



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

8 Strategies for Living Well After Cancer



a handbook for the
Skills & Support Group
for Younger Women

Grateful acknowledgement to the NuCare Research Project, Hope and Cope,
Depts. of Nursing, Oncology, Psychiatry, Division of Psychology,
Sir Mortimer B. Davis -Jewish General Hospital and McGill University

Your workbook presents:

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Good coping & mindfulness



Workbook For Coping Skills Workshop

*You Do Not Need To Learn Everything Today, Or Even Remember
What You Heard! This Workbook Is Designed To Be Your Memory...
Refer To It Often.*

We can't control the world, but we can control how we cope with it.

The major goal of the seminar is to help you strengthen and develop **your sense of personal control**. This goal is accomplished by learning about **good coping**, and by practicing the skills that lead to good coping. We define good coping as active problem solving that is optimistic, resourceful, practical and flexible.

Good coping implies personal control that lets you achieve what is important to you. Good coping also means recognizing your own strengths, and giving yourself a pat on the back.

Practicing the tools for coping in this workshop will help you make changes in your coping. Confucius, a great philosopher and teacher explained why practice is so important:

*I hear, I forget,
I see, I remember,
I do, I understand,
I practice, I master.*

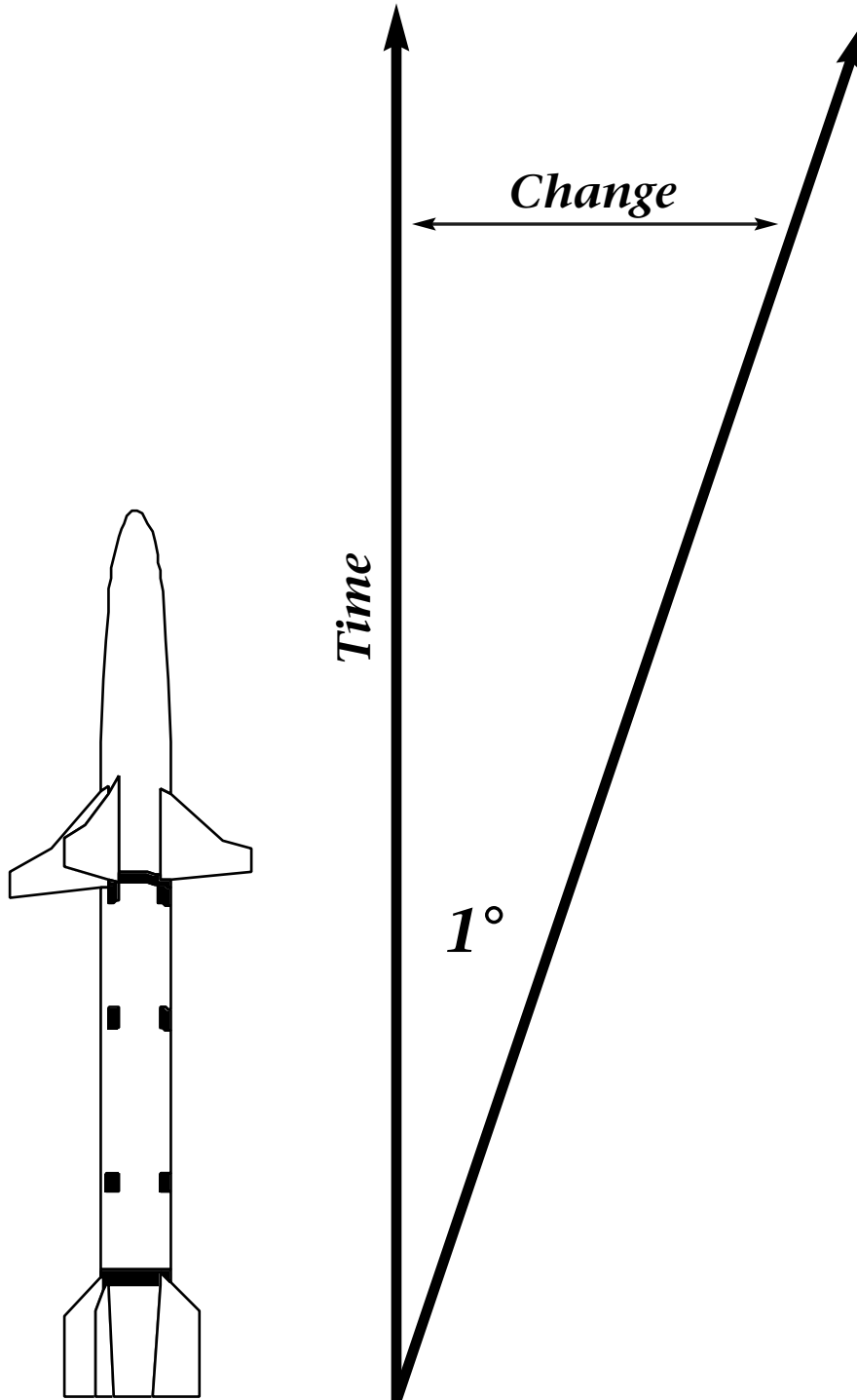
One way to practice the skills you will learn in this workbook is to repeat ideas you like out loud. Remember, "where the attention goes, the energy flows." It takes from 30-60 times to practice a new skill before it's second nature to us! The good news is that only a small amount of change is needed to make a difference — only one degree!

How many times do we need to practice these new skills?

_____ to _____ times.

How much change is needed? Just _____ degree of change.

1 Degree of Change



Good coping is active problem solving that has:

OPTIMISM or an expectation that positive change is possible,

PRACTICALITY about the kinds of solutions that are feasible,

FLEXIBILITY in approach to any problem,

RESOURCEFULNESS in finding support or additional information that helps.

Weisman and Worden Project Omega 1980

Thus, with good coping, you do not feel helpless or hopeless.

Mindfulness

What is it?

Mindfulness is:

simply the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present moment,

putting your mind to what you are doing, but not reacting to it.

a kind of meditation in daily life.

a way of celebrating in small ways the passage through the day.

Why is it important?

Mindfulness is now linked to many well-being outcomes. It is important in stopping automatic thoughts, habits and unhealthy behaviors, and gaining new energy and a sense of joyful well being.

How do I do it?

Like every other skill, you practice! Here is an easy exercise, called "The raisin exercise," to practice:

Hold one raisin in the palm of your hand. Look carefully at it – feel and smell it. Then put it in your mouth and pay attention to the taste and texture of it. Keep your mind on how it feels in your mouth as you chew it. Then, swallow it – still paying close attention to how that feels.

You may notice that by paying attention, you become more awake and aware. When we are mindful of the present, we discover relaxation, calmness, energy and insight into ourselves.

Try paying close attention to some of the usual things you tend to do automatically – like drinking a cup of tea or coffee, or watching how the sun filters through a window, or how clothes smell fresh from the dryer ... Each moment can be an opportunity to practice mindfulness.

Remember that the present is the only time that any of us ever has.

"Awareness in itself is healing" —Fritz Pearls

Through mastering the skills presented in this seminar, you will be able to cope effectively with both the changes brought about by illness and the daily stresses in your life. Mindfulness can also help master the other coping skills.

We function on three levels at the same time in relation to the world around us. Our health status is dependent on the interaction of all three. These three levels are:

- the biological (**physical/medical**),
- the psychosocial (**emotional**), and
- the sociological (**in relation to the world around us**).

Good coping is helpful to all the three levels.

We use a variety of coping methods; some more often than others, some different times than others. Some are better than others in dealing with stress. Coping methods can be divided into 2 major categories:

- 1) Behavioural methods are those actual things we do.
- 2) Emotional methods are the ways we think about a situation.

Following is a list of ways of coping we tend to use in ordinary daily life and in those times of great stress. Some are very useful, some are not. Some help in the short term only; some help in the long term too. Which ones do you tend to use? Which ones would you like to use more?

