



# Survivorship Self-Care

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# What is “Survivorship”?

Living with, through, and beyond a cancer diagnosis.

- National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (NCCS), 1986



# Why Self-Care?



- Cancer takes a toll on everyone involved.
- Cancer is a marathon, not a sprint.
- It's not 'over' when it's over.
- We have to put on 'our own oxygen mask first' if we hope to help anyone else.
  
- The bottom line: To maintain **quality of life**, we **all** have to practice **self care**.

# Quality of Life in Survivorship:

## 4 Areas of Focus (Ferrell, 1996)

- **Physical:** Symptom relief and function
- **Psychological:** Sense of control, positive life changes, addressing fear and distress
- **Social:** Roles and relationships
- **Spiritual:** Finding hope and meaning



# Physical Self-Care

- **Fatigue**

- For most people, this improves but may not go away. It can come and go, but should not get worse over time.
- **Exercise** is actually the ‘treatment’ for fatigue!
- Many resources: Livestrong at the Y, Team Survivor NW, walk with a friend, yoga, water walking, resistance bands, light weights, Physical Therapy, even YouTube
- Set a **goal**, write it down, and *get moving!*

# Psychological Self-Care

- **Living with uncertainty**
  - Normal to have many different reactions to a stressful and life threatening event
  - Common: Fear, worry, guilt, anger, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and more
  - **Control** what is in your control: Make healthy choices, write out a bucket list and work through it, do “legacy work”, seek reliable information and support, *ask for what you need*

# Social Self-Care

- **Connecting with others**
  - It is normal to feel differently about what is important to do during and after cancer
  - Tendency to withdraw, isolate, feel fearful, sad, or angry
  - **Be honest** about what you are or are not doing and *why you are making that choice*
  - Seek **reasonable solutions** to try to connect with others. Ask for **physical and psychological supports** if these are needed

# Spiritual Self-Care

- **Loss of hope and meaning**

- Common to feel overwhelmed, like giving up, stuck, misunderstood, and helpless

- **Resilience** helps meaning finding: *Being able to experience both positive and negative emotions in distressing situations*

- **Gratitude** is the the quality of being thankful: *Readiness to show appreciation and return kindness promotes hope and wellbeing*



# Practicing Resilience

- Being willing to learn from hardship
  - Post-traumatic growth
- Participating in kindness
  - Receiving and giving
- Finding humor
- Self-kindness
  - Not self-indulgence
- Recognizing our common humanity
  - Resist isolation
- Mindfulness
  - Acknowledging the current moment



# Practicing Gratitude

A **practice of gratitude** has been shown to

- Improve physical symptoms and performance
- Improve psychological coping
- Improve sleep quality, alertness, and energy
- Improve self-esteem and empathy
- Improve relationships and reduces resentment
- Build optimism
- **Have LASTING benefits**

# Survivorship Self-Care

- Remember that self-care improves your **quality of life** in many ways:
  - Physical
  - Psychological
  - Social
  - Spiritual
- **A gift of gratitude:** Your own Gratitude Journal is ready for you to use!

