

# KEEP CALM AND SCREEN

## TIPS FOR OVERCOMING 'SCANXIETY'

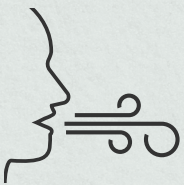


Like the ostrich, we know that burying our heads in the sand to avoid detecting potential risk, also known as avoidance, is not the most effective coping mechanism.

The same can be said for avoiding preventative and early cancer screenings.

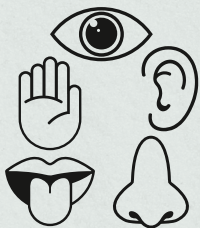
Before we get into some ways to cope with the fear of cancer screening, let's highlight some benefits of screening and early detection: Early cancer screening can find cancers before symptoms appear and can detect cancers at stages that are easier to treat and cure; screening can decrease the chance of dying from cancer; some cancer screenings, such as colorectal and cervical screenings, can be preventative and can stop cancer cells from developing.

**Here are 8 tips/coping strategies to work through the fear of screening and get you to follow through with the care you deserve.**



### **Practice breathing techniques:**

Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, hold for 2 counts and release slowly through pursed lips for a count of 8. It may help to recite certain words in your head like calm or peace as you take each breath in and slowly release. You can also try counting down from 100 to distract yourself from negative thoughts while you practice deep breathing.



### **Practice Mindfulness:**

When we are anxious we try to ignore our feelings making the pressure and anxiety worse. Mindfulness is a type of meditation which allows us to be self-aware and become deeply in tune with our emotions, feelings, senses while keeping a detached awareness and being judgement free. A simple mindfulness exercise is to identify 3 things you can see, smell, feel, taste and hear.



### **Bring support to your screening appointment:**

ii.e. have a friend accompany you, bring your favorite playlist or book, bring some scripture or an affirmation, or perhaps a religious/spiritual book can bring some comfort while you wait.



**Ally with your medical professionals and verbalize your fears to them:**

A medical professional may be able to provide some information, which may make you feel more in control and at ease.



**Reframe your thoughts:**

Remind yourself that screening is a good form of self-care or look at your screening appointment as part of your regular preventative care.



**Remember your "Why":**

Maybe it's being around for a friend or loved one, your child's wedding or graduation, grandchildren, or a career you love. Knowing your cancer risks can help others in your family know their genetic risk factors and can help them act early too. Maybe it's simply knowing that you deserve peace of mind or to have some control over your health and future.



**Talk with a friend beforehand:**

Verbalizing your fear and anxiety can reduce negative feelings. A friend can help offer some personal advice since they know you. Putting your feelings into words may help you process and work through them, allowing you to feel ready to complete your screening goals. A friend can also help keep you accountable.

**MYTHS  
FACTS**

**Recognize or be aware of common familial or cultural myths or beliefs about medical care:**

Things you may have heard growing up about health care may have provoked some of the fears you are experiencing now. Challenge or counter erroneous beliefs by looking at valid, medical resources like the CDC or the American Cancer Society websites and looking up facts about the benefits of early screenings. Find a provider that is culturally sensitive and can understand you and where you may be coming from.

## NEXT STEPS

### AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A patient navigator can help provide some support and guidance to you when you are ready to move forward with your cancer screenings

For more information contact ScreenNJ patient navigation services in any one of the ways below:

Call: **1-833-727-3665**

Email: [patientnavigation@cinj.rutgers.edu](mailto:patientnavigation@cinj.rutgers.edu)

Text: **"Screen" to 43386**

Scan the QR code below:



Be sure to request our **FREE 'Q&A Screening Guide'** providing questions you can ask your doctor during your screening appointment!