Seeking Social Support

<i>Skills I Use Now</i>		<i>Skills I would Like To Try</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Talk to someone who could do something.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Ask a friend or relative for advice.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Talk to someone about how I am feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Talk to someone to find out more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Let my feelings out somehow.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Look for empathy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Get professional help.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Positive Problem Solving

*Skills I
Use Now*

*Skills I would
Like To Try*

-
- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Look for a silver lining. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Change or grow as a person in a good way. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Treat the illness as a challenge. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Rediscover what is important in life. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Change something. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Know what has to be done. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Try to find out as much as I can. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Make a plan of action and follow it. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Be inspired to be creative. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Come up with different solutions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Change something about myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Live one day at a time. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Remind myself how much worse things could be. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Try not to act too hastily. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. _____. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. _____. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

Statement Of Coping Principles

1. Recognize that no thought or feeling is wrong in itself, it is what we do with it that really counts.
2. Become aware of the way your body feels as tension begins to build up—remind yourself to calm down.
3. Recognize that you don't have to go through this alone. Don't hesitate to seek information or counselling if questions or concerns arise. Help is available from a wide range of sources.
4. Work to improve communication with your family, friends and physician.
5. If you are experiencing fatigue or feeling overwhelmed, consider redistributing or reducing your responsibilities for a period of time.
6. Recognize that family and friends have to deal with their feelings too. They may be helpful or unhelpful to you. They are, however, probably doing the best they know how.
7. Your physician is your partner. Your part of the partnership is to accept responsibility for reporting honestly how you are feeling, inquiring about the concerns you have, and doing your best to deal with the adjustments you must make.
8. Do things each day that are nurturing to you. These may include fun activities, relaxation, time alone, and exercise.
9. You can work to solve some of the problems that are causing you stress.
10. Accept that guilt and worry about things you CAN'T change are useless and energy-draining.
11. Give yourself credit for whatever level of coping you are achieving. Remember, there is no "instant fix" for stress.
12. Develop a love and respect for yourself — because each of us is, with our strengths, a special and worthwhile person.

*Adapted from Managing The Stress of Cancer:
A Handbook for Patients and their Families by Dr. Ronna Jevne, 1984.*

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 1 **Good Coping**

Good coping is _____ problem-solving that has:

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.

How many times do we have to practice these skills before we “have them?”

_____ to _____ times.

How much change is needed? Just _____ degree of change.

My notes:



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Relaxation and imagery



The Benefits of Relaxation:

1. **Gain Control of the Mind.** This clears the mind of negative thoughts (and feelings), promotes creativity and enhances problem solving as alpha brain waves are increased. Alpha waves are associated with peace of mind and feelings of well being.
2. **Never out of Control.** The participant allows himself to relax to the degree that he chooses, and is able to terminate the experience at will.
3. **Inoculation against future stress.** With experience, the participant learns to recognize stress and tension when it starts to build up, and can correct it before it becomes a headache, backache, pain in the neck, etc.
4. **Useful for people with chronic pain.** Relaxation helps to release endorphins, the body's own natural pain killers. Relaxation combined with certain visualization techniques helps to lessen pain, especially secondary pain.
5. **A general calming response.** Can be used at anytime regardless of surroundings. Once familiar and practiced, the relaxation response can be elicited in a very few minutes, in any place, at any time.

The positive effects of relaxation are usually not experienced immediately. In fact, it is a response which most of us learn, allowing for adequate practice over time.

Nearly everyone can learn to relax their body in a short time, but wayward thoughts are the most common difficulty. The attitude to unwanted thoughts should be that of an uninvolved observer. Allow any thoughts to roll on, to come and to go, and they will eventually stop.

We recommend that you practice daily for 2-4 weeks. After this time you will be able to elicit the relaxation response by breathing deeply and using the cue word "Relax", or your own cue word.

Mental anxiety, stress and physical tension are interrelated. If we break that cycle at any point, relaxation will occur.

Relaxation training requires a passive, "let it go" attitude. An effort to relax is usually a failure to relax. Relaxation is part of each of us. All we are doing is allowing it to occur by retraining the body and mind to recognize the difference between tension and relaxation.

The research supporting the use of relaxation techniques is extensive. As a treatment for pain, stress and medical conditions, relaxation has been clearly shown to be effective. It helps to achieve a sense of peace by letting go of tensions, clearing the mind and allowing release from problems. It is almost impossible to think or feel negatively when one is relaxed. Relaxation is the starting point in the process of calming emotions and changing thoughts. Thus, relaxation acts both as a distraction and an energizer. It allows the body to function in a healthier way, for example by lowering high blood pressure, and strengthening the immune system.

Practice at home so that relaxation becomes another coping tool to be used to help you accomplish what you value.

Reading, watching TV, talking to a friend, being on holiday, jogging or walking, enjoying nature, etc. are all examples of light relaxation. Just as there are different stressors for different people, different types of relaxation will appeal to different people. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), however, brings about a deeper, more profound sense of well-being, and can be used with other forms of relaxation.

With practice, relaxation clears the mind and rids the body of unwanted tension in minutes.

Set the Scene

It is important to be free of distraction and interruptions. Become as comfortable as possible, whether lying down (preferable) or sitting in a chair, by loosening any tight clothing and removing shoes and glasses. Support your head if you are sitting in a chair. This exercise takes about 3 – 4 minutes.

a) Close your eyes and put your hands on your lap. Put your attention on your breath. Notice how you inhale and exhale. If your mind wanders, just bring it back to your breath.

b) After you have focused your mind on your breathing for a few moments, put your hands on your lap and then bring your attention to your hands resting on your lap. Be aware of your hands resting there—the position of your palms and fingers. Enjoy that awareness. You do not have to do anything to your hands—simply be aware of them. Enjoy the sensation of awareness. Now say to yourself, quietly or under your breath, "My hands are heavy, my hands are heavy." Again, you do not do anything just enjoy that awareness and sensation. If your mind wanders, just bring it back to your hands. Again, say to yourself, "My hands are heavy," and once more, "My hands are heavy." Enjoy feeling your hands resting on your lap. Now you are ready to end this

exercise on a count of three — one, to take a deep breath, two, to open your eyes, and three to look around and stretch. Congratulate yourself on what you have done! (This exercise is the first step in a series called Autogenics).

c) Choose a favorite piece of instrumental music that reflects your mood or will bring about the quality of feeling you would like to experience. Simply let the music flow through you and focus on the beauty in it.

Be certain that you will not be disturbed, so that you can give your full attention to the moment. Remember that imagery is easy, and trying hard doesn't work. Be patient with yourself.

Imagery & Relaxation

Imagery is an effective way to gain insight, build self-esteem, Relieve pain, resolve inner conflicts and help people to actively participate in their own healing process. With a sense of playfulness we will explore our imagination which may be our most significantly under utilized healing source.

Essential to imagery work is relaxation. Try out several techniques for relaxation and discover what works best for you.

Find yourself a comfortable place to sit or lie down, and put your attention on your breath. Just notice how you are breathing, don't attempt to change anything. Simply be aware of the rhythm of you breathing, and how effortless it is to breathe. Let the air breathe you. Then imagine one of the following:

- a) You are like a pad of butter melting in the warm sun. Feel the warmth of the sun on your body. The warm rays feel soothing and nurturing. Your body releases tension and gently relaxes.
- b) You are in an elevator that is slowly descending floor by floor. At each floor you become more and more relaxed. Feel the gentle sensation as the elevator takes you safely and gently into a deep state of relaxation.

Quick Relaxation Techniques

1. The clenched fist: Clench your fist tightly for a count of ten. Release and let your whole body go completely limp.
2. The deep breath: Take a full deep breath and hold it for a count of ten. When you exhale let it all out at once, letting your body go completely loose and limp. This is related to the first technique in that it too involves an initial tightening (holding the breath for a count of ten followed by a sudden and complete release as you let your breath out all at once.) In addition, it takes advantage of another basic principle — the fact that the body is most relaxed when exhaling.
3. The breathing countdown: Breathing normally, let go more and more as you release each breath, while counting slowly from 10 to 0, one number per breath. By focussing on the “letting go” feeling as you let out each breath let go even more to produce a cumulative effect. Counting backwards (one number per breath) helps create the effect of descending (as if you were in an elevator going down another floor with each breath) — becoming more relaxed with each breath.
4. The warm hands: Imagine yourself basking in the warm sun on a beach or soaking in a hot tub until you can actually feel warmth come into your hands. This technique uses the principle that the power of thought directly affects the body. An example of this principle in action is what happens when you’re hungry and begin anticipating your favourite meal. Your mouth automatically starts watering—a physiological response (salivation) caused by a thought. In the same way, the thought of warmth can have a direct effect on circulation. And since we know that the blood flowing out to the extremities is directly linked with relaxation, thoughts of warmth—especially warm hands—will cause an automatic relaxation response.

