



Emotional Challenges and Mental Health Support for Individuals Experiencing Cancer

Beth Farrell, LCSW, LIMHP, CCATP

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Meet the
presenter



Beth Farrell

- Private Practice
- Clinical Supervisor
- Mom, Friend, Comedian
- Podcaster
- Hater of Laundry



*“We are the witnesses; we honor the lost.
We willingly know what has been.”*

Demons of Punjab, Doctor Who

Objectives

Discuss the emotional challenges and common mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD, that individuals experiencing cancer face during diagnosis and treatment.

Describe various psychological therapies and support mechanisms to assist patients and their caregivers in maintaining well-being, using case-based scenarios.

Identify strategies to empower patients to seek support, communicate their needs effectively to healthcare providers, and manage stress and emotional distress.

Cancer

It is the most studied medical condition in the world. - American Cancer Society

19th
C.

Research Begins

Cancer established as a disease, interventions focused primarily on surgical treatments

20th
C.

Treatment Breakthrough

Chemotherapy developed and cancer begins to be studied on a cellular level. BRCA gene identified

21st
C.

Treatment & Prevention

Precision medicine, immunotherapy epigenetic aspects and linking health and cancer prevalence.

Cognitive Wellness

“There is no illness of the body apart from the mind.” –Socrates teachings

470
BCE

Ancient History

Mental health has been explored in every civilization, each having standards for living.

19th
C.

Mental Health Research

Establishment of Psychiatry and the classification of human behavior.

20th
C.

Psychological Intervention

Psychoanalysis, behaviorism, cognitive behavior therapy.

21st
C.

