



# BALANCING WORK & CANCER

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## CANCER AND CAREERS FOUNDED 2001

Mission: Cancer and Careers empowers and educates people with cancer to thrive in their work environment by providing expert advice, interactive tools and educational events to patients, survivors and caregivers.

The organization also provides guidance and training for healthcare providers, HR professionals, employers and managers.

Vision: to eliminate fear and uncertainty for working people with cancer



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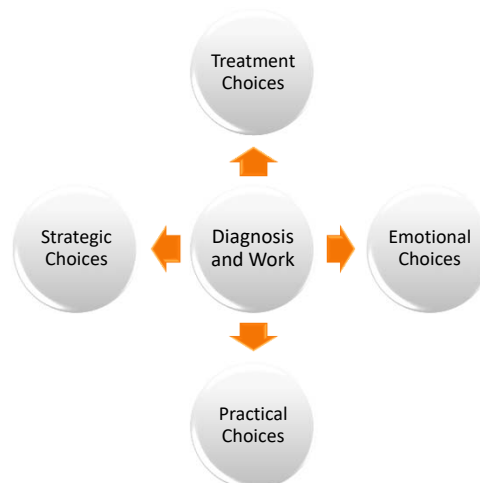
## COMMON WORK & CANCER MISCONCEPTIONS

- People diagnosed with cancer don't want to work.
- People diagnosed with cancer can't work.
- People diagnosed with cancer only work for their paycheck and/or insurance.
- People balancing work and cancer will not be as productive.
- People looking for work won't get hired because of their diagnosis.
- Providing reasonable accommodations is expensive.
- Accommodating one person means making changes for every employee.
- Treatment and/or side effects are the same for everyone.
- People who complete treatment are "all better" and should be back to "normal".

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## DIAGNOSIS/WORK DILEMMA



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## DIAGNOSIS/WORK DILEMMA

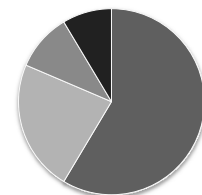
- How important is work to you?
- What information do you need to make a decision about work?

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## TO WORK OR NOT TO WORK?

- How will treatment affect work and schedule?
- What are job demands — physical and mental?
- How flexible is the work environment?
- Can accommodations be made?
- What are the financial and health insurance concerns?
- How is identity connected to work?
- Have work priorities changed?



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## INFORMATION NEEDS

### Medical and Treatment Info

- Treatment Options
- Timeline
- Potential Side Effects
- Mitigation Strategies

### Work Info

- Insurance Support
- Company Policies & Culture
- Workplace Flexibilities
- Job Demands

### Legal Info

- Federal & State Laws
- Medical Leave
- Disability Insurance
- Health Insurance

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## KEY LAW: AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

To access the ADA:

- Your employer (or prospective employer) must be big enough that the ADA is applicable to them
- You must have the required skills, experience, degree, training, license, etc. to do the job
- Your disability must meet the criteria determined by the ADA

Benefits may include:

- Protection from discrimination
- Access to Reasonable Accommodations

More resources:

<https://askian.org/index.html>

<http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/legal-and-financial>

<http://trriagecancer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/2016-ADA-Quick-Guide-Triage-Cancer.pdf> @ 2026 Cancer and Careers

YOU MAY BE  
FURTHER  
PROTECTED BY  
A STATE FAIR  
EMPLOYMENT  
LAW

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## SAFEGUARDING PRIVACY ONLINE

It's a good idea to review privacy policies before sharing personal info on any website

- Develop a disclosure plan
  - Deliberately decide what & where to share
  - Consider impact, now & in the future
  - Communicate preferences to your family, friends and anyone else you choose to disclose to
- Monitor what others post about you
- Consider how you present any cancer community involvement

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## DISCLOSURE IS A SPECTRUM

- **Whether to disclose is a personal decision**
  - How do you feel about privacy?
  - What benefits or legal protections might be available if you disclose? And, how much information is necessary to access them?
- **The amount you disclose may evolve, but that doesn't mean it ever has to be every detail**
  - Remember you can always choose to share more, but it is not possible to “un-share”
- **Consider timing—and circumstance—before starting a conversation**
  - Are you working during treatment and/or recovery?
  - Are you looking for a new job?