Practice:

Anticipate the fact that time will fly by. Think of a time right now when you could fit relaxation into your routine and write it into your agenda.

To practice at home, set aside a period of time, preferably at the same time of day (to establish habit), when you will not be disturbed. “Setting the scene” is an important part of the relaxation process. Also, although relaxation is usually not used for sleep disturbances until several practice sessions have occurred, if you fall asleep while practicing, congratulate yourself on your success!

Remember that relaxation is a gift you give yourself.

Ways of thinking



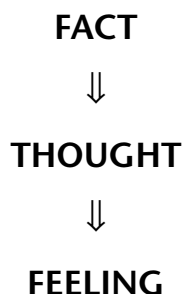
“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by changing their minds.”

— William James

what kind of thinking? ... not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative ...

Emotional and Thinking Ways of Coping

It is widely accepted that we function emotionally in the following way:



Most of life consist of facts over which we have little or no control. Being born with a certain colour of hair, having an accident, being transferred in your job, and getting certain diseases such as cancer are all facts that we can't control. Any fact creates a thought within us, spontaneously and seemingly without any effort on our part. From that thought comes a feeling.

Here is an example to make this concept clear.

FACT: A friend passes by you on the street and doesn't speak to you.

THOUGHT: She/he is upset at me for something.

FEELING: Anger or Frustration.

Note that the feeling came directly from the thought and not from the fact. We have little or no control over most of the facts in our lives but we have total control over the thoughts. The more you feel you have control in a situation, the less stress and anxiety you feel. You always can have some impact and some degree of choice.

Practice:

Practice identifying the facts, thoughts, and feelings in your mind from time to time. Sort out one from the other. By simply identifying and labelling the facts, thoughts and feelings you can begin to change the thoughts which will change your feelings.

Questions to ask yourself are:

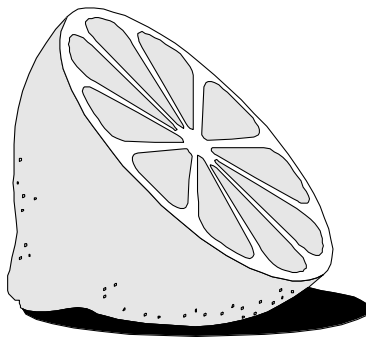
- 1) Is this a fact? Can it be changed? Do I have control over it? What thought results from this fact in my mind?
- 2) Is this a thought? If so, is it a helpful or unhelpful one to me? Can I change it?
- 3) Is this a feeling? If so, what thought did it come from? Is this a pleasant or unpleasant feeling? Do I want to change it?

Thus, a sense of personal control comes from our thoughts. This is a simple statement and it is extraordinarily powerful. It says that we have control over what and how we choose to think. The notion of choice is clear. For many of us from time to time, it is easier and less painful to believe that we have no control over our thoughts than to admit that we can take responsibility for them.

So the next step is to see if we can change our thoughts, even though we frequently do not believe that it is possible!

We do this by first understanding and accepting that although the brain is an intelligent organ, it also is very naive. It responds to whatever messages we give it whether they are true or not ! Here is an example to prove that point called, "THE LEMON EXERCISE."

Changing thoughts is also called "reframing."



Lemon Exercise: How We Can Trick The Brain

“Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your kitchen. Find a lemon; notice the colour of it. Feel its weight in your hand, feel its size, shape and pebbly texture. Bring it to the table. Put it on a wooden cutting board, take a sharp knife and cut the lemon in half. Smell the sharpness. Now bring it up to your mouth and take a bite. What do you notice? There is no lemon but we can still feel its taste in our mouth. We can and often do trick our brain to react to things that are perceptions, by the deliberate use of thoughts.”

Now refer back to the fact of the person who passed you by on the street without speaking. What different thoughts might you have about that fact? What feelings would then arise?

Here is a second example to try: “THE TRAFFIC JAM.”

Imagine yourself caught in a major traffic jam that will probably make you late for work. You could choose to think: “This is terrible. I’m going to be so late — my boss will be angry.” You could concentrate on frequent lane changes trying to beat the traffic and you will end up feeling increasingly distressed, anxious and angry.

You could rather choose to think of the situation as beyond your control and decide to use the enforced time to plan your day, organize your thoughts for work, enjoy the music on the radio, allowing you to feel calm, relaxed and in control.

You have a choice! You can control the way you feel by controlling the way you think.

It is important to remember...

Every Feeling Has a Thought Behind It.

Distorted Thinking

Researchers have categorized the negative thoughts (that are not helpful to us) we have about the facts in our lives and have labelled them distorted thinking. The value in labelling them is that we are then able to first, identify them and second, change them more easily into appropriate, logical and positive thoughts.

Here is a list of illogical and distorted ways of thinking that we commonly use to our disadvantage:

- All or nothing.
- Generalizations.
- Disqualifying the positive.
- Emotional reasoning.
- Using “should” too often.
- Personalizing events.

A. Examples of Distorted Thinking, with the facts, thoughts and feelings that follow.

DISTORTED THINKING	FACT	THOUGHT	FEELING
I think in terms of "All-or-Nothing."	You fail an exam.	I'm a failure.	Sad
I over-generalize.	Your doctor rushes you out of his office.	All doctors care about is the number of patients.	Anger
I disqualify the positive.	A friend brings flowers.	She felt she had to.	Demeaned
I use emotional reasoning.	I'm asked to make treatment options/choices.	I'm dumb, so I can't make any right choices.	Anxious
I use the word "should" a lot.	My daughter wants me to babysit her son.	I should babysit but I made other plans.	Guilty
I personalize.	Your teenager failed his exams.	It's my fault.	Depressed

B. Examples of Logical and Rational Thinking and the feelings that follow.

DISTORTED THINKING	FACT	MODIFIED THOUGHT	MODIFIED FEELING
I think in terms of "All-or-Nothing."	You fail an exam.	I'll study harder.	Hopeful
	eg.		
I over-generalize.	Your doctor rushes you out of his office.	I'll choose another doctor.	Personal control
	eg.		
I disqualify the positive.	A friend brings flowers.	She chose to do it, regardless.	Appreciative
	eg.		
I use emotional reasoning.	I'm asked to make treatment options/choices.	I'll get help from someone. Getting information is a smart thing.	Competent
	eg.		
I use the word "should" a lot.	My daughter wants me to babysit her son.	I'll offer to babysit another day when I'm free.	Relieved
	eg.		
I personalize.	Your teenager failed his exams.	He didn't study or ask for help. I'll help, but I'm not responsible.	Blameless
	eg.		

Self-talk

Self-talk is another way to help modify our thoughts. Here are examples of self-talk statements for you to use. Pick a few to practice.

A. Preparation for Stress

I've succeeded with this before.

What exactly do I have to do?

I know I can do each one of these tasks.

It's easier once I get started.

I'll jump in and be alright.

Tomorrow I'll be through it.

I won't let negative thoughts creep in.

or _____.

B. Facing a Challenge

I will take it step by step, I won't rush.

I can do this, I'm doing it now.

I can only do my best.

Any tension I feel is a signal to use my coping exercises.

I can get help if I need it.

If I don't think about fear, I won't be afraid.

If I get tense, I'll take a deep breath and relax.

It's OK to make mistakes.

or _____.

What IS a positive attitude?

It's not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative!

It is a sense of connectedness to something bigger than the self.

It is a sense of control over how we handle the events in our lives.

It is an ability to visualize a life with hope.

C. Coping with Fear

Relax now !

Just breathe deeply.

There's an end to it.

Keep my mind on right now, on the task at hand.

I can keep this within limits I can handle.

I can always call _____.

I am only afraid because I decided to be. I can
decide not to be.

I've survived this and worse before.

Being active will lessen my fear.

or: _____.

D. Self Congratulations

I did it!

I did alright.

I did well.

Next time I won't have to worry so much.

I am able to relax away anxiety.

I've got to tell _____ about this.

It's possible not to be scared...

All I have to do is stop thinking I'm scared.

or: _____.

E. Affirmations

Everyday in every way I grow stronger and stronger.

I enter this day with a peaceful heart.

or: _____.

It is important that you accept that you may not, and indeed do not have to believe in the thoughts that you substitute for the negative ones. Remember the lemon!

