Cancer and self-confidence

Cancer treatment can change the way you feel about yourself (your self-esteem). You may feel less confident about who you are and what you can do. Dealing with the cancer diagnosis and the treatment can make you feel like you’re on an emotional rollercoaster.

Cancer treatment can also change the way you feel about your body. Cancer and its treatment can mean changes to the way your body looks and how you feel about your body. Body image may not depend on how you look but how you think you look.

Regardless of what treatments you have or how your body looks after treatment, you may feel differently about your body after treatment for cancer. You may be unhappy with your body size or shape or about scars from surgery. This can affect your self-confidence.

Some people worry about how their body changes will impact on relationships with others, especially intimate relationships. A change in body image may not affect your ability to have sex but it may make you feel less sexual.

These feelings are common. It may help to talk about how you feel with your partner or other people who have had cancer.

Some people find that physical activities — sports, dancing classes, exercise — improve their body image. Creative activities such as painting, playing music, and craft can also increase your self-confidence.

Others find that they love themselves and their body more after cancer, as they come to terms with what they have been through and realise that they have an inner strength that they didn’t recognise before.

Tips:

- Give yourself time to adapt to what you’ve been through.
- Draw attention to your good points.
- Consider wearing a scarf or wig if your hair has fallen out from chemotherapy.
- Try to stay active and exercise as regularly as you can.