

Counselling

When you have kidney cancer, life can be overwhelming, challenging and often lonely. Anxiety, depression, fear of your cancer coming back or simply 'not feeling right' are almost universal to all those living with a kidney cancer diagnosis. A 2018 study of patients worldwide showed 96% experienced psychosocial problems of some kind. It also showed that around half suffer in silence, rarely talking about how they're feeling with either health professionals or family and friends. Whilst this is a big problem, studies would indicate that those who do open up and discuss how they're feeling often find their anxiety eases simply by talking about it.

Conversations can also surface simple lifestyle changes that can be implemented, delivering a positive impact on emotional wellbeing. And talking about psychosocial issues with a health professional can be a pathway to clinical support that may transform your kidney cancer journey. As well as improving mental health, research shows a sense of wellbeing, and a positive attitude can improve treatment outcomes.

The following gives an overview of the types of psychosocial help that is currently available to you. The NHS offers cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), guided self-help and counselling for depression. Some of the therapies listed below will only be available privately through a qualified psychotherapist. [Read more on the NHS website.](#)

Types of counselling/therapy

There are many types and forms of counselling/therapy. Below are the most common types and a small description of each. More information can be found on the [British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy \(BACP\) website.](#)

Person-centred counselling

Person or client-centred therapy is based on the view that everyone has the capacity and desire for personal growth and change, given the right conditions. Rather than being seen as the expert and directing the therapy, the counsellor offers unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence to help you come to terms with any negative feelings and to change and develop in your own way.

Integrative counselling

Integrative counselling looks at the whole person, considering your mental, physical, and emotional needs. Your therapist will use techniques and tools from different modalities to tailor an individual approach for you.

An integrative counsellor aims to build a trusting and non-judgmental relationship that helps you develop self-awareness. When you understand the causes of your concerns or triggers for your behaviour, you can confidently set goals and develop new behaviours to improve your satisfaction with life.

Gestalt counselling

The name Gestalt is derived from the German for 'whole' or 'pattern'. It looks at the whole individual within their surroundings, rather than breaking things into parts. Practitioners help you to focus on the here and now and your immediate thoughts, feelings, and behaviour to better understand how you relate to others and to situations. This can help you find a new, positive perspective on problems and bring about changes in your life.

Gestalt therapy often includes acting out scenarios and dream recall, and is effective in treating issues such as anxiety, stress, addiction, tension, and depression.

Existential counselling

Existential psychotherapy explores the inner conflict and anxiety people may experience when confronted with life's ultimate concerns, such as the inevitability of death, freedom and its responsibilities, isolation, and meaninglessness.

Existentialists believe that life has no essential (given) meaning and that you must make your own sense of the world. Counsellors can help you confront your anxieties and negative thoughts, enabling you to make decisions about how to live life and deal with life problems in your own way.

Psychodynamic counselling

The psychodynamic approach is derived from psychoanalysis but focuses on immediate problems to try to provide a quicker solution. It stresses the importance of the unconscious and past experiences in shaping current behaviour. A therapist will aim to build an accepting and trusting relationship, encouraging you to talk about your childhood relationships with your parents and other significant people. It also uses similar techniques to psychotherapy, including free association, interpretation and especially transference, where feelings you experienced in previous significant relationships are projected onto the therapist.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

CBT aims to help you change the way you think (cognitive) and what you do (behaviour). Rather

than looking at past causes, it focuses on current problems and practical solutions to help you feel better now.

The way we think about situations affects the way we feel and behave. If we view a situation negatively, we may experience negative emotions and feelings which lead us to behave in an unhelpful way. Your therapist will help you identify and challenge any negative thinking so you can deal with situations better and behave in a more positive way

CBT can be helpful for depression, anxiety, stress, phobias, obsessions, eating disorders and managing long term conditions.

Organisations for psychosocial support and information

You may feel you need extra support in addition to that provided by your healthcare team, GP or from the KCSN. Ask your GP to refer you to any available mental health and wellbeing services. You could join [the KCSN support group](#) or you may also find the support and services offered by the organisations below helpful:

Maggie's centres

Maggie's provide information and support to anyone with cancer and their loved ones, at their centres and online. As well as information on psychosocial wellbeing, you can access professional support from cancer specialists and psychologists. You can also attend support groups and a wide range of courses and workshops at different stages of your cancer journey. They also offer a dedicated course for family and friends.

[Visit the Maggie's website here](#)

Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan Cancer Support offer a range of emotional support services for people with cancer and their loved ones. You can contact their support

line, email them, or use their web chat service. You can also access one-one-one counselling and wellbeing support with a qualified counsellor, and remote wellbeing coaching.

[Visit the Macmillan Cancer Support website here](#)

Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK provide information on coping with cancer, both for people with cancer and their loved ones. You can also contact their helpline by telephone or email or join their online forum.

[Visit the Cancer Research UK website here](#)

Penny Brohn UK

Penny Brohn UK provides free, integrative care to everyone living with cancer, before, during and after treatment. There are online group sessions or virtual one-to-one counselling and wellbeing support. You can also contact their helpline and join their online community.

[Visit the Penny Brohn UK website here](#)

Happiful

Happiful provides directories of qualified professionals who are dedicated to offering wellbeing and mental health support. They provide online information, a magazine, a podcast and a Happiful App, which also signposts to free community resources and peer support groups.

[Visit the Happiful website here](#)

Meditation and mindfulness

There are several organisations that offer a wide range of meditation and mindfulness exercises to reduce anxiety and stress and to aid sleep:

[Visit the Headspace website here](#)

[Visit the Calm website here](#)

[Visit the MyLife Meditation website here](#)

Please help other patients:

Please keep us updated with useful information that will help other cancer patients. You can email us with your tips so we can regularly add to this resource. Please email us at:

support@actionkidneycancer.org or visit our website www.actionkidneycancer.org

This Help Sheet was written with help from Steve, a kidney cancer patient and person-centred counsellor, in June 2020.

Thanks to our community for their input, and especially to Steve for his patience and willingness to collate this information to help and support others.

Reviewed January 2022