Now quickly read the following:

O P P O R T U N I T Y I S N O W H E R E

What did you read? How else can you read it?

The next 2 pages provide you with a guide to practicing the facts-thoughts-feelings way of coping.

Exercise: Practice Identifying and Modifying Thoughts

	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	ALTERNATIVES	
			MODIFYING THOUGHTS	MODIFIED FEELINGS
<p><i>Describe the situation:</i></p> <p>Where ?</p> <p>When ?</p> <p>Who is involved?</p>	<p><i>Describe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your self-statements • Any thoughts or images that went through your mind • Concerns • Worries • Beliefs/Rules • Memories • Doubts • Meanings 	<p><i>Identify:</i></p> <p>Physiological sensations</p> <p>Emotional sensations (feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of 3 other interpretations and examine each of them • Challenge your first impression • Self-talk: talk to yourself as if you were your best friend • How can you see this situation differently? • So what? • What resources can I use? • Always? No exceptions? • Must? Should? • I need to verify my hypothesis • Am I realistic? • What about nuances? • Bird's eye view vs worm's eye view 	

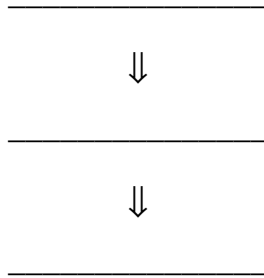
Cognitive Reframing Worksheet

FACT	THOUGHT	FEELING	MODIFIED THOUGHT	MODIFIED FEELING
Told by doctor that I must have more chemotherapy than expected.	The chemotherapy is not working. (hopelessness)	Sad 85 %	Some people require more chemotherapy than others and my body is responding positively.	Sad 30 %

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 3 *Ways of Thinking*

1. Facts, thoughts and feelings fit together like this:



2. The feeling comes from the _____, and not from the _____.
3. We may not have control over the _____ but we do over the _____.
4. The _____ exercise shows that we don't have to believe a thought to have it work.
5. How many times do we have to practice to learn a new skill? _____ to _____ times.

My notes:

Communication



Here is a quote that sums up the importance of communication in our lives.

*I see Communication as a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings.
Once a human being arrives on earth, communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he/she makes with others and what happens to him/her in the world.*

— Virginia Satir

Did you know that Communication is:

- 7 % Verbal
- 35 % Facial Expression
- 35 % Body Language
- 23 % Tone Of Voice

Communication is simply the sending and receiving of messages, intentional and unintentional, verbal and nonverbal. Being able to communicate well is a skill that most of us have not learned about and yet it is an essential part of good coping. It affects our feelings and our health. In dealing with cancer, it can affect the treatment we receive and our quality of life. No wonder then that communication is basic to every human relationship.

Tools For Successful Communication

1. Being Committed

- Wanting to develop a clear and healthy relationship.

2. Allowing Growth

- Realizing that every relationship is changing and growing.

3. Feeling Equal In The Relationship

- Feeling as if you share a common goal, with equal responsibility and authority.

Assertive Communication

Another step to good communication involves knowing how to be assertive. There is a clear difference between being assertive and being aggressive. Assertive communication is expressing yourself — your needs, your feelings, perspectives — in a manner which is clear, direct and neither threatening nor attacking.

Assumptions

- Your feelings are legitimate.
- You have the right to ask questions, state feelings.
- It is OK to negotiate for change.
- It is your right to set boundaries, to say “no.”
- You know better than anyone what you think, feel, and want.

Here is a specific technique for good communication in a situation where the other person is disagreeing with you — it may be a child, a spouse, a nurse or doctor, etc.... It works !

Step 1. Listen and find some truth in what the other person is saying.

Step 2. Listen and put yourself in the other person’s shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.

Step 3. Listen and ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

Step 4. Find something positive to say to the other person.

Step 5. Express your feelings with “I” statements.

Note how important listening is and how often it is used.

About anger

There is always another feeling behind anger. An old proverb says that if you can be patient in one moment of anger, you will escape 100 days of sorrow. Anger is an off-the-mark judgment that affects everyone around in a negative way. When you are angry count to 10; when you are very angry, count to 100. Compare being angry to being assertive.

The most important step in good communication is being able to use “I” statements.

“I” messages have 3 parts:

- I think.
- I feel.
- I want.

“I” Messages Are Used To:

- A. Disclose thoughts, feelings and wants.
- B. Assert self: say yes/no.
- C. Prevent disappointment in the future.

"I" messages are a healthy way, as Shakespeare wrote, "to give sorrow words."

On the next page is an example of how you can turn a message into an “I message” that communicates how you think, and feel and what you want.

Try to avoid blaming others. Try not to use “you” messages.

A. Disclosing thoughts, feelings, wants

eg: “I am frustrated when I trip over school bags in the entrance hall...

“I need help carrying in the...

“I want to have 10 minutes to myself before...

Exercise: Using “I” messages

SITUATION	“YOU MESSAGE”	“I MESSAGE”
	Blame	Ownership
Your mother calls everyday to ask you how you are doing.	“You are driving me crazy, —stop asking how I feel.”	“Mom, I feel frustrated having to report about my health everyday. I’m really trying to live a normal life.”

Fill in an example of your own here:

SITUATION <i>example</i>	“YOU MESSAGE” <i>example</i>	“I MESSAGE” <i>example</i>

The scenarios with “I” messages let us avoid problems by telling others what our needs are, and how others can best help. You will notice that the message is given in a clear and non-threatening way.

B. Asserting self: yes/no

How many people say “yes” when they really want to say “no”?
What is our “yes” worth if we never say “no”?

Making And Refusing Requests

When making requests be clear, specific and factual. In order to appear confident, expect your requests to be accepted. Avoid long apologetic statements...

“Do you suppose... Kind of... Maybe... Perhaps... ”

Saying “No”

Brevity is crucial. Be as brief as possible, i.e. give a legitimate reason for your refusal, “I don’t have the time”. Avoid long elaborate explanations, justifications.

Actually say the word “no” when declining. The word “no” has more power and is less ambiguous than “well, I just don’t think so...” ,
“I really can’t just now...” etc.

Broken record technique. Repetition and persistence may be necessary. You may have to decline several times before the person “hears” you. It’s not necessary to come up with a new explanation each time; you can use your original reason over and over again.

Shake your head when saying “no”. Often people unknowingly nod their heads and smile when they are attempting to decline or refuse ... this is a double message. Make sure your non-verbal gestures mirror your verbal messages.

Limit the words “I’m sorry” when saying “no”. Try to be conscious about using this phrase to excuse your refusal or to otherwise weaken your credibility. (Habitual use of this phrase can be distracting to your real intent.)

Buy time for yourself. Say, "let me get back to you on that," or "I'll think about it."

Practice:

Turn to your neighbour or friend and practice declining:

- an invitation to dinner
- being on a committee
- buying something

C. Preventive I messages: to prevent disappointment in the future

“I am going out tonight and do not want to find dirty dishes in the sink when I return.”

“I would be so happy to celebrate my birthday next Wednesday by going out to dinner.”

“I would really appreciate getting an early morning phone call on Mother’s Day.”

Family Communication

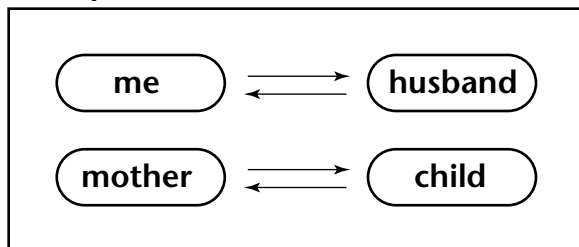
How families function is important to health and coping. Good communication is one of the best ways to have a family that functions well.

What is important to you and your family?

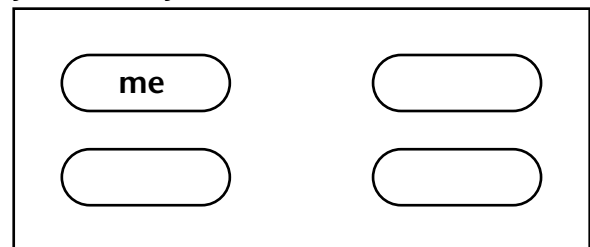
What are your strengths as a family?

How do you communicate with each other?
Read the example, then complete your own diagram.

example:



your family:



"me" and my husband talk freely to each other. I don't communicate as easily with my mother or my child, but there is good communication between the two of them.

