FACING THE Fear Of Cancer Recurrence
A Closer Look at WHAT TRIGGERS IT and WHAT YOU CAN DO About It
by Susan Krigel, PhD

Almost all cancer survivors have a few things in common: shock at being diagnosed, significant challenges in dealing with the side effects of treatment, and anxiety or worry when active treatment ends and the oncologist’s office says, “We’ll see you in three months.” Part of that worry is not knowing what lies ahead, wondering if your life will get back to normal and fearing that the cancer will return.

FEAR OF RECURRENT - A FEAR THAT CANCER WILL RETURN OR ADVANCE - IS NEARLY UNIVERSAL AMONG CANCER SURVIVORS.
Nearly all survivors have at least some fear of cancer recurrence, and it is not uncommon for it to last for years. As a psychologist who specializes in working with cancer survivors, I don’t try to talk people out of having a fear of recurrence. After all, most cancer survivors face some level of risk of their home watching TV or sleeping. The longer this pattern persists, the more depressed she becomes, furthering her downward spiral. Or, for another example, a colorectal cancer survivor

Nearly all survivors have at least some fear of cancer recurrence, and it is not uncommon for it to last for years.

cancer recurring. My goal in working with survivors is to help them manage their anxiety about cancer recurrence and harness their fear of recurrence to help them stride toward a happier, healthier life.

ALTHOUGH A LOW TO MODERATE LEVEL OF FEAR OF RECURRENT IS NORMAL, HIGH LEVELS CAN IMPAIR A PERSON'S OVERALL HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE.
Studies have shown that survivors with high levels of anxiety about recurrence have higher levels of depression and lower physical, cognitive, and social functioning. For example, a woman with a severe fear of recurrence may withdraw from friends and social activities, choosing instead to stay becomes so immobilized that he cannot bring himself to return to the oncologist’s office for his follow-up scans.

EVEN LOW LEVELS OF FEAR OF RECURRENT MAY SPIKE WHEN FACED WITH A “TRIGGER.”
Survivors often mention experiencing fear when facing follow-up scans and oncologist visits. Other common triggers are the anniversaries of being diagnosed, having surgery, or beginning or ending active treatment; hearing that a friend, or even a celebrity, was diagnosed with or has died of cancer; and anything reminiscent of

KNOW WHEN TO Get Help
While a certain degree of cancer recurrence fear is normal, sometimes the fear can become overwhelming and difficult to manage on your own.

Seek professional help if ...
♦ You’re experiencing a significant level of anxiety about recurrence
♦ You have not been able to reduce the level of anxiety on your own
♦ Anxiety is significantly impairing your quality of life
♦ You are in danger of harming yourself or someone else

Ask your healthcare team for a referral to a mental health professional.
SHIFT YOUR FOCUS

- When you find yourself dwelling on thoughts of your cancer coming back, turn your attention instead to what you can do to improve your overall health.
- Exercise!
  - Start low, and go slow
  - Set realistic goals. You don’t have to run a marathon to get health benefits from exercising.
  - If you don’t enjoy exercising, find a physical activity that you do enjoy.
  - Get good sleep — and enough of it.
- Think about what gives your life meaning, and live accordingly.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet.
- Be social.
- Learn to live with uncertainty. Mindfulness and acceptance can help.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MANAGE THE UNCERTAINTY AND ANXIETY RELATING TO RECURRENCE?

Discuss your concerns with your oncologist. Get an understanding of your individual level of cancer recurrence risk. Ask about how you’ll be monitored going forward and what symptoms you should take notice of. Find out whom you should call if you experience those symptoms. Having a plan in place can be helpful in reducing anxiety. And, finally, learn what you can do to reduce your risk of recurrence.

Dr. Susan Krigel heads the Psychosocial Oncology program for the Midwest Cancer Alliance, the outreach arm of the University of Kansas Cancer Center. A licensed psychologist in Fairway, KS, Dr. Krigel focuses her practice on improving the mental health of individuals facing cancer. You can follow Dr. Krigel on Twitter @drusankrigel.

Introducing EES - Essential Eyebrow Solution®

...A Solution for a Problem

THE PROBLEM

Your doctor may tell you that your chemotherapy treatment will most likely lead to hair loss. In addition to scalp hair loss, you may also lose your eyebrows. The loss of eyebrows can be difficult to hide and is often perceived by patients as an unwelcome, visible sign of their illness.

THE SOLUTION

RMV Trademarks, LLC, has developed a unique, patented product called EES-Essential Eyebrow Solution®. EES is a clinically-tested, topical formulation that is used cosmetically to address eyebrow thinning or loss, while conditioning and revitalizing the brows. EES is safe and non-irritating, paraben-free, hypoallergenic, and pH balanced.

THE PROOF

A recent EES clinical trial published in PRIME International Journal of Aesthetic & Anti-Ageing Medicine demonstrated that 91% of the 117 enrolled cancer patients retained 50-100% of their eyebrow hair while undergoing chemotherapy treatment, despite experiencing full body hair loss elsewhere.

10% of proceeds donated to Look Good Feel Better® during Breast Cancer Awareness Month

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EES, visit EssentialEyebrowSolution.com, or call 1-888-208-5081.