

MAKING MORE ENERGY AVAILABLE FOR HEALING

Neil Fiore, PhD

All of the studies cited ... point in the same direction: You do better when you learn to take charge of the course of your illness realistically. You cannot control everything, you cannot undo what has been done (like getting the disease), but you will benefit by taking hold of your current situation in whatever way is possible. . . . When your life is threatened, take hold and make the most of it; don't give up on it.

-- Dr. David Spiegel, Living Beyond Limits

Managing our energy, our time, and our relationships is part of the empowerment that can come from surviving a crisis such as a cancer diagnosis. Studies of cancer survivors indicate that several elements appear to correlate with a healing of the spirit and optimizing the body's ability to heal:

- **EXPRESSION** -- expression of honest emotions -- especially the more difficult emotions of anger and sadness, rather than stoic denial or false cheerfulness
- **HEALING ATMOSPHERE** -- practicing hypnotic or meditative relaxation for stress and pain reduction
e.g., "This is not the end of the world. I will not let this ruin my evening."
- **WONDER** -- maintaining a sense of wonder about how one's body will cooperate with medical treatment
e.g., "I wonder how I'll get through this one? This is going to be interesting. I wonder what unknown resources my body and mind will muster to cope with this?"
- **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION** -- maintaining some control over medical decisions, seeking second/third opinions, asking questions of the doctor, knowing what you can do [e.g., exercise and diet] that could enhance the effects of medical treatment and strengthen your body
- **LETTING GO** -- mourning our losses and adapting to the present condition, rather than struggling to hold onto or fix the past

EXPRESSION -- expression of honest emotions -- especially the more difficult emotions of anger and sadness, rather than stoic denial or false cheerfulness

Write or tape-record your feelings and thoughts every day. Do not ruminate about difficulties with others or fears for more than a few hours before expressing them to someone or in writing. Shout them in your car. Sing the Blues. Dance, walk with a vengeance. Get it out of your gut-level response and put it into words and movement.

I commit to: _____

HEALING ATMOSPHERE -- practicing hypnotic or meditative relaxation for stress and pain reduction

Take three slow, deep breathes – inhale, hold, exhale slowly – floating down into the chair. Close your eyes and acknowledge the support of the chair, the building, the earth. Remind yourself that all around you is a protective atmosphere weighing at least 14 lbs. per square inch – thick enough to burn up meteorites. Imagine this atmosphere as a white or golden light three to four feet all around YOU, protecting you from the noises outside and giving you all the time in the world to push aside any concerns or unwanted thoughts; all the time in the world to delegate energy to your Inner Healer, your wise body.

I commit to: _____

WONDER -- maintaining a sense of wonder about how one's body will cooperate with medical treatment

Use any sign of worry – holding your breath, muscle tension, tightening your jaw, fist, or forehead – as a signal to let go of holding and to delegate that energy your body, your Inner Healer, your Inner Physician. Be honest about your fears and worries but do NOT assume they're real or that they will happen. Know that statistics are NOT real for the individual. No one can apply a statistic to you as an individual, only to a group.

I commit to: _____

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION – maintain some control over medical decisions, asking questions, knowing what you can do in the way of exercise and change in diet that could enhance the effects of medical treatment

Refuse to make yourself feel like a victim by repeating “I have to . . . [take chemotherapy, go into surgery].” Calm your body and soothe your mind by taking some control, adapting to reality, and CHOOSING to do what makes sense to you.

I commit to: _____

LETTING GO -- mourning your loses and move on to adapting to the present condition, rather than struggling to hold onto the past

Use all “should've/could've” thoughts about the past to **WAKE-UP** to NOW. Catch your mind drifting into the past and bring it back to maximizing what is possible in the present and what actions are consistent with your current goals.

I commit to: _____

Based on Dr. Neil Fiore's book, with foreword by Norman Cousins, ***The Road Back to Health: Coping with the Emotional Aspects of Cancer.*** [Celestial Arts, 1-800-841-book]

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