Who in your family is most supportive to you?

Family functioning is determined by three factors:

- how cohesive or "together" the members of the family feel, and how they support each other.
- how members can express what they feel and think.
- how problems are talked about together and solved.

Good family communication is an important part of good coping.

Practice your communication skills at home too!

Doctor-Patient Communication

Remember to use the strategies in this section in the important relationship between your doctor and you !!! Here are more tips;

1. Write down a few questions or make a list of what you want to talk about. This can be your "prompt sheet."
2. Let the doctor know what is most important to you. He/she needs to know to help him/her choose the best treatments with you.
3. Ask a friend or family member to be with you to take notes.
4. Ask your most important questions first.
5. If you don't understand, ask your doctor to repeat in a way that is clearer to you.
6. Take a small tape recorder with you and tell your doctor you would like to record the visit to help you remember.
7. Regard your doctor as your ally and partner.

Following are some assertive rights which we have:

Assertive Bill Of Rights

I have the right...

To be responsible for my own life.

To accept and respect myself and others.

To feel happy, satisfied, and to allow inner peace.

To take good care of my whole being; my body, my mind and my spirit.

To be imperfect.

To be aware of and to fulfill my own needs.

To have dreams, goals and ideals... and to make them happen.

To have and to express all my emotions.

To tell others how I want to be treated.

To allow people to help me without feeling guilty, unworthy or dependent.

To set my own priorities about my use of time, money, space and energy.

To get what I pay for.

To have healthy, life-enhancing relationships, where clear communication is valued and to make conscious decisions to change relationships.

To change, emerge, expand in new directions.

To have my own beliefs, ideas, values without apology to anyone.

To live in the present moment, free of guilt about the past and worry about the future.

To relax, to let go... and "DO NOTHING."

...and to remember that when I accept these as my rights,
I also accept them as rights of others!

*Adapted from POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES
123 Queen St. West, Brampton, Ontario, L6Y 1M3*

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 4 Communication Skills

1. "I" messages start with "I" _____, or "I" _____, or "I" _____.
2. Being assertive means _____ yourself in a clear, non-aggressive way.
3. Two tips to use when visiting your doctor are:
 - * Write down a few _____ before your visit
and _____ them with you.
 - * Let the doctor know what is most _____ to you.

My notes:



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Problem solving



Coping is active problem-solving. When we are stressed by events, we are unable to be good problem-solvers as we either see no solution or one we don't like. There are steps to good problem-solving that we can follow no matter how stressed we are. Following the steps gives us a plan and results in better solutions being found. It is similar to following the steps in a recipe.

Steps in Problem Solving

1. Define the problem.
2. Recognize how you feel about the problem.
3. Relax and try not to think about solutions for a while.
4. Consider all possible solutions.
5. Try to imagine how other people might solve the problem or how to obtain the information needed to solve the problem.
6. Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution.
7. Arrange the solutions into a list starting with the least practical or least desirable one, all the way to the best.
8. Make a choice.
9. Briefly consider some favourable or positive aspects of the original problem. Can you think about it differently?

Problem solving explained...

Step 1: Define clearly the one problem you want to try and solve now.

Here are some examples:

- I want to get more information from my doctor on my treatment plans.
- I want to get back to work soon.
- I want to get the household tasks arranged.

The problem may also be a preoccupation with something or a feeling that you have. For example:

- I need to feel useful.
- I want to look more attractive.
- I want to be closer with my spouse.

The problem may be a task you have to do. For example:

- I have to go to the hospital for a few days.
- I have to decide on what treatment to take.
- I have to get more exercise.

Step 2: Identify and recognize how you feel about the problem: Thinking, feeling and behaving are all very much related and it is important not to ignore any of these. In the same way that thinking can affect your decisions, many of your feelings about a problem may lead to some very creative solutions.

Step 3: Take time out. Take time not to think about solutions or coping strategies. This phase of problem-solving is used to get away from what is on your mind, to relax for a while, using the relaxation exercises. By getting away from your problem for a brief period of time, you may uncover new and creative solutions.

Step 4: Think of as many different solutions as possible. Often when we are experiencing a great deal of distress we tend to focus only on one solution. Step 4 encourages you to list as many alternatives as possible, whether they be good, bad, or indifferent. This is a time for brainstorming, not evaluating. All solutions are valuable as often times a poor solution may trigger a better one and/or afford a contrast to those already known.

Step 5: Consider or imagine how other people would respond to the problem. In other words, sit back and say to yourself, "How might my friend solve this problem?" In this way, you may be able to shift your attention from your own approach or style and suddenly become aware of a totally different solution(s).

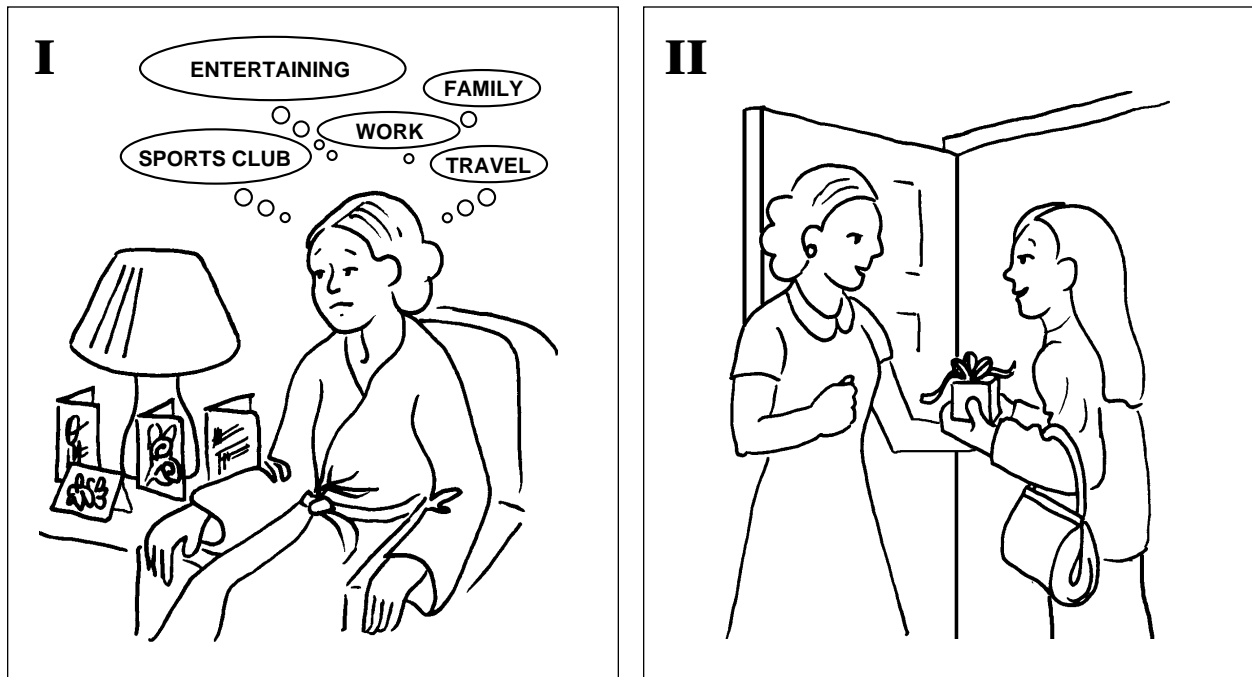
- Step 6:** List the advantages and disadvantages of each of the solutions which you generated previously. Now is the time to evaluate, to consider the possible consequences of all the different solutions. Be conscious of the fact that you are still not choosing a solution, merely assessing the validity of each one.
- Step 7:** Arrange the proposed solutions into a list, starting from the least practical or least desirable solution all the way up to the best solution or those solutions which seem to have the most likely chance of resolving the problem.
- Step 8:** Make a choice. The actual choice is quite simple and often readily apparent if all of the preceding steps have been followed carefully.
- Step 9:** Re-examine and re-define the problem. Go back to the original concern or problem and ask yourself, “Can it be thought about differently?” or “Is there anything positive that I can understand about this situation?” Many can go back to their original concern and see it in a different light or from a different perspective. For example, you may go back to a particular problem and discover that one of the positive things which comes out of the situation is that you are closer to people or you are better able to understand a particular person in your life. Thus, not everything that confronts someone with cancer is necessarily terrible and catastrophic. You can, through effective problem-solving, always discover at least one positive aspect to a difficult situation. This is a vital dimension of flexible coping.

