

14

Surviving In a World of Hurt



**Developed for Oregon FCE
from lessons given at The
National FCE Conference**



fce
Oregon Association For
Family & Community Education

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Surviving In a World of Hurt

Purpose: Some women do survive cancer (and other illnesses and traumatic events) We will explore some things you can do to encourage yourself and others.

Activity #1

Question: (Group participation) Have you or someone you know survived cancer for three or more years? Had other major illnesses or gone through a nasty divorce? What are some of the things you did or help others do? (5 minutes)

Activity #2

We will look at three ways some survivors have been able to look these traumas in the face and survived.

(Health Game) Enlarge this game on newsprint or poster board. Play it as you would Jeopardy. Layer points, answer & questions. You will have five across and five down with points in each spot. You can keep score if you would like. (10 minutes –probably will not completely finish in that time. You can use more time if you want to.)

Lecture

1. Faith/ Family/ Friends

= Many people I have interviewed for this lesson put this at the top. For many it was faith in their doctors. This is important, as it is hard to follow directions of someone you have no faith in. If trust is a problem between you and your doctor, ask for a second opinion. You need to have a doctor you trust.

If you feel he/she is not giving you the best care, your faith in them will not be very strong and that can cause depression that can drag you down instead of encouraging you. This can also lead some people to try unproven alternative treatments with disastrous results.

=You also need faith in yourself. When you are well and whole, if someone asks you if you could be a survivor, most of you would probably say “no.” But when you are literally fighting for your life, you can do things you thought impossible. It takes a lot of determination to take control of your own destiny. Take charge. Who better than you knows how you feel and how you can handle the situation? Get a notebook and pen. Take them with you to all appointments. Ask questions; jot down answers. Read all you can find on the subject. Find a support group. Some people take the attitude that “I can lick this thing” and go about proving they can. Others in lesser illnesses will give up and really become sick. Your attitude is a real barometer in survival.

=Since each of us has our own perspective on God, This suggestion is not to make a believer of you; but most people I have talked with about this subject will say their faith helped to get them through. They know there is a Higher Being they can turn to for comfort.

Another thing that we find is that we can yell and scream at "God" and he does not hit us with a lightening bolt. So don't be afraid to voice your frustrations. He knows them anyway.

--To have family and friends to come along side is a big comfort. Some will take time to just sit with you while others bring meals, clean your homes and do other chores that you don't have energy to do. Don't be shy about telling people where you need help. They wouldn't ask if they didn't want to help. So what if the bathroom needs cleaned, they will do it. Other things they can help with are the wash and taking care of children.

Some people lament they have no family to help. Then turn to your friends. If they are not willing to come along side in crises, find new friends. Some of the best are from your church, even though you may not be a regular attendee. How about your FCE group? They are a wonderful group and are always volunteering anyway.

2. Humor

You may say to yourself, "How can I have a senses of humor when I feel so bad?" Some don't, but if you can look at things differently, you can see things that a little humor would make easier. One woman told about buying five wigs she had purchased to wear during her treatments. Each one was very different. She called these her personalities. She might wear one to church Sunday morning and a different one in the evening. Wear a big bow –pasted to your bald head. (Remember the little bows the hospital pasted to baby girl's heads with Vaseline?) Or put on a headband. Have someone draw a funny face on top of your head. This may shock persons who are taller than you are.

3. Persistence and attitude

One heart attack survivor told of how the doctors were ready to give up when they couldn't get her heart going again. Her husband kept telling them, "Just one more time." She survived and is doing well.

Persist

*When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest, if you must – but don't you quit.*

*Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many failures turns about,
When he might have won had he stuck it out,
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow...
You might succeed with another blow.*

*Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man.
Often the struggler has given up,
When he might have captured the victor's cup.
And he learned too late, when the night slipped down,
How close he was to the golden crown.*

*Success is failure turned inside out.
The sliver tint to the cloud of doubt-
And you can never tell how close you are,
It may appear when it seems afar,
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit –
It is when things seem worst that you mustn't quit!*
Anonymous

Be persistent in your exercise. At least two areas in which this is very important are with breast cancer and heart attacks.