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## BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL BRAND

- Google yourself
  - Use popular social media websites to strategically increase your online presence
    - LinkedIn – Instagram
    - Twitter– Pinterest
  - Become active in online communities
  - Set up a professional webpage or blog
  - Delete old posts that no longer represent your interests
    - Though they may still exist somewhere in the online space, they become harder to find
- Think deliberately about what you post
    - Would I want a boss — current or future — or coworkers to know this?
    - Would I want this on the front page of a newspaper (or the homepage of my favorite news site)?
    - Would I want my grandmother or mother to see this?

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## DO I HAVE TO SHARE THE NEWS OF MY DIAGNOSIS AT WORK?

- Communicating information about your health or health history is a personal choice with many factors to consider
- Understand the pros and cons of sharing before making a final decision
  - Are there legal benefits to disclosing?
  - Are there interpersonal benefits to disclosing?
  - Are there practical benefits to disclosing?
- *Remember disclosure is a spectrum*

More resources:  
[www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/where-to-start/sharing-the-news](http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/where-to-start/sharing-the-news)  
[www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/early-career/disclosure-decisions-at-work](http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/early-career/disclosure-decisions-at-work)

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## DISCLOSURE AT WORK

Gather information — from both your healthcare team and your employer

Consider what your side effects might reveal—especially if you are choosing not to disclose widely

- Changed Appearance
- Fatigue
- Personality/Affect Changes
- Mobility Changes
- Neuropathy

More resources:

<https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/employers-managers/managers-toolkit>

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## AVOIDING ACCIDENTAL DISCLOSURE: AT WORK

### Technology Considerations

- Be mindful of your environment when on camera
- If meetings are being recorded, consider your conversation topics
- Be aware of tabs and documents open on your computer if you're screen sharing
- If on a work computer, be mindful of which personal accounts, files & passwords are saved down
- Understand your company's cyber security and tracking of employee activity
  - Keystrokes, idle time, screenshots, etc.
  - Consider your personal internet use
- Remember the parameters of office chat applications
- If/when having telehealth appointments, try to avoid having them on a work computer

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# DISCLOSURE & JOB SEARCH

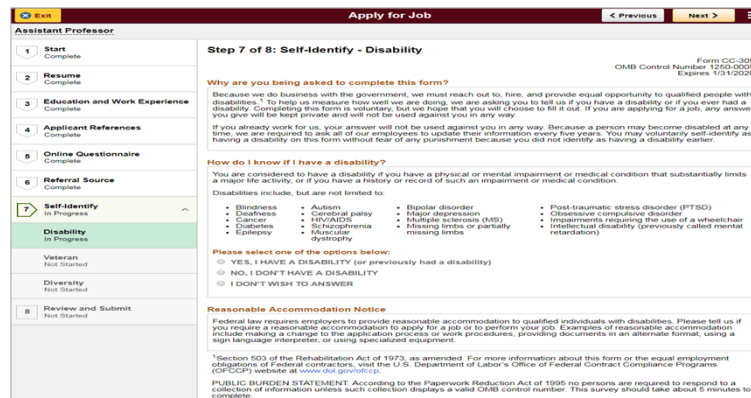
- Should you disclose your cancer history...
  - on your resume?
  - in your cover letter?
  - during an interview?

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# DISCLOSURE: ONLINE APPLICATIONS

## OPTIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS



**Apply for Job** Previous Next

**Assistant Professor**

1 Start Complete

2 Resume Complete

3 Education and Work Experience Complete

4 Applicant References Complete

5 Online Questionnaire Complete

6 Referral Source Complete

**7 Self-Identify** In Progress

Disability In Progress

Veteran Not Started

Diversity Not Started

8 Review and Submit Not Started

**Step 7 of 8: Self-Identify - Disability** Form CC-306  
OMB Control Number 1250-0036  
Expires 1/31/2020

**Why are you being asked to complete this form?**

Because we do business with the government, we must reach out to hire, and provide equal opportunity to qualified people with disabilities. To help us measure how well we are doing, we are asking you to tell us if you have a disability or if you ever had a disability. Completing this form is voluntary, but we hope that you will choose to fill it out. If you are applying for a job, any answer you give will be kept private and will not be used against you in any way.