My notes:

An example to practice...

An example to practice involves moving from the problem depicted in scenario I (below) to the solution seen in scenario II. Try it with a friend or by yourself. When you have practiced with this one, work on one of your own problems this way. You may want to put the steps in a spot where you see them frequently.

The Situation:



Pauline is married and has two children. She has recently had surgery for cancer of the uterus. Happily, she has good support from her husband and children and she will soon be able to return to work. The thought of dealing with her friends' and co-workers' questions is making her anxious. She worries what they will ask her about the operation, how things are at home, and the changes in her lifestyle as she has curtailed many of her household and social activities.

Once you have made a list of your problems or concerns, choose which problem to start with first.

Pauline's Practice with Problem Solving

Step 1: What is the one problem to be solved now?

Pauline has listed several problems — the curtailing of her activities at home, her husband's reactions to her surgery, the changes in her activities, etc., feeling different now from others, etc. Specifically she fears the questions about all that's happened and feels incapable of responding to them.

Step 2: How does she feel about it?

She is afraid. She fears being judged by her peers and co-workers. She is avoiding contact with others. She is anxious.

Step 3: Pause. Take some time out.

Pauline focussed on good memories of vacations with her husband and children. She practiced some calm, regular breathing while imagining herself on a holiday again with her family at their favourite spot on the beach with the warm sun and gentle breezes.

Step 4: Think of solutions.

Here are some of Pauline's ideas.

- Talk with someone who had the same surgery and ask how she handled the situation.
- Ask her doctor for suggestions.
- Avoid social situations for awhile.
- Anticipate questions and think up answers in advance.
- Just do her best to answer the questions and help the questioner out if they ask awkward ones.
- Refuse to comment and say that she isn't ready yet to talk about any such private matters.
- Ask her husband to warn her friends to avoid any embarrassing questions, or even ask him to answer for her.
- Relax before she goes out to remain calm when speaking to others.
- Rehearse certain responses with her husband.

Step 5: Imagine what others would do.

- Her husband would joke about it.
- Her friend Ghislane would say, "it's none of your business!"
- Her mother would become depressed and pity herself.
- Her friend Christiane would talk about her experiences and focus on the positive parts of it.
- Her priest would shift the conversation to the other person.

Step 6: Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the solutions in Steps 4 and 5.

Here are some:

SOLUTIONS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Talk with someone who had the same surgery and ask how she handled the situation.	She surely would understand me.	It would take a lot of energy to find such a person.
Ask her doctor for suggestions.	She has confidence in him.	He has never experienced this. He'll just tell her that she has to find the answer herself.
Avoid social situations for awhile.	She can gather her strength.	She feels isolated already. The longer she waits the harder it will be.
Anticipate questions and think up some answers in advance.	She'll feel more in control if she takes the initiative.	This takes a lot of energy. They may not even have thought of asking!
Just do her best to answer the questions and help the questioner out if they ask.	Once she's answered she won't have to do it again.	She can't choose the time or the place or the person.
Refuse to comment and say that she isn't ready yet to talk about any such private matters.	She's protecting herself.	She risks alienating her closest friends.
Ask her husband to warn her friends to avoid any embarrassing questions, or even ask him to answer for her.	She'll feel protected and secure.	She is being dependent on others, and he doesn't know all her friends well.
Relax before she goes out to remain calm when speaking to others.	She'll be in a good mood to answer.	She doesn't know in advance when she's likely to meet them.
Rehearse certain responses with her husband.	She'll feel at ease with him.	It will take time for both of them. Role playing isn't like reality.
Joke about it.	Joking relaxes the atmosphere.	Some people don't have a sense of humour.

SOLUTIONS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Say, "it's none of your business."	It's clear and direct.	It may offend some people.
Become depressed and pity herself.	It may make her feel better temporarily.	It will increase her isolation and loneliness.
Talk about her experiences and focus on the positive parts of it.	It projects a good image of her.	They may still ask difficult questions.
Shift the conversation to the other person.	It prevents her from thinking about herself.	It increases her isolation.

Step 7: Rank the solutions from least workable to best.

Pauline ranked them as follows:

14. Become depressed and isolated.
13. Avoid being with others for awhile.
12. Shift the conversation to the other person
11. Ask her doctor for suggestions.
10. Ask her husband to warn her friends not to ask questions, and ask him to answer if they do.
9. Meet someone with the same experience.
8. Say, "it's none of your business!"
7. Answer questions before they are asked.
6. Answer questions and even add more information.
5. Talk about the positive aspects.
4. Refuse to elaborate about it.
3. Joke.
2. Relax before meeting anyone.
1. Rehearse certain responses with her husband.

Step 8: Make a decision. Write it here.

Pauline decided to practice with her husband some likely situations. She thought it might help her to become more confident in her abilities to respond successfully.

Step 9: Look for a positive aspect of the original problem.

Pauline learned how much support her family has for her, and she became more aware of her own strengths and abilities.

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 5 Problem Solving

1. Coping is active _____.
2. Why is it important to define the problem? _____.
3. Relax before thinking of solutions so that _____.
4. Why is it important to “brainstorm” (no evaluation)? _____
_____.
5. The evaluation step helps to _____.

My notes:

Social support and sexuality



People need people. Although that statement seems obvious it is only in the last few years that we have come to learn just how important others are for our well being. For example, we know that people who have a close confidant(e), friend, or spouse live longer and are healthier than those who do not! People give social support to each other in ways that are both practical and emotional.

Social support includes giving and receiving encouragement, practical help, positive feedback and rewards, understanding and caring, and role modelling.

Another aspect of social support is knowing where to go to obtain the right type of social support. People's social support network usually extends to friends, family, health care workers and co-workers. It is not the number of people you know but the quality of care and support those people provide that matters.

Benefits Of Social Support

- Sociological studies show that as part of our involvement with others, we are more likely to engage in positive health behaviours such as exercise, medical check-ups, and health screening tests.
- In a study of older people, researchers found that having a confidant(e) significantly helped people avoid psychiatric symptoms.
- Two studies of women showed that having an intimate and confiding relationship significantly reduced the incidence of depression.
- In a study of 7000 adults, a strong correlation was shown between social involvement and length of life; it was shown to be more important to health than smoking, drinking, exercise, or diet.

From A Medical Perspective, Social Support Helps to:

- Maximize our resistance to disease.
- Give us the best fighting chance if we are ill.

From A Social Perspective, Other Benefits Emerge:

- Friends help us feel good about ourselves; they reassure us that we belong and that it's OK to be who we are.
- Friends provide emotional support — someone to talk to about our thoughts and feelings.
- Friends help us in tangible ways — help us solve problems, give us advice.
- Assist others in attaining the same benefits.

Sources of Social Support

Another important aspect of social support is knowing where to go to obtain the right type of social support. This exercise is to help you identify what type of support would be helpful and to know what resources are available.

List the people you would turn to for *emotional* support:

_____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____.

List the people you would turn to for *practical* help:

_____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____.

You may notice that your social network is not only comprised of your family and relatives. People's social support network usually extends to friends, health professionals, or whoever provides you with the particular type of support that you need.

This brings us to the idea of quantity versus quality of social support. As in many instances, it is not the number of people you know but the *quality* of care and support that people provide and that we come to rely on the most.

Risks Associated With Asking For Social Support

A common fear we all share is the risk associated with asking for support. “What is the risk involved if I ask person X to help me, or if I refuse to help?” Some of the risks involved in asking for support include the following:

- threat to self-esteem
- embarrassment
- fear of being seen as dependent on others
- possibility of rejection by others
- guilt
- possible loss of confidentiality
- lack of comfort in accepting support from others

Despite the risks associated with asking for or declining support, it is important to weigh the benefits that come from receiving the help of others. In order to weigh the pros and cons of asking for social support, you may use problem-solving to help you in your decision. The important thing to remember is that YOU alone have the control to ask for or refuse support.

Offering Social Support to Others

Another important tool for obtaining social support is by offering support to others. By making yourself available to others, you not only meet their needs but at the same time have the company and support of another person. Social support is reciprocal; i.e., both people involved in the interchange benefit from being with each other.

Receiving support from others

Accepting help and support can be a gift that you give. Friends and family are usually doing the best that they can.

