

*(Self) Love Is
in the Air!*



UPCOMING GOLD GATHERING

We'll keep you posted
on a spring event!

GOLD website

You can also visit our
website for updates and
GOLD Gathering details
at z.umn.edu/goldMN.

Self-compassion in 2018

I am wishing you a happy and health 2018. While it is past the New Year now, I would encourage you to add a New Year's resolution: *Be Kind to Yourself*. This is something I continue to work on. Treat yourself as compassionately as you would your best friend and with as much patience as you would a small child.

Are you your own worst critic? Studies have shown that self-compassion can reduce anxiety and help you make positive changes in your life by building resilience. Importantly, it has a significant positive effect on happiness and optimism.

According to a study on self-compassion by Neff and Germer (2012), self-compassion refers to the "tendency to be caring and understanding with oneself rather than being harshly critical. Rather than attacking and berating oneself for not being 'good enough,' the self is offered warmth and unconditional acceptance (even though particular behaviors may be identified as unproductive and in need of change)."

Neff and Germer also discuss how mindfulness can improve self-compassion by being aware of one's stressful or painful experiences in a way



that neither ignores nor ruminates on disliked aspects of oneself or one's life.

Studies have also shown that greater self-compassion has consistently been found to predict lower levels of depression.

Nurturing self-care, encouragement, mindfulness and supportive therapy can be good first steps to practicing self-compassion. For more info, visit <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mental-health/4-ways-to-boost-your-self-compassion>.

Be well,

Rachel Vogel, Ph.D.
Principal
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PTSD and Cancer

Adapted from Cancer.Net

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder. PTSD is most often associated with traumatic events such as war, sexual and physical attacks, natural disasters, and serious accidents. But it can also affect people with a history of cancer. For example, a recent study found that nearly 1 in 4 women who were newly diagnosed with breast cancer experienced PTSD.

Some aspects of the cancer experience that might trigger PTSD include:

- Being diagnosed with the disease
- Diagnosis of an advanced cancer
- Painful tests and treatments
- Pain from the cancer itself or other physical issues
- Test results
- Long hospital stays or treatments
- A cancer recurrence or the potential for recurrence

Signs and symptoms of PTSD

It is normal for a cancer survivor to have feelings of anxiety, such as worry, fear, and dread. However, if these feelings do not go away over time, continue to get worse, or affect daily life, they could be a sign of PTSD.

Other symptoms of PTSD include:

- Nightmares and flashbacks
- Avoiding places, events, people, or things that bring back bad memories
- Strong feelings of guilt, hopelessness, or shame
- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Continuous feelings of fear or anger
- Loss of interest in activities and relationships that used to be enjoyable
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drug or alcohol abuse
- Frightening or unwanted thoughts
- Difficulty feeling emotions



PTSD symptoms are different for each person and can come and go. The symptoms usually develop within 3 months of a traumatic event. But they can also occur several months or even years later. If you experience any of these symptoms and they last more than 1 month, talk with your doctor or a member of your health care team.

People with cancer and cancer survivors who have PTSD need have treatment because the disorder can keep them from getting needed tests, cancer treatments, or follow-up care. PTSD can also increase a person's risk of developing other mental, physical, and social problems. These can include depression, alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, and loss of relationships and employment.

Risk factors for PTSD

It is not clear why some people develop PTSD while others do not. Certain factors may make a person more likely to develop the disorder, including a younger age at diagnosis. PTSD seems to be more common for:

- People who have had PTSD or other mental health conditions before being diagnosed with cancer

- Women from minority groups
- People with high levels of overall stress
- People who use avoidance strategies to cope with stress, such as drugs or alcohol
- Single people

However, a person with cancer or a survivor is less likely to develop PTSD if they:

- Receive strong support from family and friends
- Are given correct information about the stage of the cancer
- Have good relationships with members of the health care team

Treatment of PTSD

PTSD is treatable. Which treatment works best depends on a person's specific symptoms and situation. Common treatments are psychotherapy, medications in combination with psychotherapy and support groups.

Find support for PTSD

Many PTSD resources are available. Talk with your doctor or another member of your health care team for help and recommendations. One national resource is the American Psychosocial Oncology Society's helpline: 866-276-7443.

Local MN resources

- Crisis Connection: 612-379- 6363 or 1-866- 379-6363 (toll free)
- COPE (availability is variable): 612-596- 1223 (no cost)
- Fairview Riverside Behavioral Emergency Center: 612-672- 6600
- Hennepin County Acute Psychiatric Services: 612-873- 3161
- Ramsey County Adult Mental Health: 651-266- 7900