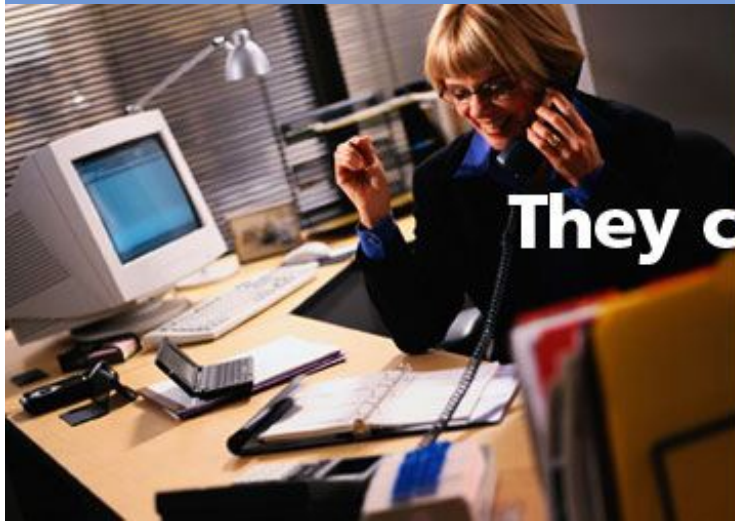


New Connections

HELPING YOU FIND YOUR WAY THROUGH TREATMENT



Issue 13



They call it work,

but for you
it could be therapy.

Most of us get genuine satisfaction from our jobs, so it's understandable that people undergoing cancer treatment may want to continue reaping the positive psychological benefits of work. That sense of productivity, teamwork and control can boost your self-esteem and even take the focus off of your treatment.

Not everyone undergoing cancer treatment will be able to work. It will depend on how you feel, which is influenced by the stage of your cancer and the symptoms associated with your treatment. There are no reasons to stop working if you're able to continue. Below are some tips you may want to follow for making work easier and more successful.

Making a plan: Try to determine what would help you continue working without negatively affecting your employer. If possible, schedule your treatments for late in the day or right before a weekend to allow yourself time to recuperate without reducing your time on the job. Weigh the possibilities of telecommuting, flextime, or shortened work days or work weeks. Prioritize your daily tasks so that your most important work is accomplished and less important tasks are set aside for a time or handled by others.

Setting the stage: In a face-to-face meeting with your supervisor, talk about your diagnosis, the treatment and your strong desire to continue working. Present the plan you developed and get feedback from your supervisor. If you have not yet started treatment and don't know how it is going to affect you, explain that your plan is tentative and may need revision.

Most people will be happy to try to accommodate your needs and to help in any way they can. You can tell your supervisor as much or as little as you wish about your illness, keeping in mind that what you say to your supervisor is *protected* information under the law. To learn more about these protections and your rights, call the Americans with Disabilities Act information line at 1-800-514-0301 or contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at www.eeoc.gov or by calling 1-800-669-4000.

Your supervisor will likely appreciate that you have thought things through, but she or he may still feel ill equipped to react appropriately to your diagnosis. After all, people respond in different ways. Remember that communication and education can go a long way in these matters.

Suggestions for talking to your supervisor:

- Remind your employer that many people with cancer continue to lead productive lives, including lives with careers.
- Help allay fears about the impact on your company or department, pointing out that it may well be negligible, with only minor adjustments made for treatment and periods of excessive tiredness.
- Discuss candidly what changes, if any, you may need to make to your present schedule, hours and duties.
- Address what you would and would not like your supervisor to share with your coworkers.
- Assure your supervisor that you would like to be treated like any other employee and that you will be the judge of

whether or not an assignment is too much of a strain.

Telling your coworkers: How open you are with your coworkers is a personal decision. Keep in mind that what you tell your coworkers about your illness is not protected information. In some work environments, it might be better not to share details. In others, it might help both your coworkers and you. While most people will be concerned and want to help, others, even those who mean well, may respond in odd, awkward ways. However, most people report being glad they shared information about their disease and its treatment with the people with whom they work.

**For more cancer information, call 1-800-ACS-2345
or visit www.cancer.org, anytime, day or night.**

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