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 6 ***Social Support***

1. People need _____.
2. Social support means help that is _____ and emotional.
3. It is not the _____ of people you know but the quality of support that matters.
4. Social support is reciprocal — that is, both people in the relationship _____.

My notes:

Healthy Sexuality

What do we mean by “Healthy Sexuality”?

- feelings of femininity
- feelings of sexual self-esteem, including feelings about your body
- sexual response, including arousal and orgasm
- sexual desire, including feeling like you might want to be sexual
- sexual behaviour, including hugging, kissing, touching. Intercourse is one aspect, but not the only aspect, of sexual health
- is experienced either with a partner or alone. You need not be in a relationship in order to have sexual health

What are some common concerns that women have reported during and after treatment for breast cancer?

1. **Dryness in genital area.** Chemotherapy can lead to damage to the ovaries, which are the primary source of hormones for women. As the ovaries lose their function, estrogen levels decline resulting in genital dryness and often pain. As well, the hormone medications that are used to treat hormone-dependent tumours may have a negative side-effect on genital dryness and pain.
2. **Reduced sexual desire.** Libido, sexual interest, and drive are all common terms that refer to a woman’s sexual desire. Although hormonal changes can reduce sexual desire, there are also psychosocial ways in which cancer affects sexual desire. For example, changes in how “feminine” a woman feels following breast surgery or removal are common, and can dampen her sexual drive. Not wanting a partner to see or touch your body can also reduce desire. A loss of fertility and early menopause are also common concerns that women report following breast cancer and both can reduce a woman’s willingness to be sexual.
3. **Reduced physical sexual arousal.** Changes in hormones resulting from chemotherapy or hormone medications can also have a negative effect on genital arousal. Some women report that their genitals are not as responsive as prior to breast cancer, and some women report difficulty experiencing orgasm, or having a muted orgasm response.

True or False?

Mastectomy destroys women's sex lives. FALSE! Two large research studies have examined this and found it to be false. In fact, the largest reason why women had sexual problems following mastectomy is that they had sexual problems before breast cancer.

Women who have had lumpectomy or breast reconstruction are much better off sexually than women who have had mastectomy. FALSE! There have been several research studies to examine this association and most find no difference in sexual satisfaction or quality of life among women who have had partial or full breast removal.

A woman has not adjusted to cancer unless she learns to love her scars. FALSE! There does not appear to be any association between how a woman adjusts sexually and her love of her scars. What is more important than learning to love your scars is learning to love yourself! Confidence and self-esteem have been linked to positive sexual health.

Once chemotherapy is finished, any negative effects on sexuality are completely reversed. FALSE! It is true that the short-term effects of chemotherapy on nausea, fatigue, hair loss, and weight gain, largely cease when chemotherapy ends, however, there may be lasting effects of chemotherapy on sexual arousal and desire, especially if there has been damage to the ovaries.

Women should never take estrogen following breast cancer. FALSE! It is important to discuss with your physician the possible hazards and benefits from taking estrogens following breast cancer. There are many forms of estrogen administration, including some forms which can be delivered directly to the genital tissue without effects on the breasts. These "local estrogens" have been found to significantly improve aspects of sexual response for women.

Steps in fostering a healthy sexual life following breast cancer

1. Talk to other women who have had a similar experience to you. Sexual changes following cancer are extremely common and knowing that another woman has had a similar experience to you can feel very reassuring.
2. Understand that sexual health usually takes place within a context. This context may include a relationship with a partner, your mood, your health, your family, etc. Changes in your context can affect your sexual energy and response.
3. There are changes in sexual health in all women, regardless of breast cancer, which take place as women age. There appears to be an increased risk for genital dryness and loss of sexual desire with age. In addition, the "passion" that is present for women in the early stages of a relationship naturally declines as time goes by. Realize that declines in sexual desire are normal and instead take active steps to re-inject sexual desire into your relationship.

A new way of looking at sexual desire

Researchers now understand that sexual desire in women is complex, and that a lack of desire for sex is not necessarily unhealthy (for more information, see the work of Dr. Rosemary Basson). The checklist of items below highlights many of the essential components to experiencing healthy sexuality. If any one of these ingredients are missing or dampened, this can take a toll on your sexual feelings and response. As you read each item, stop and ask yourself how this is experienced in your own sexuality? Are there places where changes can be made?

- ☐ *Do you have “reasons” or “incentives” to be sexual?*

For example, wanting to be close with your partner, wanting to feel “normal”, to please yourself or your partner? Without a reason to be sexual, there will be little to motivate you forward.

- ☐ *Are the kinds of touches, words, and other sexual exchanges between yourself and your partner arousing to you?*

For example, are you someone who feels aroused after a back massage, after a long hike, or after a delicious dinner? It is important to consider the things that are effective for you. These may be different than the kinds of stimuli that worked for you when you were younger, and possibly different than the things you enjoyed prior to breast cancer. Consider varying the sexual stimuli you and your partner use. This may be an opportunity to experiment with trying different ways of boosting your arousal.

- ☐ *Are the influences around you, both between you and your partner, and those within yourself, positive?*

For example, do you “like” your partner or are you angry and resentful at him/her? Are you turned on or off by your partner’s appearance? Also, is there strain on your relationship that affects how you feel about your partner? Do you have privacy? Are there psychological setbacks within yourself, such as a dislike of yourself, your body, or mood or anxiety concerns? The influences around and within you are subtle, but can exert a powerful effect on your sexuality. Look at the different influences on your sexuality and consider making changes to factors that interfere with a healthy sexual context.

- ☐ *Are distractions getting in the way of keeping you focused on the sexual stimulations you are giving and receiving?*

For example, are you preoccupied with fears of poor performance? Are you focusing on a scar? Are you worried your partner will not find you attractive? Distractions create anxiety that can block a sexual response.

- ☐ *Are there medical factors that are standing in the way of your body responding?*

For example, are you using medications, such as antidepressants, that can block the sexual signal? Are you fatigued, nauseated, or out of breath?

- ☐ *If you reach the stage of experiencing some pleasurable arousal (in other words, your body starts to respond), are you able to stay focused sufficiently so that a feeling of “desire” or “wanting more” emerges?*

As you can see, there are many components to experiencing healthy sexuality. It is also essential to recognize that medical and psychological/social factors interact with one another to affect your sexuality. Thus, if you are feeling fatigued (medical factor), this will reduce your willingness (psychological factor) to include different types of sexual stimuli into your behaviour. A road-block at any of these points can prevent a sexual response. It is important to ask yourself each of these check-list points, identify areas that are missing, and then make a decision on where and how to make improvements.



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Healthy lifestyle



What makes a healthy lifestyle?

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Laughter
- Handling Fatigue
- Hope
- Spirituality
- Forgiveness
- Self Trust

...and so on

Exercise

Lifestyle means exercise!

Everyone needs to get active. In fact, many of the changes that occur in our bodies as we get older may not be due to aging but to a lack of physical activity.

A more active lifestyle has been proven to reduce the risk of many diseases as well as reduce the symptoms of chronic conditions.

In short, the proven benefits of exercise are many and the side-effects are few. The exercise connection can be taken one step further: people who are in good shape tend to develop other positive lifestyle habits, like a healthy diet, not smoking and moderate use of alcohol.

There is no definitive information on just how hard or how long one has to exercise but daily physical activity is important. A good general guideline to aim for is to exercise at least 3 times a week for 20 to 45 minutes at an activity you like: walking, swimming, cycling, dancing. Graduated weight training has been proven to be beneficial to people of all ages... check it out with your doctor.

Practice:

List the activities you enjoy:

_____	_____
_____	_____

My notes:

Nutrition

Eating well:

A nutritious diet is always vital for your body to work at its best. Good nutrition is even more important for people with cancer. Why?

- People who eat well during their treatment are better able to cope with the side effects of treatment. People who eat well may even be able to handle a higher dose of certain treatments.
- A healthy diet can help keep up your strength, prevent your body tissues from breaking down, and rebuild tissues that cancer treatment may harm.
- When you eat enough food, particularly the right kind of food, your body has nutrients as a source of energy. As a result, your natural defences are strong and your body can fight infection effectively. Your immune/defence system is especially important to you now.

What kinds of food do I need?

