

## Helplessness and fear...

That is what you and your partner may both be feeling. Imagine what you would think and feel if it were your partner who was diagnosed with breast cancer. Would you feel helpless? Would you want to do anything and everything you could to take away the cancer, yet at the same time, there was nothing you could do? Your partner may feel the same way.

Breast cancer is a disease full of unknowns and your partner will have questions and concerns. Encourage your partner to share his or her feelings. For example, you may say, “I know you are afraid. I am too. Let’s talk about it.” However, because you are the one with the cancer, the focus will be on you. Sometimes partners may feel that they should not ask you for help because they are supposed to be helping you.

## We are all human...

We need support from others. If you have trouble talking with your partner, ask someone else to help. This might be your doctor or another member of your health care team, a friend or another family member.

You may be interested in support groups for couples. You can find out about these from your health care team. Listening to and talking to others who are also going through this experience can be very helpful. You can discuss anything from the most general topics (like nutrition) to the most personal topics (like sex).

Finding support from others will not only help you — it could also help your partner.



## About the term “partner”

### What is a partner?

The term may have a different meaning to you than it does to someone else. In general, it means “that person to whom you are closest.” This person is usually (but not always) a non-blood relative and may be your spouse, partner in life, boyfriend, girlfriend and/or your best friend.

While it may be difficult right now to find much to be thankful for, having a partner, someone who really cares about you and loves you, is something for which to be truly thankful.

## Co-survivor

Your partner may also be referred to as a co-survivor. Co-survivors are family, friends, health care providers or colleagues — who are there to lend support from diagnosis, through treatment and beyond.

## Together through it all

Think about your relationship with your partner. You have been through both happy and hard times together. Your diagnosis may be shocking at first. The more you and your partner find out about it, the more you will learn that breast cancer is a disease that can be treated successfully.

Do not be afraid to talk about your feelings. You will find that if either of you hold your thoughts, worries and fears inside, they can create a wall between you and may cause you to grow apart. A good place to start may be a simple open-ended question such as, “What makes you feel good today and how can I help you?”

Think about all the good times you have shared. Think about the rough times. You have both made it through them all — and have stayed together. Actually, for some people, going through something very serious — like breast cancer — brings them closer together. Your fears are shared, your joys are shared and both of you can make it through the treatment and recovery from breast cancer together.

## Resources

Susan G. Komen® — promises to save lives and end breast cancer forever by empowering people, ensuring quality care for all and energizing science to find the cures.

1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636)

[www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)

American Cancer Society’s Reach to Recovery program — has trained breast cancer survivors who visit newly diagnosed patients.

1-800-ACS-2345

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

Cancer Support Community — ensures that all people impacted by cancer are empowered by knowledge, strengthened by action, and sustained by community.

1-888-793-9355

[www.cancersupportcommunity.org](http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org)

National Family Caregivers Association — educates, supports, empowers and speaks up for family caregivers.

1-800-896-3650

[www.nfcares.org](http://www.nfcares.org)

Men Against Breast Cancer™ — leverages the important role of the husband/partner caring for the woman he loves.

1-866-547-MABC (6222)

[www.menagainstbreastcancer.org](http://www.menagainstbreastcancer.org)

The Komen message boards offer online forums for cancer survivors to share their experiences and advice with other survivors. <https://apps.komen.org/Forums/>

### Related fact sheets in this series:

- Sexuality & Intimacy
- Support After A Breast Cancer Diagnosis

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