If you already work for us, your answer will not be used against you in any way. Because a person may become disabled at any time, we are required to ask all of our employees to update their information every five years. You may voluntarily self-identify as having a disability on this form without fear of any punishment because you did not identify as having a disability earlier.

**How do I know if I have a disability?**

You are considered to have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment or medical condition that substantially limits a major life activity, or if you have a history or record of such an impairment or medical condition.

Disabilities include, but are not limited to:

• Blindness	• Autism	• Bipolar disorder	• Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
• Deafness	• Cerebral palsy	• Major depression	• Obsessive compulsive disorder
• Cancer	• HIV/AIDS	• Multiple sclerosis (MS)	• Impairments relating to the use of a wheelchair
• Diabetes	• Schizophrenia	• Missing limbs or partially missing limbs	• Intellectual disability (previously called mental retardation)
• Epilepsy	• Muscular dystrophy		

Please select one of the options below:

YES, I HAVE A DISABILITY (or previously had a disability)

NO, I DON'T HAVE A DISABILITY

I DON'T WANT TO ANSWER

**Reasonable Accommodation Notice**

Federal law requires employers to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities. Please tell us if you require a reasonable accommodation to apply for a job or to perform your job. Examples of reasonable accommodations include making a change to the application process or work procedures, providing documents in an alternate format, using a sign language interpreter, or using specialized equipment.

\*Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. For more information about this form or the equal employment obligations of Federal contractors, visit the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) website at [www.dhs.gov/ofccp](http://www.dhs.gov/ofccp).

PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT: According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1996 no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete.

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## MANAGING “CHEMO BRAIN” ON THE JOB – BACK TO BASICS

- Don't multi-task
- Write down a list of priorities
- Do one thing at a time
- Take notes
- Rehearse everything
- Build breaks into your day

“Chemo Brain” one sheet:  
[https://www.cancerandcareers.org/publication\\_orders/new](https://www.cancerandcareers.org/publication_orders/new)

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## STRATEGIES AT WORK: COMMUNICATIONS

- Identify a point person
- Communication is key
  - Ask for priorities
    - Create a written plan
  - Know your limits and set boundaries
    - “I appreciate that you thought of me for this project but I’m a bit swamped this week and am concerned about my ability to get this back to you in a timely manner.”
    - “Thank you for offering me these additional shifts. Unfortunately, I’m short on time at the moment as I’ve got some family obligations to attend to. But I’d love to talk about this possibility again in a few months, once the situation at home has settled down.”

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## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: THE SWIVEL

My uncle had cancer . . .

- *"I'm sorry to hear that, it must have been hard . . . (AND) . . . What did you think about the meeting that we had yesterday?"*

How are you feeling?

- *"Really excited to be back! In fact, I have a few questions about the new time-card system. Do you have a minute to answer them?"*

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## STRATEGIES AT WORK: REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Modifications to your job, your schedule or the environment that you work in that makes it possible for you to perform your essential duties
- Also available during the job search process

More resources:

- <https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/legal-and-financial/requesting-reasonable-accommodations>
- <https://askjan.org/index.html>

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## QUESTIONS TO HELP IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

### Is it reasonable in your job to:

- **Work the same number of hours every week, but at different times?** (e.g. instead of 9-5 work 7-3)
- **Do some or all your work from home?**
- **Move to a different work station?** (e.g. closer to the restroom, or further away from entrance door)
- **Ask for special furniture?** (e.g. a movie theater ticket taker who is given a chair to sit in while working)
- **Ask for special equipment?** (e.g. an anti-glare screen for your computer or a cooling vest to help balance heat sensitivity)
- **Request more frequent breaks?**
- **Reassign job responsibilities?** (e.g. a teacher has recess duty covered by coworkers so he can rest)
- **Ask if an exception can be made to a policy?** (e.g. being allowed to use headphones at your work station to help reduce distractions)
- **Change to working an open role that you are qualified for?**
- **Work in a different location?** (e.g. moving to a different restaurant within the same chain that is closer to home)

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## LOOKING FOR WORK

- Things to think about:
  - Emotional highs/lows
  - Being strategic
  - Holding yourself to a higher standard
- The steps of a job search are the same as the steps to build any relationship—consider what you reveal, and when.

