

Coping with Chronic Disease

Presented by Sarah Potts, RSW HBSW

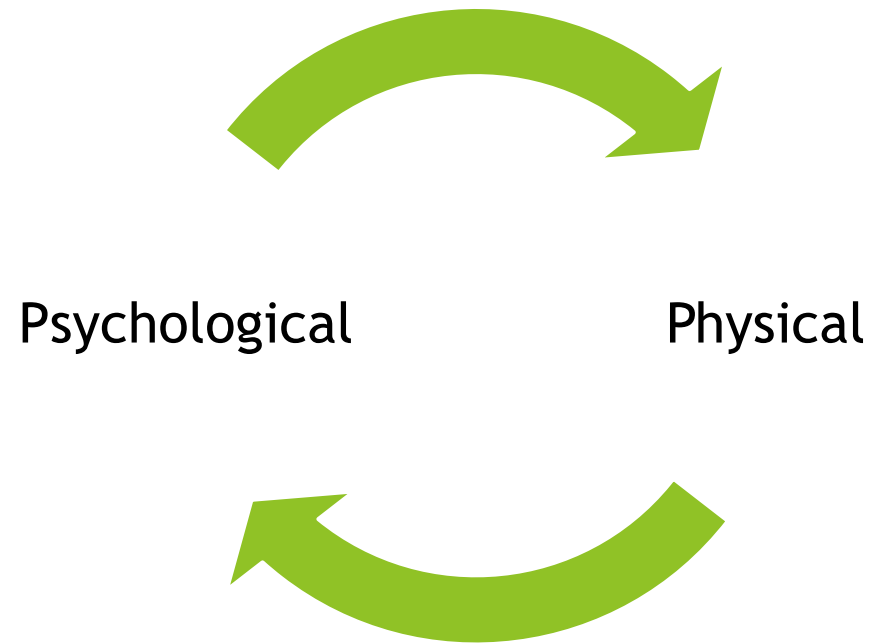
Goals for the Presentation

- ▶ To define chronic disease in the context of quality of life
- ▶ To learn about the impacts of chronic disease/illness
- ▶ Introduce potential coping strategies
- ▶ Review resources

Chronic Disease & Quality of Life

- ▶ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as *“not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well being”*
- ▶ *Health Related QOL (HRQoL) is “a multidimensional construct that consists of at least three broad domains - physical, psychological, and social functioning - that are affected by one’s disease and/or treatment.”*
- ▶ The majority of chronic diseases hold the potential to worsen the overall health of patients by decreasing their HRQoL.
- ▶ *“For those who experience diminished HRQoL due to lymphedema, healthcare providers should intervene with psychosocial support”*

Impact of Chronic Disease



Psychological Impact

- ▶ Chronic Disease can change many parts of your life, from relationships to work to hobbies. It takes a lot of energy to manage your chronic disease every day. Sometimes, this can affect your outlook and mood. Common feelings include:
 - ▶ Grief
 - ▶ Loneliness
 - ▶ Sadness
 - ▶ Anxiety
 - ▶ Fear
 - ▶ Anger
 - ▶ Frustration
 - ▶ Uncertainty
 - ▶ Loss of control
- ▶ These kinds of feelings are normal and common, but it is important to let someone know if these feelings are persistent.
- ▶ Chronic Disease can also impact your body image. "Body image" is the term for how you feel about your looks. Many people with health issues feel self-conscious or upset about changes in their bodies.

How do we cope?

- ▶ Try to reduce stress
- ▶ Implement relaxation techniques
 - ▶ Mindfulness, Meditation
 - ▶ Progressive muscle relaxation
 - ▶ Yoga
- ▶ Access counselling
- ▶ Participate in support groups

1. Reducing Stress

- ▶ Stress can make it harder for you to take care of your chronic disease. We can learn strategies to cope with stress to help you manage day to day...
 - ▶ Don't overschedule-- be aware of your limits, say "no"
 - ▶ Ask for help... informally, let your loved ones know what they can do
 - ▶ Practice self care
 - ▶ Stay physically active- physical activity can give you more energy and help you feel better. Talk with your health care provider about how to safely exercise and what to avoid.
 - ▶ Get outside
 - ▶ Socialize, spend time with those who lift your spirits
 - ▶ Do things you enjoy
 - ▶ Learn a new hobby
 - ▶ Journal
 - ▶ Practice self compassion-- be gentle with yourself.

