

## Develop a Cancer-Resistant Attitude

Of all the diseases known to man, cancer is the most feared. And even though cancer in its various forms strikes about one-third of the people in the United States, doctors are still at a loss to explain exactly what causes it. Factors like smoking, exposure to toxic substances like asbestos or radiation, and high-fat diets have been associated with causing cancer. But something else is a factor. Why, for example, does one cigarette smoker get lung cancer and another does not?

Researchers are looking into the existence of a cancer-prone personality—attitudes and behavior that, all else being equal, make certain people more likely than others to develop cancer. Numerous studies indicate that these traits may point to a cancer-prone disposition:

- A passive, unemotional outlook on life.
- Suppression of feelings.
- Allowing anger to build up.
- Withdrawal or feelings of hopelessness and helplessness when something bad happens.
- An emotionally troubled childhood.

People with these characteristics are more likely to get cancer, and when they do, they accept the condition passively and are likely to die in a shorter period of time.

Doctors explain the apparent relationship between cancer and personality by theorizing that a lifetime of built-up emotions causes a release of hormones that interferes with the body's natural defenses against disease. To resist cancer, then, people should actively try to solve conflicts within their control and should suppress or let go of feelings about conflicts that they can't change. In fact, researchers have found that people who survive cancer tend to be feisty, demanding, and express their feelings easily.