

# The Transition Into Survivorship

## Addressing Emotions After Treatment

Roseanne Roybal, MSWI  
Hoag Family Cancer Institute  
Counseling and Supportive Services

# Today's Topics



The Transition: Stepping into survivorship & Common Emotions



The Experience: Grief, Cancer Related Post-Traumatic Stress,  
Post Traumatic Growth



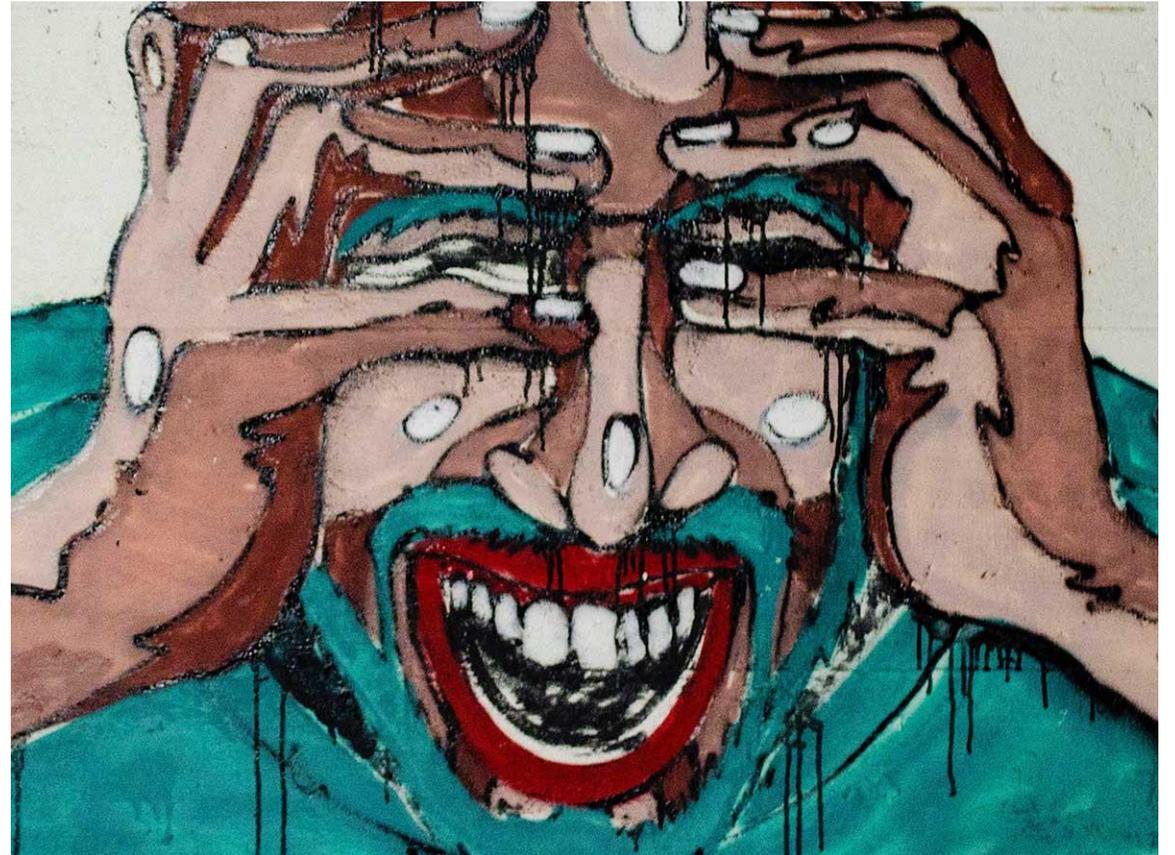
Tools For Your Toolbox: Everyday accessible ways to address  
some of these challenges

# Warrior Mentality

“Many cancer patients believe they need to adopt a ‘warrior mentality’ and remain positive and optimistic from diagnosis through treatment to stand a better chance of beating their cancer. To these patients, seeking help for the emotional issues they face is akin to admitting weakness ... **There needs to be greater awareness that there is nothing wrong with getting help to manage the emotional upheaval, particularly depression, anxiety, and PTSD post-cancer.**” - Caryn Mei Hsien Chan, PhD

# Emotional Floodgates

- The emotions that have been held inside are suddenly all pouring out at once.
- The mind was working to protecting itself, “self preservation.”
- Can feel very overwhelming and confusing.