2. Relaxation Techniques

▶ Mindfulness and/or Meditation

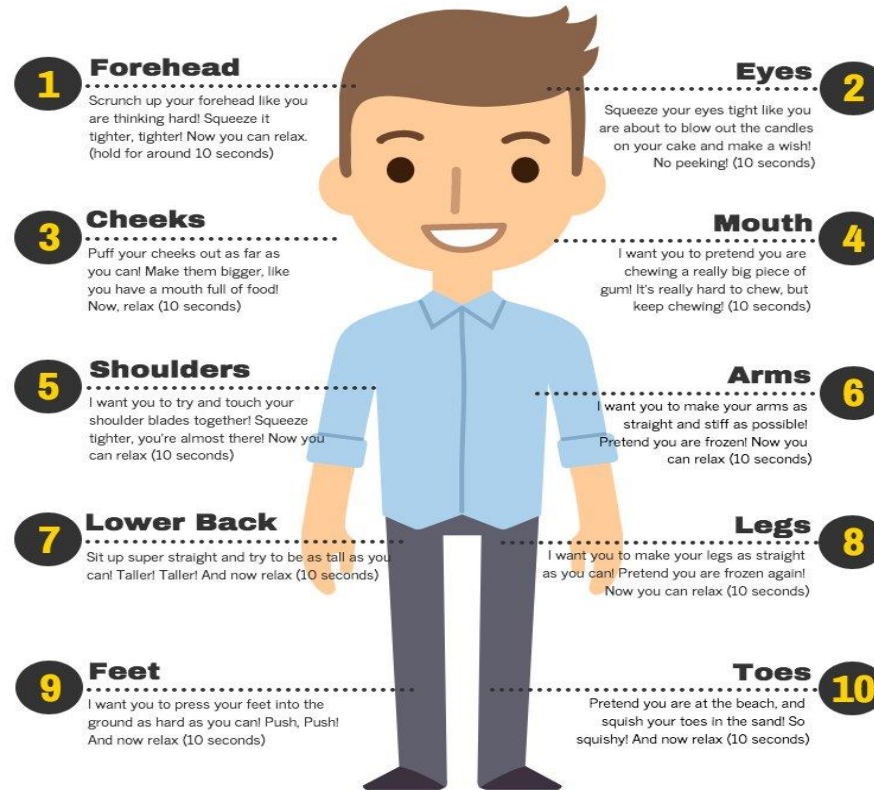
- ▶ “a treatment for psychological distress, depressive symptoms and anxiety for people with chronic disease.” Bohlmeijer et al, 2009, 539.
- ▶ a therapeutic intervention that trains attention and awareness. It is a practice of being conscious of the present moment and learning to respond to negative emotions with acceptance and kindness.
- ▶ “It’s important for people living with health conditions to recognize what they are feeling, instead of trying to push painful thoughts and emotions away, which can actually amplify them.”
- ▶ “Another way mindfulness can help is by reminding us to focus on the present moment, which can be challenging. For many, including those affected by a chronic disease, the mind can wander to worrying about the past or the future, which can lead to stress, anxiety and fear”
- ▶ Start by searching for some videos on Youtube, read a book on the topic

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- ▶ This technique involves tightening and then relaxing muscles. Most people start at either the toes or the head and progressively relax all the muscles across the body.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Whole Body Script



Yoga

- ▶ focuses the mind on breathing and posture to promote relaxation and reduce fatigue.
- ▶ Can reduce stress, anxiety, and fatigue in people living with chronic illness.
- ▶ Emphases practicing self compassion
- ▶ Most communities run yoga groups at recreation centers, seniors centers, gyms, etc.



Counselling/Support Groups

- ▶ **Counselling--** Professional help from a [counsellor](#) can help you cope with difficult or conflicting feelings.
 - ▶ Private pay options
 - ▶ Funded options:
 - ▶ Through your family doctor
 - ▶ Through your employer (benefits, insurance)
 - ▶ Government funded-<https://northwestaccesspoint.ca/>
 - ▶ Crisis response- Thunder Bay: 807-346-8282 | District / Toll-Free: 1-866-888-8988
- ▶ **Support Groups...**one of the benefits of social media.

Questions
or
Comments

Bibliography

- ▶ <https://www.gene.com/stories/a-mindful-approach-to-chronic-disease>
- ▶ <https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/managing-emotions/depression>
- ▶ Keng, S.L., Smoski, M.J., Robins, C.J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, CPR-01165. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21802619>
- ▶ Hölzel BK, Hoge EA, Greve DN, Gard T, Creswell JD, Brown KW, Barrett LF, Schwartz C, Vaitl D, Lazar SW. Neural mechanisms of symptom improvements in generalized anxiety disorder following mindfulness training. *Neuroimage Clin*. 2013; 2:448-58. PMID: 24179799; PMCID: PMC3777795. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24179799>
- ▶ Hofmann, S. G., Sawyer, A. T., Witt, A. A., & Oh, D. (2010). The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Therapy on Anxiety and Depression: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78(2), 169-183. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2848393/>
- ▶ Giacomo Sgalla et al, Mindfulness-based stress reduction in patients with interstitial lung diseases: a pilot, single-centre observational study on safety and efficacy, *Mar* 2015. <http://bmjopenrespres.bmj.com/content/2/1/e000065.full>
- ▶ American Psychological Association website. Coping with a diagnosis of chronic illness. www.apa.org/helpcenter/chronic-illness.aspx. Updated August 2013. Accessed July 25, 2022.