



# *Living with Cancer-* *coping with an advanced/Metastatic diagnosis*

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# Emotional Effects

- Shock and Disbelief
- Fear and Uncertainty
- Loss of Control
- Denial
- Anger
- Blame and Guilt
- Withdrawal and Isolation
- Resentment
- Anxiety
- Depression
- ***Practical issues!***

# Studies & Research

“A diagnosis of cancer is a very stressful event for the patient and their families. Patients, partners and other family members can suffer from clinical levels of depression and severe levels of anxiety and stress reactions”

(Edwards B, Clarke V. 2004)

# Studies & Research

## **Study on QOL of Women with Recurrent Breast Cancer and their Family members**

### **Conclusion**

Women with recurrent breast cancer are in need of programs to assist them with the severe effects of the disease on their QOL. Programs need to include family members to help counteract the negative effects of the recurrent disease on their mental health and to enable them to continue as effective caregivers. (Journal of Clinical Oncology 2002)

# Depression

- Low mood most/all of the time
- Loss of pleasure and interest in your favourite activities
- No motivation
- Feeling worse in the morning
- Changing in sleep patterns
- Poor concentration

# Depression

- Feelings of guilt, blame, hopelessness and helpless
- Feeling over sensitive or vulnerable
- Feelings of despair and worthlessness
- Irritable
- Wanting to cry/crying
- Thoughts of suicide

# Dealing with Depression

- Can be successfully treated
- Ask for help
- Talk to professionals, family & friends
- Medical intervention
- You can often recover from depression even if you think it unlikely at the time

# Anxiety

- Can come and go or be constant
- Difficult in concentration, upset easily and distracted etc
- Can effect the body in many ways-physical, psychological and behavioural

# Psychological Effects

- Fear and dread
  - Worry
  - Negative thoughts
  - The same feelings over and over again
- ✓ Helpful to write down what you feel and think

# Behavioural

- Irritable with others
- Moody
- Nervous
- Tearful
- Angry
- Avoiding people/places

# Physical Effects

- Panic attacks
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhoea
- Lump in your throat
- Dry mouth
- Chest pain
- Pins and needles
- Shortness of breath
- Over breathing
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Shaking
- Hot flushes
- Racing heartbeat

***WHAT TO DO....?***

# What to do?

- Find Support
- Communicate
- Manage Uncertainty
- Balance Hope with Acceptance
- Highlight Positives

