

From Isolation to Connection: The Power of Support Groups for Families Affected by Cancer

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10/3/2026



Reflection for Caregivers

What emotion words come to mind when you think about being the caregiver for a child going through cancer?

During your child's cancer journey, what were your top 2 priorities?

Reflection for Caregivers

What are some lingering stress symptoms you've experienced since the end of the cancer journey?

What were some ways you managed/cared for your own mental and emotional needs during treatment?

How have you cared for your mental and emotional needs after treatment finished?

Caregiver Well-being

- Upon cancer diagnosis, after initial period of “marked distress”, caregiver well-being generally improves with time
- However, 27% of caregivers report elevated distress at 5 years post-diagnosis
- Transition off therapy is emotionally complicated milestone:
 - Processing cancer experience
 - Fear of recurrence and/or late effects
 - Social and occupational reintegration
 - Re-establishing personal/family routines

In context of decreased support and increased exhaustion

Wakefield et al., 2011

Caregiver Well-being

School issues

- How to determine need for school support/accommodations
- How to navigate school and healthcare systems to establish 504/IEPs
- Extra social stress
- Deciding whether to stay in current grade or repeat a year

Sibling concerns

- Siblings with lingering complex feelings – jealousy, guilt, fear, anxiety
- How to help siblings feel included and validated

Robertson & Freeman, 2026

Hearing from Caregivers

[Caregivers SHARE Podcast | St. Jude Care & Treatment](#)

- Season 1, Episode 4: The Emotions of Transitioning Off Therapy
- Season 1, Episode 5: Back to the Local Care Team
- Season 1, Episode 6: Going Back to School
- Season 1, Episode 7: Friends, Relationships, and Mental Health

Resources for Connection

Cactus Cancer Society

- 30 Minute Tune Up
- Art Workshops
- Book Club
- Builders Workshop
- Creative Arts Book Club
- Guided Yoga
- Guys Discussion Group
- Research Roundup

Elephants and Tea

- Workshop – Guide to Adulting
- Virtual Happy Hour
- Young Adult Game Night

Bright Spot Network

- Virtual support groups for parents with cancer

Inova

- Group for Childhood Cancer Caregivers
- Brain Fog Series

Dear Jack Foundation

- Breathe Now Wellness Retreat
- Community Forum

Reflection for Caregivers

How would you describe a support group to someone who has never heard of one before? How are they structured? What happens during a group?

What are 3 pros and cons of attending a support group?

Why do you think support groups work for some people?

Support Groups

bring together people who share a common issue, offering a space for connection, encouragement, and healing

are often structured gatherings where people can express themselves openly and listen to others without judgment

create a sense of belonging that can ease isolation and build resilience

provide an opportunity to exchange encouragement and learn new coping strategies and life skills.

MentalHealth.com, 2026

Support Groups

Types of groups

- Peer-Led
- Professional-Led
- Online

Benefits

- Personal growth and healing
- Learning and practicing skills to enhance daily life
- Sense of purpose in offering encouragement to others

Challenges

- Discomfort opening up in front of others
- Effectiveness hinges on group dynamics
- Practical barriers

MentalHealth.com, 2026

SCH Support Group for Caregivers of Cancer Survivors

Some topic areas of interest, based on ~20 responses:

- PTSD/mental health
- Supporting siblings
- Managing long-term side effects
- Conversation strategies for work and social settings
- Survivor guilt

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Thank you!

