Wellness: Thriving with Brain Cancer

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Patients, Families and Caregivers face many Challenges during the course of diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

However, there are strategies you can use to regain some Sense of Control and to Feel more Empowered!
We will begin by discussing

- **Common Stressors** and the types of **Emotional and Behavioral Responses** you and your loved one may experience.

- We will then discuss some **Options** you may consider pursuing to help you
  - **Cope** and **Adjust Emotionally**
  - **Improve Quality of Life**
  - **Feel more Empowered**
  - Help Make Treatment a **TEMPORARY** Experience
Patient Challenges

• **Treatment**
  Surgery & Anesthesia, Radiation, Chemotherapy

• **Brain Injury**
  Slow to Heal
  Possible Cognitive Impairment
  Seizures
  *Fatigue* & Increased *Sensitivity to Stimuli*

• **Emotional Distress**
  Possible Behavioral & Personality Changes
  Changes in Mood Experienced by *50%* of Patients
Family and Caregiver Challenges

- **Feelings of Loss and Feeling Overwhelmed**
- **Anger or Guilt**
  - Due to Behaviors Patients Cannot Control
- **Ambivalence**
  - Provision of High Levels of Care
  - Deterioration of Quality of Life
- **Disruption of Life**
  - Change of Plans
  - Isolation
- **Financial Concerns**
Changes in Emotion & Personality

- Can be the **Most Difficult Changes to Adjust to** for both Patient and Family
- **Often Overlooked** by Medical Professionals
- Most Common are **Depression & Anxiety**
- Irritability, Apathy, Euphoria, Labile Mood
- Disinhibition, Withdrawal, Obsessive-Compulsive Tendencies, Sexual Interest
Some Effects of Stressors

- Deterioration of Overall Quality of Life
- Relationships with Family, Doctors, Caregivers
- Changes in Life Style & Role Functioning
- Long-Term Stress Can “Re-Wire” the Brain
  Increase Vulnerability to Illness & Mood Sx
- Poor Stress Response & Prolonged Depression are linked to:
  - Increased Disease Progression
  - Reduced Rates of Survival
Holistic Approach to Wellness

Biopsychosocial Model of Healthcare

• Medical Care
• Mental/ Emotional Well-being
• Social Functioning & Support
• Spirituality / Religion
• Nutrition
• Sleep Hygiene
• Exercise
You may not be able to
do everything at once,
But you can do something at once!

Calvin Coolidge
Adjusting to Life with a Brain Tumor

- **Give Yourself Time** to Absorb the News of the Diagnosis and Other Information
- Discuss Treatment Options with your **Support Network**
- **Discuss Feelings** of Fear, Sadness and Anger
- **Self-Compassion & Self-Acceptance**
  - *Be Patient with Yourself*
  - *Focus on Strengths You or Loved One Still Possess*
Learning as much as you can about your Diagnosis and Treatment

Knowledge Enhances your Ability
- To Understand the Processes you are Experiencing
- To Manage Feelings and Expectations

Use Discretion in your Research
Join a Support Group

- Opportunity to **Connect with Others** who are experiencing Similar Challenges & Questions
- Participants are at **All Stages of Diagnosis and Treatment** and can offer lots of **Insights and Help**
- Periodic **Educational Presentations**
- Call **Department of Neurosurgery** for Schedule
Seek Professional Psychological Services

- Your Emotional Well-Being is Essential to Your Overall Health
- A Psychologist who Specializes in Medical Health Psychology will
  - Understand your Unique Health-Related Issues
  - Facilitate Coping with the Stress of Illness
  - Potentially Help Improve Your Quality of Life
Psychological Services for Cognitive Problems

• **Cognitive Screening Evaluation**
  - Noninvasive Tests
  - Shortened Version

• **Testing Helps Determine Whether Sx are Within Normal Limits or Due to Medical Condition**
  - Establishes Initial Baseline
  - Indicates Appropriate Treatment Referrals for Further Evaluation, Cognitive Rehab, Psychotherapy, etc.

• **Cognitive Rehabilitation**
  - Helps Pts Regain Abilities or Compensate for Losses
  - Often Best Combined with Psychotherapy
Practice Stress Management

• Stress can have an impact on your healing

• Daily practice is often beneficial both before surgery and during recovery

• Various techniques help you process emotions, vent anger and express feelings

• Not every technique works for everyone.

• Practice a variety of techniques to find what works best for you.
Stress Management for Anxiety

- Deep-Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Hypnosis
- Visualization
- Self-Talk
Visualization

• “The mind communicates with the body through images.”
  • Paul Schilder, MD, Neurologist & Psychiatrist

• “The brain’s ability to create visual images and to treat those images as real, may lie at the center of a type of mind-body healing.”
  • Herbert Benson, MD, Harvard Medical School, Associate Professor, Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine
Stress Management for Depression

- Behavioral Activation
  - Increase Pleasant and Mastery Activities
- Cognitive Restructuring
  - Challenge Negative Thinking
  - Balance Negative Thoughts with **Uplifting** Thoughts
- Coping Self-Statements/ Social Validation List
- Hypnosis
- Mental Imagery (Yale Study)
• **Goal-Setting**
  • Set Realistic, Attainable Goals
  • “Baby Steps”

• **Problem-Solving**
  • Examine Costs and Benefits
  • Social Support for Unchangeable Problems

• **Emotional Expression**
  • Authenticity
Spirituality

- Nurturing the Soul
- Gratitude List
- Confession List
- Forgiveness (Re-Scripting)
- Challenges as Learning Opportunities
- Coming to Terms with Necessary Losses
- Integrity vs Despair
- “The Next Great Adventure”
Complementary Therapies

• Acupuncture
• Aromatherapy
• Art Therapy
• Massage / Reflexology
• Traditional Chinese Medicine
• Nutritional Supplements
• Spiritual/Religious Retreats
Peace.

It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

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