*With breast cancer you need to do arm exercises to keep the muscles from getting too stiff. Exercise is hard to stick with when you are still sore from surgery but if you don't persist your range of motion will be severely limited later. (A good exercise for strengthening the arms after breast surgery is to take a small nylon rope about four to four and a half feet long. Tie knots on both ends and use it for resistance above your head or behind your back.)

*For heart attack victims, walking seems to be the best exercise, at least to start. Start easy, but your doctor will soon be asking you to walk up to 5 miles a day, if all other factors are normal.

Walking or other activities are also a good stress reliever when you are going through a divorce.

*Take all of your treatments, medications etc. This is not always easy. When you come home from chemotherapy sicker than when you went in, it is a big temptation to say "no more." You wonder if something that makes you feel that bad can be good for you. Hang in there and see.

*Take the attitude, "I can lick this thing," You will be more likely to succeed than if you think it has beat you already. This goes, not only for cancer, heart attacks and strokes but also when you go through a nasty divorce you thought would never happen. In all these traumas, draw from the strength of loved ones and people who want to see you succeed. And stay away from all that expect to see you fail.

Activity #3

Enclosed are several quotes. Cut apart and pass these to participants to read. Discuss if they would be encouraging .Why or why not?

Handout (The Ten Commandments) Just for encouragement

Recourses

The Oregonian; Letters in a column asking what helped you survive

-The Hearth Fire series #8 and #16

-Pub Med (online)

-Interviews with survivors

-Notes from speakers at the National Conference who are survivors

-The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

-Nhlcyberfamily.org/poem.htm

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Taken from a lesson given at National FCE

SOME THOUGHTS.....

WE CAN'T ALWAYS CHANGE WHAT HAPPENS TO US...BUT WE CAN CHANGE HOW WE LOOK AT IT.

ARE YOU DRIVEN BY FEAR OR FREEDOM?

NOW IS THE TIME TO SHOW UP FOR YOUR OWN LIFE.

WE SPEND OUR LIVES THINKING ABOUT WHAT WE ALREADY DID OR ARE GOING TO DO AND WE COMPLETELY MISS WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW.

THE THINGS YOU DIDN'T DO ARE LIKELY TO CAUSE THE MOST REGRET.

WALT WHITMORE'S "SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD:"

**"AFOOT AND LIGHT-HEARTED,
I TAKE TO THE OPEN ROAD.
HEALTHY, FREE, THE WORLD BEFORE ME,
THE LONG BROWN PATH BEFORE ME,
LEADING WHEREVER I CHOOSE."**

WORRYING ABOUT A RELAPSE MAKES LITTLE OR NO DIFFERENCE IN OUR HEALTH BUT IT SURELY HINDERS THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES.

THE YEAR AHEAD WILL NOT BE THE YEAR YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO HAVE SO MAKE SOMETHING OF IT.

WORRYING TO ME IS LIKE BUYING GASOLINE WHEN YOU DON'T OWN A CAR. IT HAS A COST BUT NO PURPOSE.

IT'S NOT GETTING BACK TO NORMAL THAT WORRIES ME...IT'S FINDING OUT WHAT IS NORMAL FOR ME NOW.

NOTHING WILL BE THE SAME....I DON'T HAVE A DISEASE...I HAVE A 2ND CHANCE FOR A NEW LIFE.

MY FORMER WORLD WAS SO SUPERFICIAL.

I HAVE NO DESIRE TO GO BACK TO BEING THE PERSON I WAS BEFORE ALL OF THIS HAPPENED; MY ENTIRE LIFE IS DIFFERENT NOW.

I DON'T WANT TO BE CALLED BRAVE....I'M NOT BRAVE...I DIDN'T CHOOSE THIS PATH...IT WAS FORCED UPON ME.

AT LEAST AFTER HAVING CANCER...I'M NOT AFRAID OF GETTING SICK ANY MORE!

RESOURCES:

Life After Cancer Treatment by The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May, 2002

The After Breast Cancer Treatment Survival Handbook - Hope Lives! Margit Esser Porter. 2000.

