



PATHWAYS TO HEALING: FOCUSING ON MENTAL WELL-BEING

The psychological impact of a cancer diagnosis can have a significant impact on your mental well-being. Here, we share coping strategies, resilience techniques, and support for navigating cancer-related challenges.

In light of World Cancer Day this month, we spoke to Johan Lombaard, clinic manager at Life Brackenview, to gain his insights on how to navigate the mental well-being journey that's coupled with a cancer diagnosis.

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THE PHASES OF COPING

Johan explains that individuals diagnosed with cancer go through various phases, from shock and denial to anger, bargaining, depression, and, finally, acceptance. He emphasises the importance of addressing mental health early in the journey, as denial may create a false perception of strength that hinders reaching out for support. 'After the initial shock has passed, anger sets in. Patients are often angry at themselves, and that then spreads to those closest to them,' says Johan.

IDENTIFYING MENTAL WELL-BEING

Pre-existing mental health issues can be overlooked and treatment for mental health may only commence when severe depression and anxiety become evident. Johan underscores

the critical role of identifying and assessing the mental well-being of individuals facing a cancer diagnosis. He suggests a comprehensive examination of mental health prior to receiving a cancer diagnosis, emphasising collaboration with mental health teams. 'Working together with a mental health team in these cases is crucial,' explains Johan.

TAILORED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

'Support groups and networks work really well for patients. It is always easier to talk to someone who is or was in the same boat,' says Johan. For cancer patients, personalised support strategies are important. Johan emphasises the effectiveness of support groups and networks, allowing individuals to share fears and feelings with others in similar situations. He also highlights the power of hope when shared by those who have overcome the same diagnosis.

SUPPORT NETWORKS

Family, friends and community support play a crucial role in the mental well-being of cancer patients. Johan emphasises the importance of allowing patients to express their emotions and providing understanding support.

OVERCOMING STIGMA

Addressing mental health stigma remains a challenge, particularly in seeking help from mental health professionals. Johan encourages continuous efforts to normalise asking for help. 'Over the past years, these stigmas have been addressed and need to be addressed continuously.'



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Mental health



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It's okay not to be okay,' says Johan.

COPING STRATEGIES AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Johan offers practical coping strategies, such as open communication, setting new routines, managing side effects and acknowledging the validity of negative emotions. He emphasises the importance of being honest with oneself, seeking support, and turning mental health treatment into a crucial part of the overall cancer treatment plan. 'Dealing with cancer needs a holistic approach from day one. Understand that the diagnosis will have an effect on the patient's mental health too,' explains Johan.

OUR APPROACH

Life Healthcare provides comprehensive care for medical conditions, integrating tranquil oncology environments, qualified nursing staff, and nationwide mental health units for dedicated support as needed.

References:

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