More resources –  
Early Career Job Search Articles: [www.cancerandcareers.org/en/looking-for-work/early-career](http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/looking-for-work/early-career)  
Job Search Toolkit: [www.cancerandcareers.org/publication\\_orders/new](http://www.cancerandcareers.org/publication_orders/new)

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# NETWORKING

- 85% of jobs are found through networking
- Networking sources:
  - Websites such as LinkedIn
    - Write a compelling profile; include photo
    - Ask for substantive recommendations
    - #BeSpecific
    - Post status updates regularly
    - Join “groups” and participate actively
  - Former coworkers and vendors
  - Friends, neighbors, fellow volunteers, members of support groups or faith communities
  - Professional associations
  - Doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants, dog walkers
  - Professors, teachers, career services

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# NETWORKING DO'S & DON'TS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>DO</b> think about anyone &amp; everyone who you know</li> <li> <b>DO</b> be specific about what you need</li> <li> <b>DO</b> offer to help in return</li> <li> <b>DO</b> update your LinkedIn</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>DON'T</b> rely solely on job boards to find opportunities</li> <li> <b>DON'T</b> be afraid to introduce yourself</li> <li> <b>DON'T</b> expect a job offer right away</li> <li> <b>DON'T</b> forget to follow up</li> </ul>
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# RESUME DOS & DON'TS

✓

- DO** incorporate keywords for tracking software
- DO** write measurable achievements
- DO** include a short summary
- DO** use active words (created, increased...)
- DO** list volunteer work

✗

- DON'T** include clichés (go-getter, team-player...)
- DON'T** write more than two pages
- DON'T** use elaborate fonts, designs or images
- DON'T** highlight gaps by including months
- DON'T** forget to proof-read

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# SAMPLE KEYWORDS

## STRENGTHS & EXPERTISE

- Project Management
- Client Service
- Strategic Planning
- Internal Communications
- Social Media Strategy
- Budget Management
- Graphic Design
- Product Marketing
- Trade Show/Events Planning
- Billing and invoicing
- Vendor Supervision

SAMPLE KEYWORDS BY FUNCTIONAL SPECIALTY	
<b>ACCOUNTING/FINANCE</b> • Financial Modeling & Budgeting • Accounts & AP/PA • Financial Reporting • Vendor Accounts • Financial Planning • Cash Management	<b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b> • Project Management • Risk Management • Resource Allocation & Scheduling • CRM • Microsoft Office Suite • PMP/SA Series 7 & 8 • Bloomberg Proficiency
<b>EDUCATION/TEACHING</b> • Student Assessment • Elementary Education • K-12 Subjects • Differentiation Through • Small Group Instruction • Social Media Programs • Data Collection • Lesson Planning & Implementation	<b>RESEARCH</b> • Data Collection • Data Analysis • Literature Review • Statistical Analysis • Grant Writing • Research Design • Research Ethics
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b> • Recruitment • Compensation Management • Employee Relations • Training & Development • Performance Management • Employee Engagement • Talent Acquisition • Leadership Development	<b>MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS</b> • Social Media Management • Digital Photography • Blog & Content Writing • Branding & Launch • Communications • Content Strategy • Graphic Design • Video Production • Event Planning
<b>NON-PROFIT/ID</b> • Team Leadership • Program Design & Implementation • Fundraising • Community Outreach • Volunteer Management • Grant Writing • Data Analysis • Financial Reporting	<b>OPERATIONS/LOGISTICS</b> • Inventory Management • Supply Chain Management • Quality Control • Process Improvement • Customer Service • Logistics Planning

For more sample keywords, check out Cancer and Careers' guide, [www.cancerandcareers.org/en/SampleKeyWords](https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/SampleKeyWords)

