



Advanced Cancer Support – Caregiving and Self Care Programs

Intended Audience

Members who are living with cancer as a terminal illness and care partners, if they come with the partner with cancer.

Program Description

When facing our mortality, important questions surface, such as: How do I live well knowing that I have an illness that will end my life? How do I talk about this reality with people in my life? What really matters to me? What needs to happen now... next? What resources are available to assist me and my loved ones? During the Advanced Cancer Support program the goal is to nurture a sense of belonging with others who are also facing the realities of living with an incurable disease. Stories are shared; thoughts and feelings are expressed; challenges and celebrations are shared.

Benefits and Impact

People who have a terminal illness often feel isolated and long to speak openly with others about their experiences, questions, hopes and fears. Research indicates that when they are able to safely discuss death and dying and its challenges, people experience less fear, fatigue, loneliness and isolation. As anxiety diminishes, inner awareness grows, and choices are made with greater intention and purpose. Life has greater meaning.

What to Expect at a Session

Members support each other through open conversations about their uncertainty and the challenges of living with dying. From the most universal themes of death and dying to the most individual and personal experiences, all that is shared is held with care as this group explores wisdom from within, ancient and contemporary philosophies, and community resources that support, guide and illuminate the way.

**Community leaders are occasionally invited to share expertise and wisdom on end-of-life, palliative and spiritual issues.*

Participant Comments

“I found safety here, a secure place.”

“It’s okay to say the word ‘cancer’ here.”

“There is pleasure and relief in openness.”

“At Wellspring there is no judgement.”

What the Research Says:

Metastatic cancer is a daunting and life-changing diagnosis. In addition to managing treatments and physical symptoms, patients will encounter questions and challenges relating to their emotions and spirituality. In a study by Breitbart et al. (2015), 253 patients with advanced cancer participated in either a support group treatment or a meaning-centered group treatment. Both treatments consisted of 8 sessions. Facilitators in the support group treatment encouraged participants to share experiences related to their physical and emotional well-being. In the meaning-centered group, facilitators encouraged participants to explore and reflect on themes such as meaning, hope, and spirituality in addition to sharing their experiences regarding their physical and emotional well-being. Participants from both groups reported decreased anxiety and psychological and spiritual distress. The meaning-centered group reported decreased depression, hopelessness, and physical symptoms-related distress whereas the support-group treatment did not (Breitbart W, Rosenfeld B, Pessin H, Applebaum A, Kulikowski J, Lichtenthal WG. (2015). Meaning-Centered Group Psychotherapy: An Effective Intervention for Improving Psychological Well-Being in Patients with Advanced Cancer. *Clinical Oncology*. 33(7):749-756).

Program Frequency:

1.5 hours per week
Ongoing registration
12-14 weeks per session
1 program per session
 Winter, Spring / Summer, Fall

Related Programs:

The Healing Journey Program
 The Ultimate Road Trip: Book Discussion
 Thursdays with Bob
 Finding Sanctuary