# Expectations- Your Own & Others

“I don’t understand why I feel so sad.”

“I don’t know what’s going on with me.”

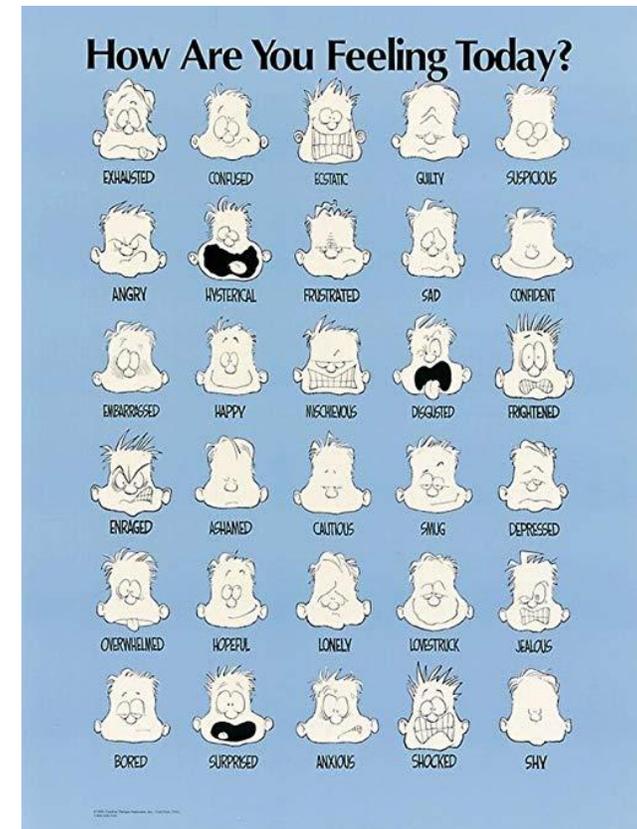
“I feel so silly.”

“I didn’t cry once during treatment.”

**“I should be happy.”**

# Common Feelings & Emotions Post-Treatment

- Sadness and Depression
- Fear of Recurrence
- Anxiety (about what the future holds)
- Confusion and Uncertainty
- Anger
- Emotional Numbness



# Cancer and Grief

## Understanding The Connection

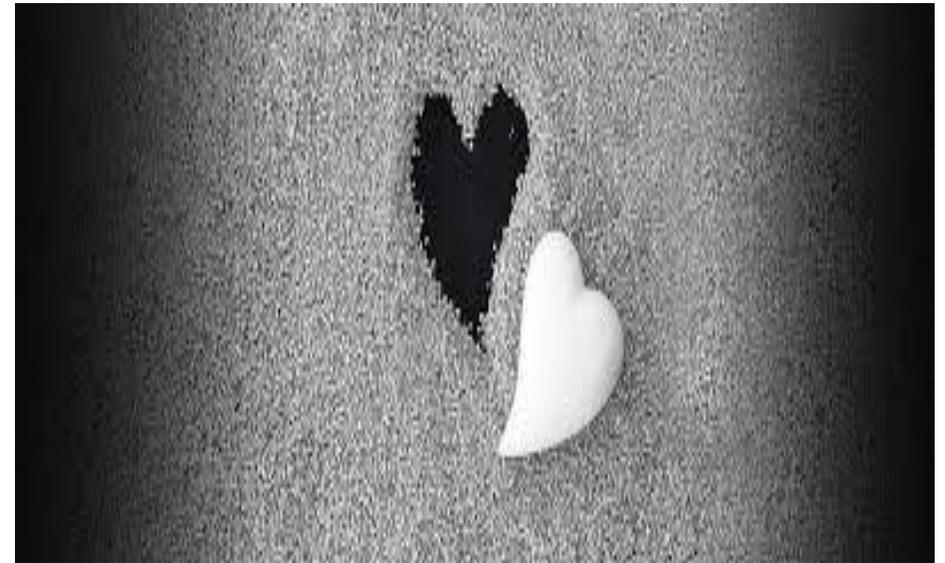
- Acknowledge that grief is often a part of this experience- there may be losses you haven't identified as losses.
- Name your losses, big and small. Honor them.
- Allow yourself the time and space to grieve what has changed and what you have lost in your life because of cancer.