NOW I WASN'T WRONG ABOUT SOME OF MY IDEAS THAT HELPED ME TO COPE....when I was doing my research, I found several authors that had reached the same conclusions that I had! **SUCH AS.....**

YOU WON'T BE HEALED ON THE DAY TREATMENT ENDS.

I ATE PROPERLY AND TOOK GOOD CARE OF MYSELF AND I STILL GOT SICK....so why should I take care of myself now?

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE TIRED...SO DO WHAT YOU WANT AND BE TIRED! RESTING WON'T MAKE YOU FEEL ANY DIFFERENTLY....research is telling us that 15 minutes of gentle exercise might be the answer to the chronic fatigue syndrome. Most troubling side effects...

#1...effect on family #2...loss of hair #3...fatigue

SO PLAN YOUR DAY...DO THE THING YOU WANT TO DO THE MOST...WHEN YOU ARE THE LEAST TIRED! Prioritize your activities and schedule things differently. Do things differently...would you rather use your energy to visit or play with grandkids or clean bathrooms? So either let the bathrooms go or allow someone to clean them for you....haven't people offered to help?

LET PEOPLE HELP....THEY LEARN ABOUT YOUR DISEASE AND THEN THEY TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEMSELVES AND THEY "OWN" PART OF YOUR RECOVERY.

SAVE ENERGY BY ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY JOBS!

DO WHAT YOU ENJOY BUT DO LESS OF IT. SAY "NO" TO THINGS THAT DO NOT MATTER.

1/4 suffer change in memory or concentration after treatment....be prepared!

(With a few changes from the word cancer and its treatment, this could apply to all traumas.)

The Ten Commandments for Cancer Survival

1. Thou shalt regard the word, "Cancer", as exactly that: a word. Nothing more, nothing less. For its original meaning has changed mightily over the years, as have such works a Smallpox, TB, and Polio, all once dreaded ailments, now non-existent as maladies. And thus, too, shall go thy Cancer. The answer shall come to those who shall be present to hear it. Be present to hear it when it comes.
2. Thou shalt love thy chemotherapy, and thy radiation, and thy other treatments even as thyself, for they are thy friends and champions. Although they may exact a toll for their endeavors, they are oft most generous in the favors they bestow.
3. Thou shalt participate fully in thy recovery. Thou shalt learn all the details of thy ailment, its diagnosis, its prognosis, its treatments, conventional and alternative. Thou shalt discuss them openly and candidly with thy oncologist and shalt question all thou do not comprehend. Then, thou shalt cooperate intelligently, and knowledgeably with thy doctor.
4. Thou shalt regard thy ailment as a temporary detour in life and shalt plan thy future as though this detour had not occurred. Thou shalt never, at no time, nohow, regard thy temporary ailment as permanent. Thou shalt set long-term goals for thyself. For thou will verily recover and your believing so will contribute mightily to thy recovery.
5. Thou shalt express thy feelings candidly and openly to thy loved ones for they, too, are stricken. Thou shalt comfort and reassure them for they, too, needest comforting and reassurance, even as thou doest.
6. Thou shalt be a comfort to thy fellow-cancerites, providing knowledge, encouragement, understanding and love. Thou shalt give them hope where there may be none, for only in hope lies their salvation. And by doing so, thou providest comfort for thyself, as well.
7. Thou shalt never relinquish hope, no matter how thou may feelest at that moment, for thou knowest, in the deep recesses of thy heart, that thy discouragement is but fleeting and that a better day awaits thee, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps the day after tomorrow, but certainly it shall come.
8. Thou shalt not regard thy ailment as the sum total of thy life but as a merely a part of it. Fill your life with other diversions, be they mundane, daring, altruistic, or merely amusing. To fill your life with your ailment is to surrender to it.
9. Thou shalt maintain, at all times and in all circumstances, thy sense of humor, for laughter lightens thy heart and hastens thy recovery. This is not an easy task, sometimes seemingly impossible, but it is a goal well worth the endeavor.
10. Thou shalt have enduring and unassailably faith, whether thy faith be in a Supreme Being, in Medical Science, in Thy Future, in Thyself or in Whatever. Steadfastly sustain thy faith for it shall sustain thee.