Acceptance of the Body Mind Connection

Psychopharmacology, neuroscience, genetics and understanding stress on the body



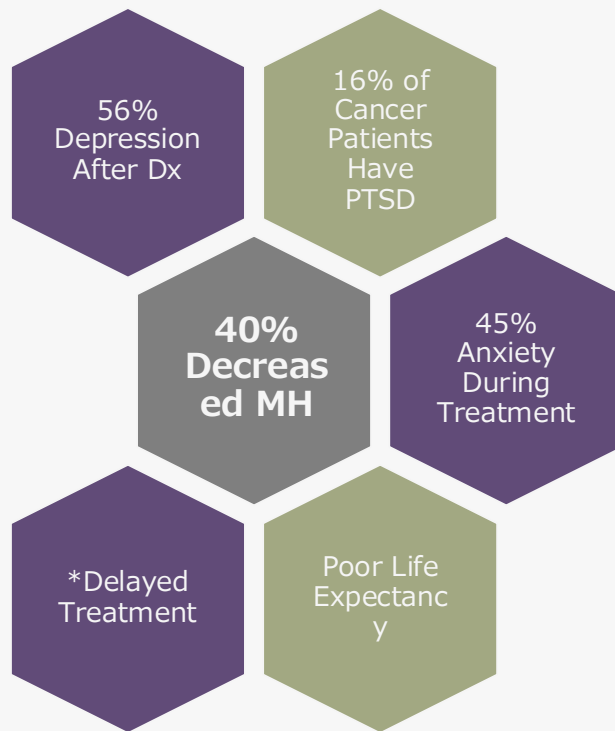
Mental Health

Impact of cancer diagnosis and treatment

Psychosocial Impact



Statistics



Biology of Mental Health in Cancer

Cancer Impacts

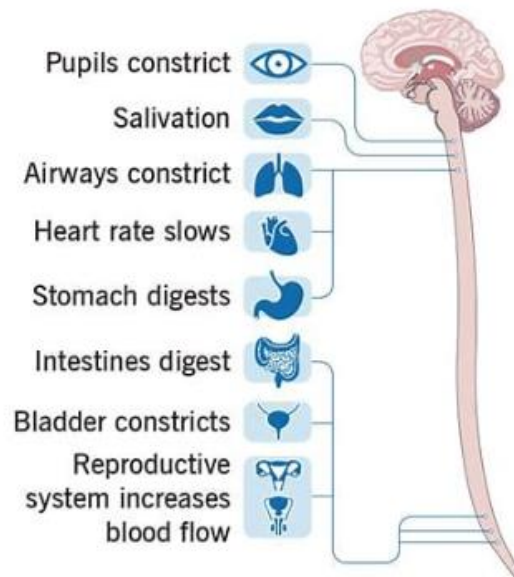
Autonomic Nervous System

- Parasympathetic
- Sympathetic

11

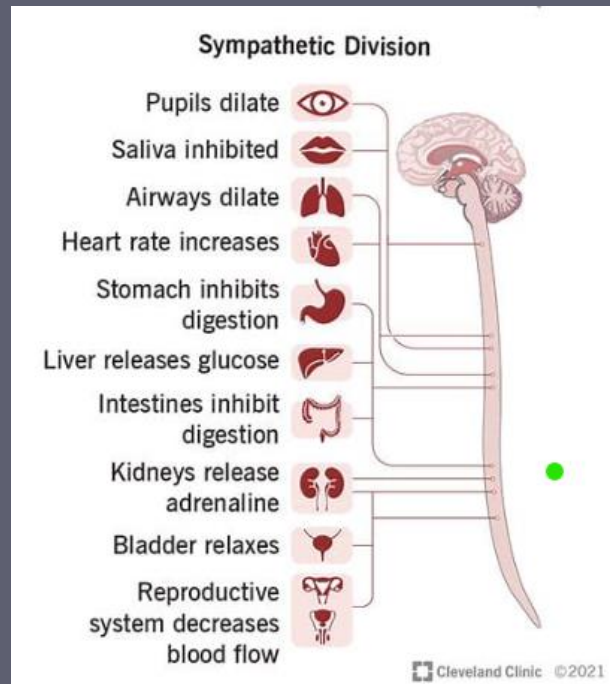
Parasympathetic

Parasympathetic Division

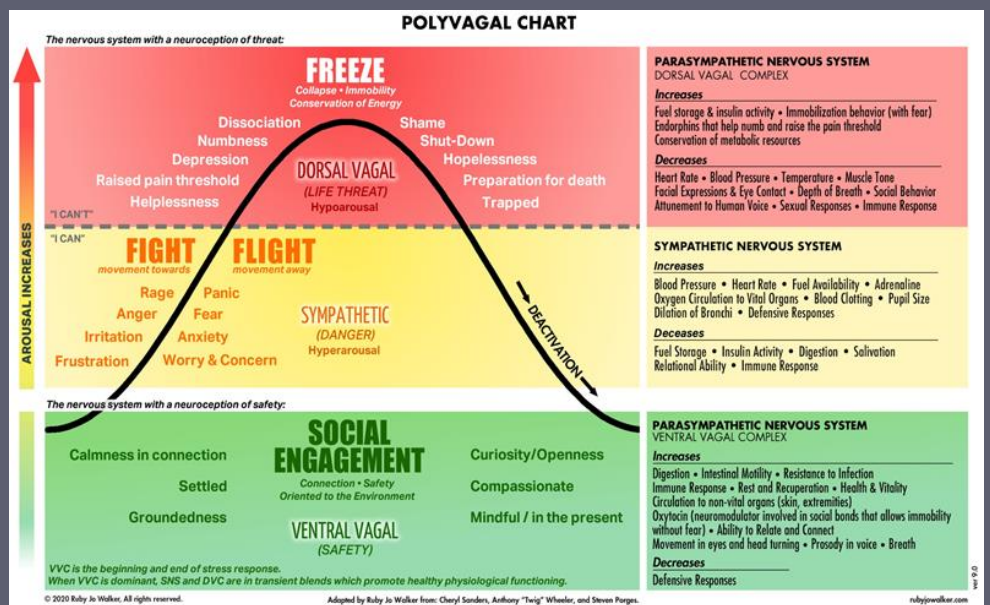


12

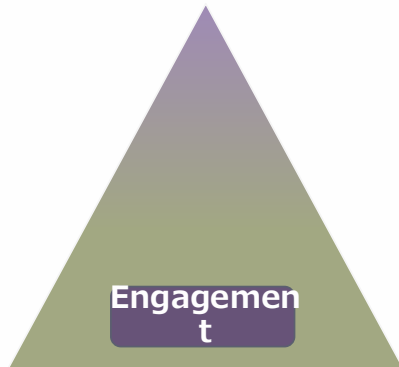
Sympathetic



Poly Vagal Theory



Engagement



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

Increases

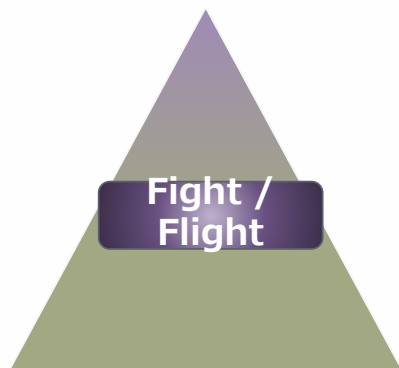
Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

Decreases

Defensive Responses

15

Activation



SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Increases

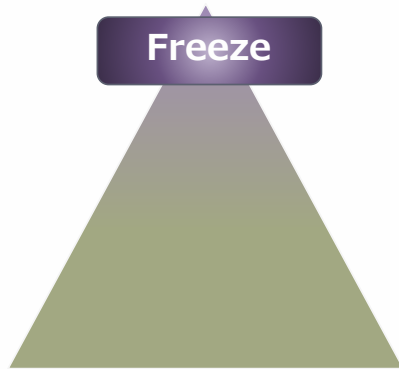
Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

Decreases

Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
Relational Ability • Immune Response

16

Survival



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

Increases

Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
Conservation of metabolic resources