A good rule to follow is to eat a variety of different foods every day. No one food or group of foods contains all of the nutrients you need. A diet to keep your body strong will include daily servings from these food groups:

Fruits and Vegetables: Raw or cooked vegetables, fruits, and fruit juices provide certain vitamins (such as A and C) and minerals the body needs.

Protein Foods: Protein helps your body heal itself and fight infection. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and cheese give you protein as well as many vitamins and minerals. Plant proteins such as beans and nuts are another important source.

Grains: Grains, such as bread, pasta and cereals, provide a variety of carbohydrates and B vitamins. Carbohydrates provide a good source of energy, which the body needs to function well.

Dairy Foods: Milk and other dairy products provide protein and many vitamins and are the best sources of calcium.

NOTE:

Eating well does not mean becoming overweight! In fact, some studies have found that gaining too much weight was harmful to the treatments and the person's future well-being.

So... how's your diet ?

Practice:

Daily, I eat —

Fruits and Vegetables:

5-10 servings per day

Protein:

2-3 servings per day

Grains:

5-12 servings per day

Dairy Foods:

3-4 servings per day

And drink several glasses of water

The hospital dietitian is available to help you, ask your nurse or doctor for a referral.

Laughter

Humour promotes:

- Simplicity.
- Change in how we see things.
- Delight.
- Optimism and Hope.

The benefits of humour:

1. Aids circulation of blood.
2. Decreases blood pressure.
3. Lowers heart rate.
4. Increases respiration and cleans foreign matter out of the respiratory tract.
5. Increases the level of endorphins (the body's natural pain killers).
6. Stimulates the endocrine system (hormone production).
7. Stimulates the immune system (disease prevention).
8. Reduces stress.
9. Relieves muscle tension.

Laughter is internal jogging !

We have to learn not to take ourselves too seriously.

PRACTICE !

Some thoughts to make you smile:

Save time — see it my way.

Go with the flow...and don't forget to play and engage in life.

Warning: Humour may be hazardous to your illness.

Never underestimate the unimportance of everything.

Dogs have owners, cats have staff.

We don't laugh because we are happy ... we're happy because we laugh.

To avoid pollution, a person shouldn't blow his stack.

Laughter is the shortest distance between 2 people.

Give yourself the courage to be imperfect.

Humour prevents a "hardening of the attitudes" — helps you to stay flexible.

Even though we have pains, we don't have to be one.

Handling Fatigue

In addition to exercise, setting aside time for simple restorative activities three times a week for about 30 minutes may be helpful in dealing with feelings of fatigue. These simple restorative activities include:

1. Walking or sitting in a natural environment such as a park.
2. Tending to plants.
3. Gardening.
4. Bird Watching.
5. Reading.
6. Doing crossword puzzles.
7. Watching a movie.
8. Listening to music.
9. Taking a bath.
10. Others _____.

Practice:

Schedule into your weekly agenda one of the above activities. Just as we make appointments with the doctor, we need to make time for non-medical healthy activities. Learn your own rhythm and energy cycles and stop activities before deep fatigue sets in. It's easier to recover that way.

Some find it energizing and helpful to keep a journal or diary where they write their thoughts, feelings and observations about life.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness has 2 benefits:

- it reduces stress – anger, fear, bitterness
- it increases social support

“If you devote your life to seeking revenge, first dig 2 graves.”

— Confucius

Hope

Hope is not a way out — it is a way through.

Hope is much more than a desire to get well. Hope must include effort, hard work, and determination to reach that goal of wellness. Hope looks to the future but rests in the present. It guides your present experience and reflects your love of life.

Hope has proven to be a powerful ally in the struggle to find balance in life. You are not a statistic; as some patients have said, “if 20 % of the people with this type of cancer are cured, I want to be part of that 20 %.”

“Cancer patients recovering from surgery, chemotherapy and radiation know that daily survival and well-being requires the presence of hope. Hope differs from survival. Hope is the stuff on which productive energy is built.” Elizabeth Simpson, cancer survivor, The Globe and Mail, Spring 1996

“There is no cancer for which there is no treatment; and there is no cancer from which some people have not been cured.” Richard Block (H&R Block) cancer survivor

Learn to believe in miracles. Then picture yourself as part of one.

“We have hardly begun to learn. We have not come to the end of knowledge by a long shot; we have only come to the edge of it.” Johnson and Klein, Staying Healthy with Cancer, 1988.

It’s an uplifting thought. The decades ahead hold great promise. No one can predict what is around the corner for the individual diagnosed with cancer today. There is certainly reason for hope.

*Hope is always deep within us — even though
the nature of what we hope for changes,
the hope itself remains.*

Spirituality

For many people spirituality and prayer have always been a part of their lives. For others, they have not been important. The relationship between spirituality and health is being explored by a number of universities and research centers. It turns out that there are more than 100 scientific studies in the general area of spirituality and prayer. A good summary of the evidence is common sense: use what works. In medical situations there will be a place for both prayer and modern medicine.

“In its simplest form, prayer is an attitude of the heart — a matter of being. Prayer is the desire to contact the Absolute, however it may be conceived. When we experience the need to make this connection, we are praying, whatever the words, and even whether or not we use the words. Prayer is not better than modern medicine. Prayer, medications and surgery — they are all a blessing, a grace, a gift. Why not use all of them, with reverence and gratitude?” asks Larry Dossey, MD., author of *Prayer is Good Medicine*.

The body does not distinguish between prayer, meditation and relaxation techniques. They all come from the heart and have many similarities. Although our minds may distinguish between them, our bodies do not.

You may ask if you should pray? As Dr. Dossey responds, “If you need to ask, you’ve probably already begun.”

Prayer or spiritual belief is like running to your mother when you fell and scraped your knee as a child. You didn’t think she would take away the scrape and pain but that you would be comforted and strengthened.

Self Trust

Self trust is a strong inner core that says we know we can handle whatever life throws at us.

It's being authentic and arises from the use of the FACT-THOUGHT-FEELING way.

It's very much like love and self-respect, from our wisdom and intuition.

*When you are stressed,
put your hand over your heart or touch your cheek
as you might touch the cheek of a child you love,
and say simply, "**I understand.**"*

Self trust leads to self-management

Here are 5 core self-management skills:

1. Problem-solving
2. Decision-making
3. Using resources
4. Forming partnerships with the health care system
5. Taking action—small steps immediately.



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Goal setting



Think back to the good feelings you felt when you successfully met one of your goals.

Goal setting is important because it has been found to:

1. Help re-establish a normal, daily routine.
2. Help set priorities when there are many demands on your time and energy.
3. Help you accomplish tasks that are important to you.

Goal setting can be done in 2 ways. Some like to set very small goals, and others prefer big goals. Whichever you prefer, breaking your goals into manageable pieces is the way to make them happen.

The guidelines for goal setting are:

- Your goal must be do-able in the time frame you have allotted.
- It must be important to you.
- It must help you on your way to accomplishing what is important to you.

Write a goal you have for today:

If it seems difficult to think of an important goal for yourself, it helps to ask, "Given that I don't always get what I want, what would I be willing to settle for?"

At same time we must ask ourselves... what is really important to me?

Once determined, we can then focus our attention on what really matters. This activity can reduce worry, support greater peace of mind and better relationships, and help with goal setting.

Think about your ideas. Remember that this list will change over time.

MY LIST of things I value most.

When you find yourself worrying about something, ask yourself, "Is it on **MY LIST**?". If not, let it go.

Successful Goals Are:

- Important to you
- Realistic / Achievable
- Specific
- Written
- Measurable
- Activity based
- Time framed
- Demanding

The Advantages of Goal Setting

- Helps to establish a normal daily schedule.
- Helps to prioritize at a time when there may be many demands.
- Is a realistic means of accomplishing tasks that are important to you.
- Clears thinking on a day to day basis.
- Increases self-esteem and self-confidence through a sense of accomplishment.
- Reaffirms the future.
- Gives meaning and purpose to life.
- Encourages better use of the imagination.

Goal Setting

List your Goals below : *Start at the top or the bottom of the list!*

Lifetime Goals:

One Year Goals:

3 Month Goals:

Tomorrow Goals:

Today Goals:

You may choose to set a priority beside each of your goals: 1 for most important, 2 for next most important, and so on.

What do you expect you might do to sabotage your attempts to reach your goals?
Just knowing what that may be can help to prevent it!

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 8

Goal Setting

- 1 Goal setting helps you to _____.
- 2 Goals can be short or _____ term.

My notes: