Building Resilience, Gaining Hope

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## Disclosures

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“You gotta stay positive!”
Hope and human struggle

• Hope predates modern medicine by 1000’s of years
• Legends, stories, myths feature moments when hope emerges after all seems lost
Hope can be...

• A statement of preference
• A comforting emotion
• A source of motivation
• An expectation (perhaps unrealistic)
• A vulnerability to disappointment
The roller coaster

• Sequence of medical events (test results, screening results, surgery impacts, etc.) create a series of hope and disappointment
What is resilience?

Invincible hero?  Special magic?
Resilience

• Most people are resilient in the face of challenge
• Resilience is a process, not an innate trait

“Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources...”

Masten, Am Psychol, 2001
Bonanno & Diminich, J Child Psychol Psych, 2013
Varieties of stress
Big Events

• May change how you think about yourself, your world, your future
• May rearrange roles within the family
Decisions

• Understanding complex medical information
• Power vs. burden
• Looking within
Chronic (ongoing) Stress

- Need recovery time to avoid depletion
- Communicate that support is still needed
Hassles

• More closely tied to moods than other kinds of stress
• Big events (even positive ones) can trigger landslide of hassles
The “C” word

Control

Cancer and cancer risk illuminate the limits of control
Adjusting your Quality of Life

• Re-prioritize:
  • What’s important to you now?

• Re-calibrate:
  • What’s your measure of a good day?

• Re-define
  • How do you define “quality of life” today?

• Re-focus:
  • What *can* you do? What’s going well?
“By the time he made this picture, Matisse was over 80 and too ill to paint. So he came up with a new technique [cutting up] colored paper...he called this “drawing with scissors.” With his assistant’s help, the shapes were then arranged and glued down. This method is known as collage, from colle, the French word for glue.”

Rosie Dickens, *The Children’s Book of Art*
J.’s (age 9) list of what you could or couldn’t do if you broke your arm:

**Can’t do**
- “Cook as well (it would be hard)
- Paint walls
- Play
- Move the arm
- Go swing
- Hang stuff up
- Any sport”

**Can do**
- “You could pour water in a cup
- You could walk
- You could still paint stuff but different
- Color
- Use your phone
- Take a picture
- Write
- Read a book”
Aiming for the road, not the hole
The road: Life tasks at every age

- 0 – 2 years: Trust and care
- 2 – 5 years: Exploring the world
- 5 - 12 years: Learning to accomplish
- 12 – 18 years: Exploring identity
- Early adulthood: Building a life
- Mid-adulthood: Creating a legacy
- Later adulthood: Accomplishment & acceptance
How do we get from here.....

...to here?
Goal flexibility

• Studies of people facing health challenges show importance of:
  • Releasing untenable goals
  • Re-engaging in new, attainable goals

We grieve loss of goals just as we grieve other losses

Lankveld et al., J Rehab Med, 2011
Thompson et al., J Personality, 2013
Hanssen et al., J Happiness Stud 2014
“The FEMA year”
Coping Tools
Positive self-coaching
Other catch phrases

• “If you can’t do a lot, do a little.”
• “Every day, another piece falls into place.”
• “I’m in good hands.”
Social Support

• Find at least one neutral person who can listen without judging

• Use “bookending” – talk to someone immediately before and after taking a difficult step

• Those who do not confide are at risk for prolonged distress
Resilience is a process

• Coping creates hope

• Hope gives you energy to take active coping steps
Exploring

• Body as it is now
• What can/can’t do
• What might be possible
• Insights gained
• Changes in relationships
• Changes in goals
Hope and resilience

• “...quality of life is not just what [people] have in their life (a certain list of important things) but also how to be in that life.

McClimans et al., 2012
What is resilience?

Resilience is something we do: Creating good outcomes in the face of challenge.

Resilience is always now: What’s one step you can take to get closer to back on track?