Healing the Mind, Healing the Body:
Emotional recovery after cancer

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Betty’s Story
Cancer survival rates are increasing.

By 2022, 67% of the estimated 18 million U.S. people diagnosed with cancer will survive beyond 5 years.

De Moore et al., 2013
Survivorship comes at a price

- Changes in physical appearance and functioning
- Fatigue
- Cognitive difficulties
- Foreshortened future/ fear of recurrence
- Pain
- Changes in sexual functioning
- Altered financial status
- Change in social relationships
The Emotional Cost

• ≥30% report clinically significant distress
• Depression rates 3 times higher than the general population (58% report sx)
• 34% report clinically significant anxiety

• Those with early childhood trauma or multiple concurrent life events more vulnerable to emotional difficulties.
Survivorship Stages and Challenges

- Fear of Recurrence
- Depressive sx
- Fatigue
- Cognitive difficulties
- Pain
- Cancer Spec. Sequelae
- Finding Benefit
- Return to work

- Fear of Recurrence/Anxiety
- Depressive sx
- Fatigue
- Cognitive difficulties
- Pain
- Cancer Spec. Sequelae
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- Fear of Recurrence/Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Cognitive difficulties
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- Cancer Spec. Sequelae
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Stanton et al., 2015

- Re-entry
  - Treatment Completion

- Early survivorship
  - 2 years After diagnosis

- Long term survivorship
  - 5 years After diagnosis
Psychological distress occurs across the cancer continuum

- Before diagnosis among those at increased risk due to family history
- Diagnosis and Treatment
- Immediately post treatment
- Survivorship
Effects of chronic stress

- Increased vulnerability to common cold
- Slower wound healing
- General decrements in immune function
- High blood pressure and high cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Weight gain (central fat storage)
- Poor control of blood sugar among diabetics
- Poor health behaviors (e.g., diet, smoking, no exercise)
  - Even 10 years after dx among CRC women w anxiety and depression at tx
- Shortened telomeres and telomerase activity
- DNA damage and poor repair
- Increased VEGF production and vascularization of tumor cells
- Increased rates of tumor cell metastases
Effects of chronic stress

Before work

After work
Bio Behavioral cancer risk factors

- Increased vulnerability to common cold
- Slower wound healing
- General decrements in immune function
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Psychological Interventions

• Promote better management of stressors
• Reduce distress, anxiety, depressed mood
• Enhance quality of life
• Enhance emotional growth (finding benefit)
Can there be a benefit??

- Most survivors navigate the disease without high levels of distress needing psychological intervention.
- Those with strong adaptive functioning and good social support do better.
- Some will find benefit from the experience and a renewed sense of meaning.
- No one is left unchanged.
- Psychological intervention can lead to positive changes.
Healing the Body

The Stress and Immunity Breast Cancer Project

- Stress management, coping etc.
- Health behavior change
- Relaxation training
- Education to ↑adherence to tx
- Met weekly for 4 months then monthly for 8 months
- 227 Stage 1-3 breast cancer

Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management And Relaxation Training (SMART)

- Stress management, coping etc.
- Social support
- Relaxation training
- Met weekly for 10 weeks
- 240 Stage 0-3b breast cancer

Anderson et al., 2002 *J Consult Clin Psychol*

Antoni et al., 2001 *Health Psychology*
CBSM associated with changes in gene expression

- 273 upregulated genes
- 336 downregulated genes

Good genes turned on
- IFN
- Imm Activ
- GCS Sensitiv

Unhelpful genes turned off
- CREB/PKA
- NFkB
- Inflammation
- MMP9

Antoni, Lutgendorf, Blomberg et al (2012) *Biological Psychiatry*
Reduced Risk of Breast Cancer Recurrence

Andersen et. al, (2008) *Cancer*

Stagl et. al, (2015) *Br Ca Res and Trtmnt*
Reduced Risk of Death

Andersen et. al, *Cancer*, 2008

Stagl et. al, *(2015)*Br Ca Res and Trtmnt

56% reduced risk of death

HR = .44, P = .016

HR = .21, P = .04
Does anyone want to learn a few stress management and coping techniques?
How stressed are you right now?
Take a deep breath…
How stressed are you right now?
What is stress?
What is stress?

The physical, mental, or emotional tension experienced in reaction to an event.
What is stress?

• Typically experienced when we perceive demands exceeding our resources.
What is stress?

- Typically experienced when we perceive demands exceeding our resources
THE STRESS RESPONSE CURVE

- Good Stress
- Distress

Stress Management Increasing
The Performance Level

- Actual Performance
- FATIGUE
- COMFORT ZONE
- Fatigue
- Exhaustion
- ILL-Health
- BREAKDOWN

Adapted from Nixon P, Practitioner, 1979

AROUSAL STRESS
How can we manage stress?

- Decrease perceived demands
- Increase perceived resources
How can we manage stress?

“Try these relaxation methods. If they don’t work, I’ll prescribe a tranquilizer dart.”
step 1. Increase Awareness:

How do you know when you are stressed?
## Symptoms of stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Symptoms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>Irritable Bowel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>Muscle Tension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Backaches</td>
<td>Indigestion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulcers</td>
<td>Constipation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muscle Spasms</td>
<td>Poor Concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleeping Difficulties</td>
<td>Obesity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Low Self Esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drinking/Drug Use</td>
<td>Chronic Diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>Insomnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears</td>
<td>Physical Weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck Aches</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Symptoms of stress

Stressful situation

cognitive

emotional

behavioral

physical

social
Thoughts determine feelings
Imagine a lemon
Symptoms of stress

Stressful situation

Automatic thoughts

- cognitive
- emotional
- behavioral
- social
- physical
Symptoms of stress

Stressful situation

Automatic thoughts

- cognitive
- emotional
- behavioral
- social
- physical
Step 3: Coping with stress

- Problem focused coping
  - Ask for help
  - Get more information

- Emotion focused coping
  - Talk to a friend
  - Relaxation practice
Coping with stress

- Exercise
- Yoga
- Social support
- Meditation
"That's part of our in-house, stress management program..."
Mindfulness and Stress

• Staying present in the moment reduces stress

• Living in the past or future brings the past and future demands into the present – adding to your perception of stress in this moment

• Planning is good, but when you plan, just plan, then execute your plan moment by moment.

• Multi-tasking is less efficient than doing one thing at a time
Guided Imagery can help

https://www.healthjourneys.com
What are we doing now...
“Germaine seemed that evening to have captured something essential about our struggle against cancer: that to keep pace with this malady, you need to keep inventing and reinventing, learning and unlearning strategies.”

“The cancer cell is evolving. And so are we.”

Siddhartha Mukherjee, The Emperor of all Maladies
We can help you cope!

- CBSM groups
- Psychotherapy
- Acupuncture
- Nutrition
- Oncology massage

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