*"In a society which is much more inclined to help you hide your pain rather than to grow through it, is necessary to make a very conscious effort to mourn."*

*-Henri Nouwen*

# Reasons You May Need to Grieve

- **Physical Changes**
  - Loss of hair, scarring, skin changes, loss of limb or other body part, loss of muscle tone, fertility, **loss of the body you once knew**
- **Lifestyle changes**
  - Fatigue, Loss in ability to take part in hobbies & previous lifestyle
- **Loss of independence**
- **Loss of identity/ role changes**
- **Loss of trust in your body**



# Stages of Grief

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance



**“They were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages.** They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grieving is as individual as our lives.” -Kübler-Ross on the five stages of grief

# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder “PTSD”

“Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event — either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.”

# Cancer Related Post-Traumatic Stress

“A condition that develops in some people who are diagnosed with cancer. Symptoms of cancer-related post-traumatic stress (PTS) include having **frightening thoughts or trouble sleeping, being distracted or overexcited, feeling alone, or losing interest in daily activities.** Symptoms may also **include feelings of shock, fear, helplessness, or horror.** Cancer-related PTS can occur anytime after diagnosis, including during or after treatment. Relaxation training, counseling, support groups, and certain medicines may be used to reduce symptoms of PTS.”

# Cancer Related Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms:

- Difficulty with Emotion Regulation
- Repeated frightening thoughts
- Being distracted or overexcited
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling detached from oneself or reality
- Shock, fear, helplessness
- Feeling defensive, irritable, or fearful
- Loss of interest in daily activities

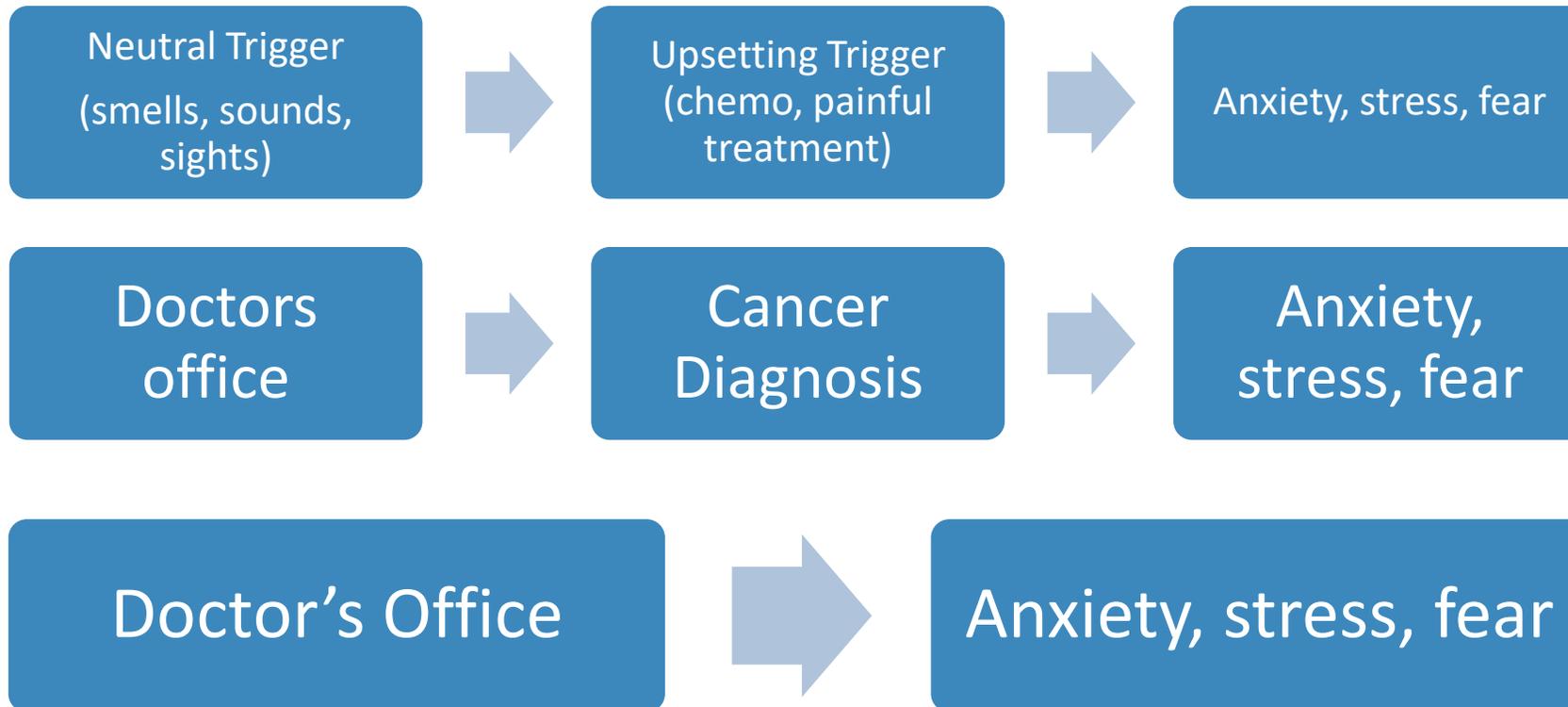
# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Cancer Patients