Beginning today I will no longer worry about yesterday
It is in the past and the past will never change.
Only I can change by choosing to do so.

Beginning today I will no longer worry about tomorrow.
Tomorrow will always be there,
Waiting for me to make the most of it.
But I cannot make the most of tomorrow
Without first making the most of today.

Beginning today I will cherish each moment of my life.
I value this gift bestowed upon me in this world and
I will unselfishly share this gift with others.
I will use this gift to enhance the lives of others.

Beginning today I will take a moment
To step off the beaten path
And to revel in the mysteries I encounter,
I will face challenges with courage and determination.
I will overcome what barriers there may be
Which hinder my quest for growth and self-improvement.

Beginning today I will take life
One day at a time, one step at a time.
Discouragement will not be allowed
To taint my positive self image,
My desire to succeed or my capacity to love.

Beginning today I will open my mind and my heart.
I will welcome new experiences-
I will meet new people.
I will not expect perfection from myself nor anyone else;
Perfection does not exist in an imperfect world.
But, I will applaud the attempt to overcome human foibles.

Beginning today I will learn something new;
I will try something different;
I will savor all various flavors life has to offer.
I will change what I can and the rest I will let go.
I will strive to become the best me I can possibly be.

Beginning today
And every day for the rest of my life.

FCCE & Women's Health

A Health Game



FCE & Women's Health

Elementary	The Facts of Life	Statistically Speaking	Eggs – Xactly	Testing
What is Cancer?	What is the change of lie?	What is ovarian cancer?	What is the ovary?	1 – 2 – 3 What is a Biopsy?
What is benign?	What is exercise/walking?	What is Heart Disease?	What is shedding?	What is CA-125?
What is ovarian cancer?	What is getting older and being a woman?	What is Lung Cancer	What is a cyst?	What is a pelvic exam?
What is the National Cancer Institute?	What is listen?	What is 50 years old?	What is ovulation?	What is a transvaginal ultrasound?
What is removal of the ovaries?	What is obesity?	What is ovarian cancer?	What is progesterone?	What is staging?

FCE & Women's Health

Elementary	The Facts of Life	Statistically Speaking	Eggs - Xactly	Testing 1 - 2 - 3
This is the term for more than 100 diseases in which cells divide without control	This metamorphosis is also called menopause.	This gynecological cancer is 90% curable if found in the early stage.	Part of the female reproductive organs which produces eggs every month.	A sample of tissue that is removed and examined under a microscope.
This kind of growth is not a cancer.	This will help you to reduce stress, lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, improve sleep, and increase energy.	This is the leading cause of death in women.	This is the name of the process in which Cancer cells break away from the ovaries.	This test is used to measure the level of a protein that is found at elevated levels in most ovarian cancer cells.
This is often referred to as the silent disease.	These are the two biggest risk factors for getting breast cancer.	This is the leading cause of cancer deaths in women.	This is a fluid filled sack that forms on the surface of an ovary.	This test includes feeling the uterus, vagina, ovaries, fallopian tubes, bladder, and rectum.
This institution is the federal governments authority on ovarian cancer.	This is what we need to do when our body tells us something is wrong.	Most cases of ovarian cancer occur in women over this age.	Having this normal monthly function can increase your risk of ovarian cancer.	This test uses high-frequency sound waves to create a picture and when inserted internally feels like a "Joy Stick" from a Nintendo Game.
This medical term for this procedure is "Prophylactic Oophorectomy."	In the U.S. 64% of adults and 15% of children have this problem that can lead to certain types of cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other chronic health problems.	One in every 57 women in the United States will develop this kind of cancer.	Estrogen is just one of the female hormones that the ovaries produce.	This is an assessment of how far the tumor has spread.

FCE & Women's Health

Elementary	The Facts of Life	Statistically Speaking	Eggs - Xactly	Testing 1 - 2 - 3
10 points	10 points	10 points	10 points	10 points
20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points	20 points
30 points	30 points	30 points	30 points	30 points
40 points	40 points	40 points	40 points	40 points
50 points	50 points	50 points	50 points	50 points