Thrive Anyway.

Fostering Personal and Family Resilience in the Midst of Life Threatening Illness

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In the context of a patient/family living with a life-limiting illness; resilience means...

Write your answer (neatly) on the index card.
Switching Chairs

Family / Loved One

Professional

Patient / Client
Nine Things All Children Need to Be Resilient

1. Structure
2. Consequences
3. Parent-child connections
4. Lots and lots of strong relationships
5. A powerful identity
6. A sense of control
7. A sense of belonging, spirituality, and life purpose
8. Rights and responsibilities
9. Safety and support

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Exploring Resilience

• My children, spouse, myself
• Consolidate and integrate learnings
• Disease trajectory?
• Palliative care and me
Uncertainty is the birthplace of hope.
5. A Powerful Identity
Dying of...

Living with....

Exceptional Responder
Secondary Cancer
Metastatic Cancer
Terminal.

Survivor
Palliative
No cure yet.

Lifer
Incurable
Patient
Failed Survivor

Stage 4 Cancer
Advanced Cancer

Victim
Advanced Cancer
Dancing with monsters.
Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.
Bouncing Back?

Bouncing Forward?

How does that work with a life limiting illness?!
Resilient and Palliative?

In groups of 2-3, describe:
- a “non-resilient” palliative patient
- a “resilient” palliative patient

Compare and contrast.
Resilience…

• No singular definition
• Context specific
• Comes and goes, can be nurtured
• Navigate to and negotiate resources
Some definitions

• Stable trajectory of healthy functioning, Bonanno
• Moving forward in an insightful and integrated positive manner, Yehuda
• Capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully, Masten
• A process to harness resources to sustain well-being, Panter-Brick
Resilience is both the capacity of individuals to **navigate** their way to the psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their capacity individually and collectively to **negotiate** for these **resources** to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways.

Michael Ungar, 2008
Resilience is the strength and speed of our response to adversity - and we can build it.

...not just built in individuals. It is built among individuals. Sandberg and Grant
Atypical Responders

- Exceptional Responder
- Rapid Progressor
- Exceptional Survivor

Moonshots and metastatic disease: the need for a multi-faceted approach when studying atypical responses, De La Torre, Cohen et al, npj Breast Cancer, 2017
Exploring Resilience

• Research and knowledge transfer/sharing
• Agency and advocacy
• Patients2patients collaborative learning
• Resilience factors?
Conversations in a leaky boat.

• Survey Monkey: MBC, IG, invite
• Living with Mets: n=69+1 (3 were male)
• Caregivers, n=6
• 93% Female
• Age: 33-54yrs, 73%
• Dx mets 5 yrs or less, 87%
• Parenting or caregiving also, 54%
• 82% want results, 78% further Q
• Resilient factor Q6: n=49 to 67
Very Important

• Healthcare team I trust and respect
• Support of my family
• My determination and will to live
• Health insurance
• Comfort discussing anything, everything with healthcare team
Not universally important

• Natural remedies and alternative medicine
• My faith or religious practice
• Going to work and doing my job
• Participating in support groups
• My therapist or counsellor
• My cultural heritage
Dear Doctor,
Please ask me about...
Top 5 to Cope and Thrive - Resilience Inventory

Check off ALL the things that help you cope and thrive when you are struggling, feeling stressed or facing challenges. Add anything else that you find helpful.

Circle 5 things that are MOST important to help you cope and thrive NOW. Discuss with your care providers and support people. Stick on the fridge.

☐ remembering how I made it through earlier challenges
☐ exercise
☐ my determination and strong will
☐ my hobbies
☐ spirituality
☐ stress management techniques
☐ a health care team I respect & trust
☐ the support of my family
☐ my faith
☐ people I can discuss my hopes, fears and anxieties with
☐ intimacy with my partner
☐ eating well
☐ opportunities to help others
☐ faith in the treatment plan

☐ solitude
☐ feeling safe and supported
☐ access to medications/treatment
☐ a support group
☐ a strong identity
☐ time spent playing
☐ having a job
☐ people / things to distract me
☐ a healthcare team I can discuss anything and everything with
☐ getting outside into nature
☐ my sense of humour
☐ art or dance
☐ writing
☐ getting enough rest / sleep
☐ a sense of life purpose
Next Steps?

• When and how might you explore resilience (*coping and thriving*) with palliative patients and families
• When might it be inappropriate to explore resilience?
There are no silver bullets. But there are silver threads that we can weave together to optimize health and wellness today.
In the context of a patient/family living with a life-limiting illness; resilience means…

Write your answer (neatly) on the index card and submit.
Thank you,
Eileen Dahl

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Some References

• Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant, Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy, 2017

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