



Co-survivor

Your partner is a **co-survivor**. Co-survivors are family, friends, health care providers or others who are there to lend support, from the moment of diagnosis, through treatment and beyond.

As with any major illness, breast cancer can affect more than the person who is diagnosed. Co-survivors may feel many of the same emotions as you: shock, sadness, fear, anger and denial.

Co-survivors can be strong sources of support but remember they may need support too.



About the term “partner”

The term “partner” may have a different meaning to you than it does to someone else. In general, it means the person who is closest to you. This person may be your spouse, partner, boyfriend, girlfriend or whoever you consider this person to be in your life.

Together through it all

Think about your relationship with your partner. You’ve been through both happy and sad times together. Your diagnosis may be shocking at first, but with time, you can learn **about breast cancer**, process your emotions and adjust to living with the disease. Members of your health care team can support you and your partner with these things.

For some people, going through something serious – like breast cancer – brings them closer. However, breast cancer can also strain relationships. Some people may even notice a withdrawal of emotional support from their loved ones. At a time when they are needed most, the people closest to you may be less supportive than usual.

Don’t be afraid to talk about your feelings. It can help your partner understand what you’re going through. If either of you holds your thoughts, worries and fears inside, this 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, “How can I support you today?”

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

You may also be interested in one-on-one counseling or couples counseling. There may be a mental health provider such as a clinical social worker, counselor or psychologist at your doctor’s office. Or you can ask for a referral to one in your community.

This fact sheet is intended to be a brief overview. For more information, visit [komen.org](https://www.komen.org) or call Susan G. Komen’s Breast Care Helpline at 1-877 GO KOMEN (1-877-465-6636) Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET, or email at helpline@komen.org. Se habla español.

Resources

Susan G. Komen®

1-877 GO KOMEN
(1-877-465-6636)
komen.org

American Cancer Society's Reach to Recovery program

1-800-ACS-2345
cancer.org

Cancer Support Community

1-888-793-9355
cancersupportcommunity.org

Caregiver Action Network

202-454-3970
caregiveraction.org

Related online resources:

- Co-Survivors
- Sexuality & Intimacy
- Support After A Breast Cancer Diagnosis
- Talking with your Doctor
- Talking with your Children
- What's Happening to Me
- What's Happening to Mom
- What's Happening to the One We Love

Lean on each other

Breast cancer is a disease full of unknowns and it may bring up topics that are hard to talk about. You and your partner may have questions and concerns. Share your thoughts and feelings with each other. Recognize you both are going through something difficult. For example, you may say, "I know you're afraid. I am too. Let's talk about it."

It may help to schedule time to check in with your partner regularly. This can be a dedicated time for the two of you to talk about how you're doing and how you can support one another.

How your partner copes

Your partner might feel the same way you do. They may also feel they need to be "strong" for you and hide their emotions. They may feel helpless or overwhelmed that they can't "fix" your cancer. There is no right or wrong way to feel. Help them focus on the things they can control. They may feel better by:

- Helping you find information
- Talking with others
- Exercising
- Doing something they enjoy like reading books, listening to music, watching movies or spending time with friends
- Writing down their thoughts



We're 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, another member of your health care team, such as a social worker, a friend or a family member.

You can also contact **Komen's Patient Care Center** for support at 1-877 GO KOMEN (465-6636) or helpline@komen.org.

The **Komen Breast Cancer** and **Komen Metastatic (Stage IV) Breast Cancer** Facebook groups are places where those with breast cancer and their family and friends can talk with others for friendship and support.

Getting support from others will not only help you – but it could also help your partner.

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