&A cancer columnist for *CapeWomenOnlineMagazine*, an inspirational speaker, mentor, cancer volunteer, and Cambridge Who's Who Executive Professional of the Year 2009-2010.

Kathy was recently interviewed on the Dr. Pat radio show, and told how her dreams found her cancer that the doctors missed. You can listen to a podcast [here](#).

Visit her [website](#) and [Facebook page](#); follow her on [Twitter](#) ; and connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).