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# COVER LETTER DOS & DON'TS

**DO** include a cover letter, even if it is optional

**DO** mention specifics about your interest in the company

**DO** highlight your experience that aligns with the job description

**DON'T** copy exactly what is on your resume

**DON'T** use a form letter

**DON'T** forget to proof-read

More resources: <https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/looking-for-work/resume-cover-letter>

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# INTERVIEW DOS & DON'TS

**DO** research the interviewer & the company

**DO** practice your Swivels in advance

**DO** focus on your qualifications for the job

**DO** ask for clarification, if needed

**DON'T** feel obligated to disclose your diagnosis

**DON'T** forget you are interviewing the company as well

**DON'T** be vague, answer with specific examples of your experience

**DON'T** leave without asking for next steps

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## HANDLING TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: THE SWIVEL

"Why are you just now entering the workforce?"

"What have you been doing since you graduated?"

*"I took some time to handle personal priorities that are now fully resolved, and I used that time to [take a course / freelance / volunteer / reflect on what I really wanted to do]. I'm genuinely energized and particularly excited about this role because..."*

More resources:

<http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/looking-for-work/interviewing/mock-interviews>

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## MORE SWIVELING

"I noticed on LinkedIn you're involved with several cancer-related organizations — can you tell me about that?"

*"Like a lot of people, cancer has touched my life, and I've found ways to give back that mean a lot to me. It's also given me some great skills — I've done [specific volunteer role or activity], which maps really well to what you're looking for here. Speaking of which, I noticed your company is also involved in [cause or initiative] — how does that show up in this team's work"*

-----  
Are you sure you'd be able to handle the demands of this role?

*"Absolutely. I've consistently delivered [outcome] even during demanding periods, and I've gotten good at prioritizing and managing my time effectively. I'd actually like to hear more about what the pace looks like day to day — what does a typical week in this role look like"*

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## RESEARCHING AN EMPLOYER

- Company benefits
- How have they treated other employees in the past?
- How large is the company? Will the ADA apply?
- Discrimination lawsuits
- Do they have employee programs? (e.g., EAP, affinity programs)
- Other information that can help identify their workplace culture (e.g., [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com) , [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) )

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## WORKING IN A NEW JOB WITH A NEW EMPLOYER

- How do you assimilate?
- How do you handle it if you are still in treatment?
- Managing your energy
- How can you succeed?
- Asking for accommodations

At Work Early Career Articles:  
[www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/early-career](http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/at-work/early-career)

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## CAC CONFERENCES

### **Midwest Conference on Work & Cancer\***

March 27, 2026 | 9:00 AM CT – 4:00 PM CT

<http://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/midwest>

### **National Conference on Work & Cancer**

June 26, 2026 | 8:45 AM ET – 4:00 PM ET

<https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/community/events/conference>

### **West Coast Conference on Work & Cancer**

October 17, 2026 | 9:00 AM PT – 4:00 PM PT

<https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/community/events/westcoast-conference>

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## UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENTS

### **First Impressions: Resumes and LinkedIn**

April 1 | 6:00 PM ET/3:00 PM PT

### **Networking: Tips, Tools & Techniques**

May 6 | 6:00 PM ET/3:00 PM PT

### **Communicating Effectively: Part 1**

July 8 | 1:00 PM ET/10:00 AM PT

### **Communicating Effectively: Part 2**

August 5 | 1:00 PM ET/10:00 AM PT

For more info & to register, visit: <https://www.cancerandcareers.org/en/community/events>

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# BALANCEAR EL TRABAJO Y EL CÁNCER EN ESPAÑOL

Balancear el trabajo y el cáncer (Balancing Work & Cancer)  
March 11 | 6:00 PM ET/3:00 PM PT

Búsqueda de empleo (Job Search)  
June 3 | 1:00 PM ET/10:00 AM PT

Balancear el trabajo y la salud mental (Mental Health)  
September 16 | 1:00 PM ET/10:00 AM PT

Balancear el trabajo y el cuidado (Caregiving)  
December 2 | 6:00 PM ET/3:00 PM PT

For more info & to register, visit: [www.cancerandcareers.org/es/recursos/btc](http://www.cancerandcareers.org/es/recursos/btc)

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