**AVOIDANCE:** may avoid cancer related people and places, including important check-ups and may avoid necessary professional care.

# The Body Remembers

- “I didn’t know why I was feeling that way.”
  - “I felt like I couldn’t breathe.”
- “My body remembered what my mind tried to forget.”

# Triggers



"You're not alone."



# Post-Traumatic Growth

“A positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with a major life crisis or a traumatic event.”

Researchers found that Post Traumatic Growth is commonly reported in approximately 30-70% of survivors.



# Post-Traumatic Growth

- New life experiences
- Increased sense of strength
- Improved relationships with others
- Spiritual Domain: Significant change in belief system
- Greater appreciation for life



# Be Kind to Yourself

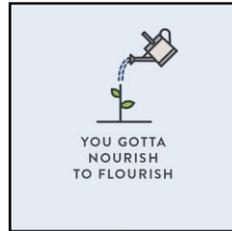
Allow yourself the time and space to heal from the emotional impact of this experience, just as you have allowed yourself the time and space to heal physically.

# Tools For Your Toolbox



## Express

- Art
- Music
- Free Flow Writing
- Journaling
- Blogging



## Relax

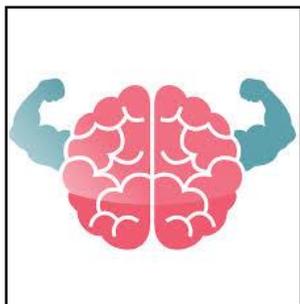
- Meditation
- Breathing exercises
- Yoga
- Massage
- Take a bath
- Read a book
- Garden



## Move

- Walking
- Swimming
- Hiking
- Cycling
- Chair exercise
- Chair yoga
- Stretching

# Tools For Your Toolbox



## Know

- Be informed
- Know what to expect, medically, physically, emotionally
- Know what resources & services are available



## Connect

- Connect/reconnect with the people in your life
- Find your people-cancer community
- Lean on social support system

# Hoag Counseling & Support Services

- Individual Counseling Sessions
- Support Groups with SW & Nurse Navigators
- Classes and Workshops

For more information or to schedule an appointment please call

**949.722.6237**

or visit [www.hoag.org](http://www.hoag.org)

