Take Control: Navigating the Emotional Roller Coaster of Cancer

Tuesday, February 2nd

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WELCOME

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Sharsheret

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THANK YOU

This program is made possible with generous support from Julius and Emmy Hamburger Memorial Fund

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Sharsheret is a national not-for-profit organization supporting young Jewish women and their families facing breast cancer. Our mission is to offer a community of support to women, of all Jewish backgrounds, diagnosed with breast cancer or at increased genetic risk, by fostering culturally-relevant individualized connections with networks of peers, health professionals, and related resources.

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COMMONALITIES

Genetics
Culture
Spirituality
Values

Holidays
Dating
Marriage
Community
NAVIGATING YOUR EMOTIONS
NEWLY DIAGNOSED AND IN TREATMENT

Karen E. Hurley, PhD
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Hereditary Cancer Risk

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When you’re the one…

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Other strains on mood

• Hassles
• Shifting roles
• Medications
The “C” word

Control

Cancer illuminates the limits of control we have over our lives

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Battle mind

• Common coping mechanism for getting through surgery or treatment

• “Get it done” mentality regardless of how you feel or the long-term cost

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Worrying about worry

• People who worry often have beliefs about worry:
  – “Worrying helps me cope”
  – “Worrying is dangerous”

• Ironically, both positive and negative beliefs about worry make people more anxious and depressed

Cook et al., Health Psychology, 2015
De-centering

• Seeing thoughts as passing events
• A key ingredient to anxiety management techniques such as:
  – Mindfulness meditation
  – Cognitive-behavioral therapy
• “Lifting up off the thought”

Hayes-Skelton & Graham, Behav Cogn Psychother, 2013
“By the time he made this picture, Matisse was over 80 and too ill to paint. So he came up with a new technique [cutting up] colored paper...he called this "drawing with scissors." With his assistant’s help, the shapes were then arranged and glued down. This method is known as collage, from colle, the French word for glue.”

Rosie Dickens, The Children’s Book of Art
Jayla’s (age 9) list of what you could or couldn’t do if you broke your arm:

Can’t do

• “Cook as well (it would be hard)
• Paint walls
• Play
• Move the arm
• Go swing
• Hang stuff up
• Any sport”

Can do

• “You could pour water in a cup
• You could walk
• You could still paint stuff but different
• Color
• Use your phone
• Take a picture
• Write
• Read a book”
“Mis-imagining the unimaginable”

• Focusing illusion: what we can’t do takes up all attention; what’s still possible is out of focus

• Underestimating adaptation: Not able to imagine learning to live with something if you have to

Ubel, Health Psych, 2005
Adjusting your quality of life

- Re-prioritize:
  - What’s important to you now?

- Re-calibrate:
  - What’s your measure of a good day?

- Re-define:
  - How do you define “quality of life” today?

- Re-focus:
  - What *can* you do? What’s going well?

Rapkin & Schwartz, Health QOL Outcomes, 2004

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One Day at a Time
Techniques for shifting perspective

- Mindfulness (meditation, yoga)
- Reappraisal (cognitive-behavioral therapy)
- Exercise
- Expressive writing
- Social support
Social support

• Find at least one neutral person who can listen without judging

• Those who do not confide at risk for prolonged distress
Food for thought

• What image do you use to express your experience of cancer – roller coaster, battle, or something else?

• To what extent does your image:
  – Speak your truth?
  – Empower you?
  – Comfort you?
  – Connect you with others?

Hurley, Women & Therapy, 2014

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More food for thought

• What are your beliefs about worry?
• What is your relationship to your worried self?
Positive Paradox

• Maintaining compassionate attention to all emotions, even negative ones
NAVIGATING YOUR EMOTIONS
SURVIVORSHIP

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ARE YOU DONE? IT’S MY TURN!
PRETTY BOX WITH A PINK RIBBON

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LOOKS ARE DECEIVING
EMOTIONAL DNA

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CANCER GLASSES

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LOST...
...AND FOUND

Look What I Found Outside My Box!

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WHAT’S NEXT?

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VOLUME CONTROL

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EMBRACE YOUR TRIGGERS

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NOT EVERYTHING IS ABOUT CANCER
EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

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FIND YOUR VOICE

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THRIVING AGAIN

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Abbie, a Sharsheret cancer survivor, shares her personal story about navigating the emotional impact of cancer.
To ask a question, please dial *1 or enter your question into the chat box.

Questions will be addressed in the order received.

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