Decreases

Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

Cancers Biological Impact

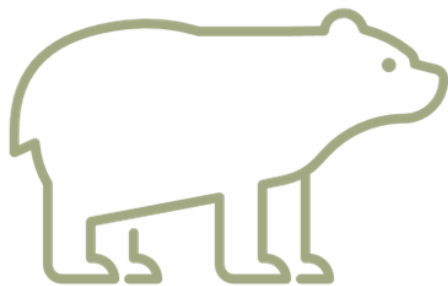
Direct Effects of the Tumor
Chemotherapy and Radiation
Cancer-Related Fatigue
Pain and Stress Responses
Paraneoplastic Syndromes

Strategies for Managing Distress from Cancer & Treatment

19

Anxiety

GRRRR



Fear

Look, there is a Bear!

Anxiety

There MIGHT be a Bear

What to do IF there is a Bear

There also COULD be an alien.

Or

Biological Activation

20

Managing Fear



When in CRISIS use TIP Skills

Temperature

Physical Activation Progressive
Relaxation

Deep Breathing

*Mindful Exposure

21

Managing Anxiety



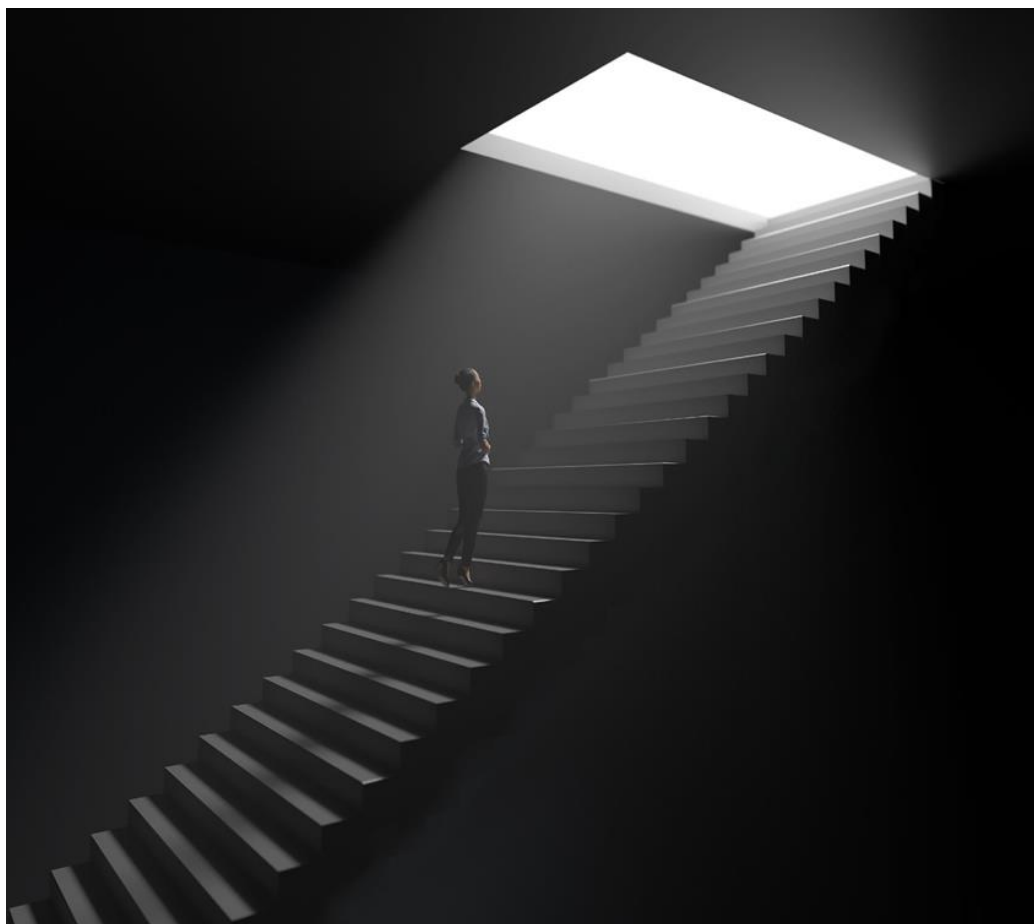
Normalize & Validate

Paraphrase or Summarize Identity
Values and Motivation

*Follow your ABC's

22

Impacting Depression



Activating Behavior

- Set Achievable Goals
- Practice Gratitude
- Rediscover Joy
- Rediscover Agency

Community



25

Biological Protective Factors for Depression

- Vitamin D
- B12 and Folate Ferritin
- Thyroid Function
- Cortisol Levels
- Neurotransmitter Levels

26

Anxiety vs Biology Checklist

- ✓ Sleep Disruption
- ✓ Pain
- ✓ Hypoglycemia
- ✓ Dehydration
- ✓ Emotionally or Physically Overwhelmed

27

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28

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