Dealing with Fear and Uncertainty

Dr. Ardythe Taylor MD, CCFP, FCFP

September 14th, 2012
Most prevalent and often most distressing emotional challenge of cancer patients

Worrying that the cancer will come back is one of the most common fears people have after completing cancer treatment

- Post-treatment VOID
- Feelings of vulnerability to cancer returning since treatment no longer fighting cancer
- No test to guarantee that you are cured
- Feelings of being abandoned
  - medical team not as accessible
  - support team perceives your are now fine
I asked my oncologist if there was anything helpful that I could do to best manage my risk of cancer coming back now that I had completed my cancer treatment. He told me to “Get a life!”

I searched medical literature and the internet to try to figure out how long I would likely live so I could plan how I would spend my life.

(months, 1 year, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years...???)
My oncologist told me that I now had a ‘chronic disease’ – even if my cancer never came back and I lived to be a grandma in my 80’s, I would always live with the possibility of the cancer returning.

• I was going to need to learn how to manage this uncertainty!
My experience with Fear and Uncertainty

- I experienced intense fear when I completed my cancer treatment 13 years ago...

- My husband told me about the Caribou he had read about...

- The Caribou Metaphor can help us learn how to manage fear and uncertainty and “Get a Life!”
Managing Fear and Uncertainty

The Caribou Metaphor
Managing Fear and Uncertainty

- FEAR
  - Cancer coming back
  - Pain and suffering in the future
  - Death and leaving loved ones behind

- UNCERTAINTY
  - Many things cannot be predicted and are beyond our control
  - We cannot completely control our future
Can I change the chances of my fear coming true?

**Yes**
- Take action to optimize the things I can control
  - decrease my risks
  - increase my health
  - address other things?

**No**
- Increase my ability to cope with the things I cannot control
GOD,

Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

The Courage to change the things I can,

And the Wisdom to know the difference.  

Amen
The Courage to change the things I can...

Decrease my risk factors
Increase my health
Address other things in my life?
The Serenity to accept the things I cannot change...

Increase my ability to cope
Acknowledge a Power greater than myself
Embrace mystery
Make peace
And the Wisdom to know the difference.

Our Common Destiny
Hope and Purpose
Making Meaning in our Lives
And the Wisdom to know the difference.

The Caribou Metaphor

“Getting a Life”
What Resources are there for you?

The Fitness Fix Inc.
Hunterhorn Plaza
566- 64th Ave NE
403-569-6757
Email: info@fitnessfix.ca
www.fitnessfix.ca

Thrive Program for Cancer Survivors
University of Calgary (403-210-6983)
Email: thrive.ucalgary.ca
www.kin.ucalgary.ca/healthandwellnesslab
Sleeping Well with Cancer and Beyond
I-CAN Sleep Program
Phone: 1 (877) SLEEP40
Email: icansleep@ucalgary.ca
Holy Cross Hospital

Counselling and Support for Patients, Family & Friends
Department of Psychosocial Resources (AHS)
Phone: 403-355-3207
Email: calgarypsychosocial@albertahealthservices.ca
Holy Cross Hospital and TBCC
Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program
Department of Psychosocial Resources (AHS)
Phone: 403-355-3207

Spiritual Care at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre (AHS)
Phone: 403-521-3363

Tapestry Retreat: A Program for People Living with Cancer
Department of Psychosocial Resources (AHS)
Phone: 403-998-8549
What Resources are there for you?

Wellspring Calgary
1404 Home Road N.W.
Phone: 403-521-5292
Brain Fog
Return to Work
Yoga Thrive
Mindful Meditation
Healing Journey
and many more…

www.bcscf.com
Breast Cancer Supportive Care Foundation

#414 Hillhurst Professional Building,
302 – 14th Street N.W.
Phone: 403-270-2242

www.bcscf.com