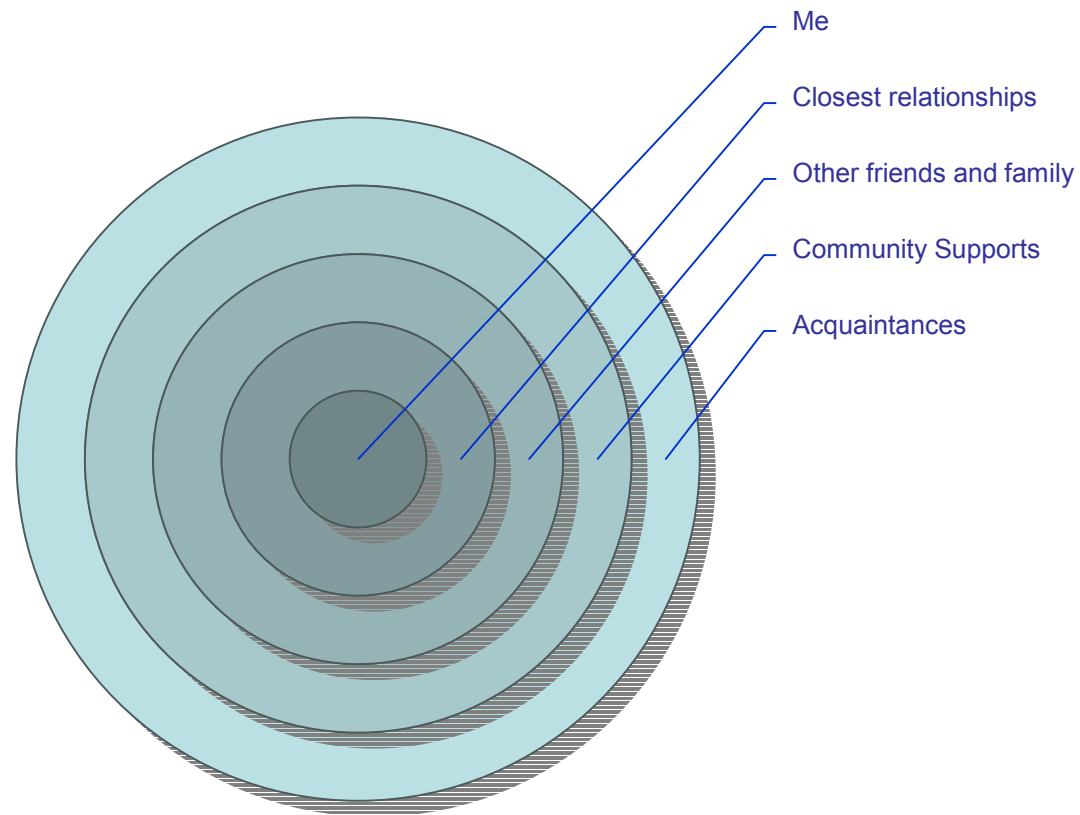
# Support Systems

- Essential in Fight Against Cancer
- Help you cope over long periods
- You may get the help you need from:
  - friends and family
  - members of the community
  - understanding professionals
  - cancer support groups/centres

# Using Your Support

- Involve others from the start
- Accept offers of help
- Suggest how people can help
- Value your support
- Caring is not a one way process

# My Family/ Support System



# Communication

## ☺ Verbal and non-verbal

- Communication should match intentions
- Ignoring cancer causes isolation
- Exchange information to avoid stress
- Practical AND Emotional issues

# What is safe to share?

- Feelings can seem '*Unacceptable*' or '*Threatening*'
- Understandable desire to protect
- Danger of generating boundaries
- Reduced capacity to problem solve
- Person with Cancer readier to confront issues

# Managing Uncertainty

- Uncertainty about the future can cause anxiety
- Much of the work reconciling with cancer is finding ways to deal with.....
  - fear and doubt
  - lack of knowledge about success of treatment
  - what will the future bring?

# Cognitive strategies for keeping uncertainty at bay

- Distraction
- Pacing yourself
- Setting goals
- Comparisons
- Prayer and Faith



# Cognitive strategies for keeping uncertainty at bay

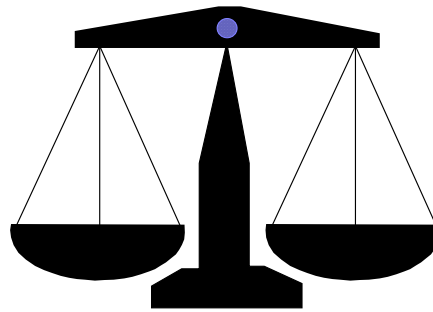


- Humour
- Keeping Up Appearances
- Wishful thinking
- Taking Control
- Relaxation

*“laughter may not always add years to  
your life ,but it will add life to your  
years” - author unknown*

# Balancing Hope with Acceptance

- Fighting the illness Vs Yielding to it....



- Not becoming overwhelmed
- Denial- an adaptive technique
- Planning
- Hold onto hope

# Positives!

Families experience the cancer illness of a loved one with a range of emotions and activities;

- ✓ empathy
- ✓ comforting as much as possible
- ✓ sharing decisions
- ✓ being advocates
- ✓ providing physical and emotional care

- Despite role changes, stresses, and distress, the positive feelings of *“being there when it counts”* and the sense of doing all one can for a loved one more than outweigh the stress of care giving.

# Positive Experiences.....

- valuing support of others
  - developing compassion
  - learning to delay personal gratification
  - new levels of intimacy.
- .....Can lead to reevaluation of lifestyles
- living each day fully
  - putting preoccupations about future to rest
  - look at life-work balance

*Thank you*