

Living With Chronic Illness

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Surviving
Coping
Thriving



Stages of Adaptation

Diagnostic "Shock"

- (>weeks/
months)

Post- Diagnostic Phase 1:

- Passivity and
resignation
- (>months or
year/s)

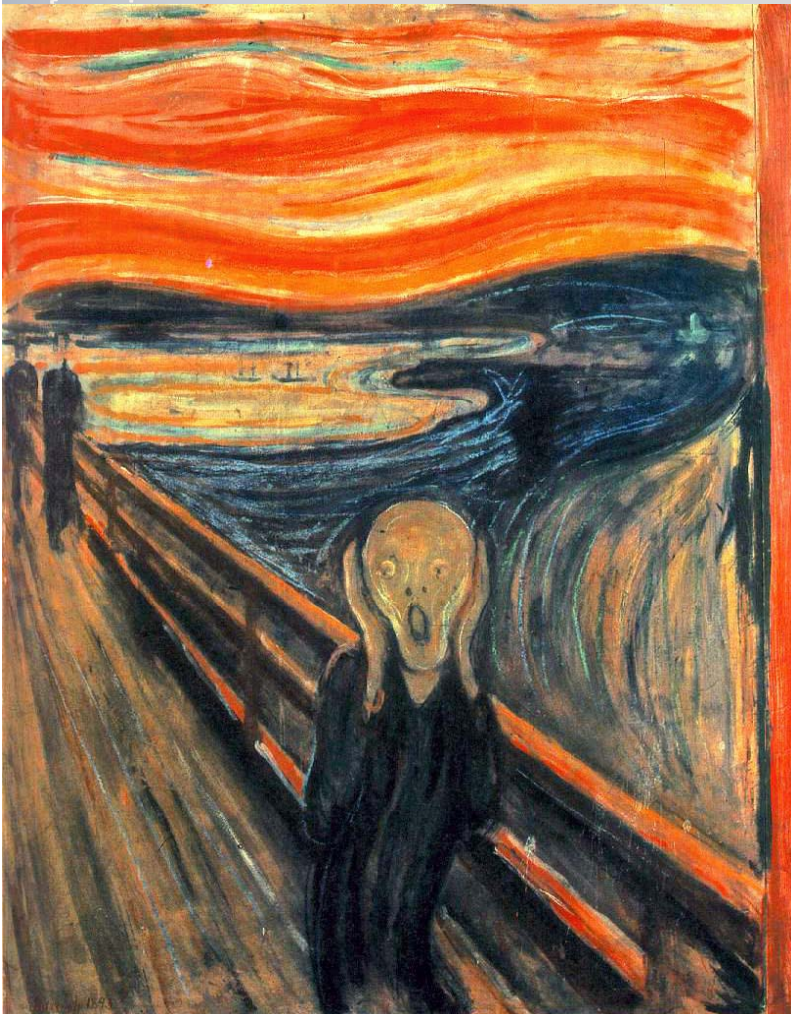
Post- Diagnostic Phase 2:

- Assimilation-
Resolution
- (Continuum)

"Highs" &
"Lows,"
"blues" and
"blahs"
mean you're
doing OK

Diagnostic “Shock”

- Confrontation with loss of control; personal vulnerability; mortality
- Isolation vs. Clinging or alternate
- 45% initially depressed @ breast cancer diagnosis; 43% are not (Seth Segall et al 2010)



Post-Diagnostic Phase

- ✿ 75% post treatment (1-2 years) breast cancer patients adjust well



Seth Segall (2010)

Significant Factors in Coping

- Neuroticism v. Normalcy (non-neuroticism)
- Dispositional optimism v. pessimism
- Self-reliance v. Other reliance
- Problem focused v. emotion-focused strategy
- “Monitors” v. “blunters”

“Monitors” v. “Blunters”

- Monitors tend to scan, search, amplify threat
- Blunters tend to avoid, ignore, self-distract
- Monitors do better with more information
- Blunters with less. Offer relaxation

Seth Segall (2010)

Positive Adjustment-Early Stages

- ✱ Fighting spirit

- ✱ Positive focus

- ✱ Support seeking

(know what you want and who to go to)

- ✱ Information seeking

Seth Segall (2010)



Positive Adjustment--Later Stages

☀ Stoicism

☀ Persistence

☀ Acceptance

☀ Spiritual/religious adherence

- ☀ "Psychological Adaptation, Distress, and Coping in Adult-Onset Soft-Tissue Sarcoma" (2010) Seth Segall, PhD, Katherine N. DuHamel, PhD, and Laurie Paul-- Electronic Sarcoma Update Newsletter* (vol. 7, #4)

Adaptation and Outcome

- ✿ Psychological adjustment and health outcomes can vastly differ due to **HUNDREDS** of individual & social variables
- ✿ Job of a therapist begins with identifying what they are!
 - ✿ Therapist enters the soul of the individual in order to diagnose *Charak*

You are your greatest ally

One should uplift oneself by the self

Uddharet ātmana ātmānam

One should not degrade oneself

na ātmānam avsādyet

Self indeed a friend of self

ātmaiva hi ātmano bandhur

Self alone is enemy of the self

☀ *ātmaiva ripus ātmanāh*

☀ Gita 6:5 (translation Winthrop Sargeant)

The Two

“HOT”

Thoughts

✿ “I am not the person I once was.”

✿ “They are not how they used to be”

The person behind the illness

- Relationship with the self
(self image, past, future, etc.)
- Relationship with others
(expectations, roles, responsibilities, intimacy, etc.)
- Impact on emotional life
(relationship with the “disease,” anger, depression, anxiety, self-pity, etc.)
- Stressors and Skills
(pain, fatigue, insomnia--)

Four Tasks in self-management

Managing
Symptoms

Managing daily
activities

Managing
emotions

Sharpening the
“tools” (relax,
renew, empower)

Health is multi-dimensional

- ✿ Few are totally sick or totally healthy
Few are totally weak or totally strong
- ✿ In what ways are you strong, healthy or “okay”
- ✿ Assets/qualities for dealing with the challenge



Healthy Skepticism

- ✿ Current medical knowledge & opinions are constantly replaced by newer ones
- ✿ Be skeptical of medical “verdicts”
- ✿ Identify the misperceptions, myths and misinformation about your illness



Realistic Optimism

- ★ If 10/100 get better, count yourself in among the 10
- ★ Spontaneous recovery and miracles are part of the reality
- ★ “Pessimists may live longer but optimists have lot more fun!”



Acceptance is not surrender

✿ What is, IS!

✿ Contrary to the fears, real work begins with acceptance

✿ Acceptance is an ongoing work



Relationship with Others

- ✿ Limit expectations
- ✿ Don't hesitate to seek help when needed
- ✿ Nourish and support others in anyway you can
- ✿ Stay connected
- ✿ Get out whenever you can



“Fighting spirit”

- ★ Cancer patients with fighting spirits do better

(Hans Eysenck)

- ★ “The fight in me is gone”= depression

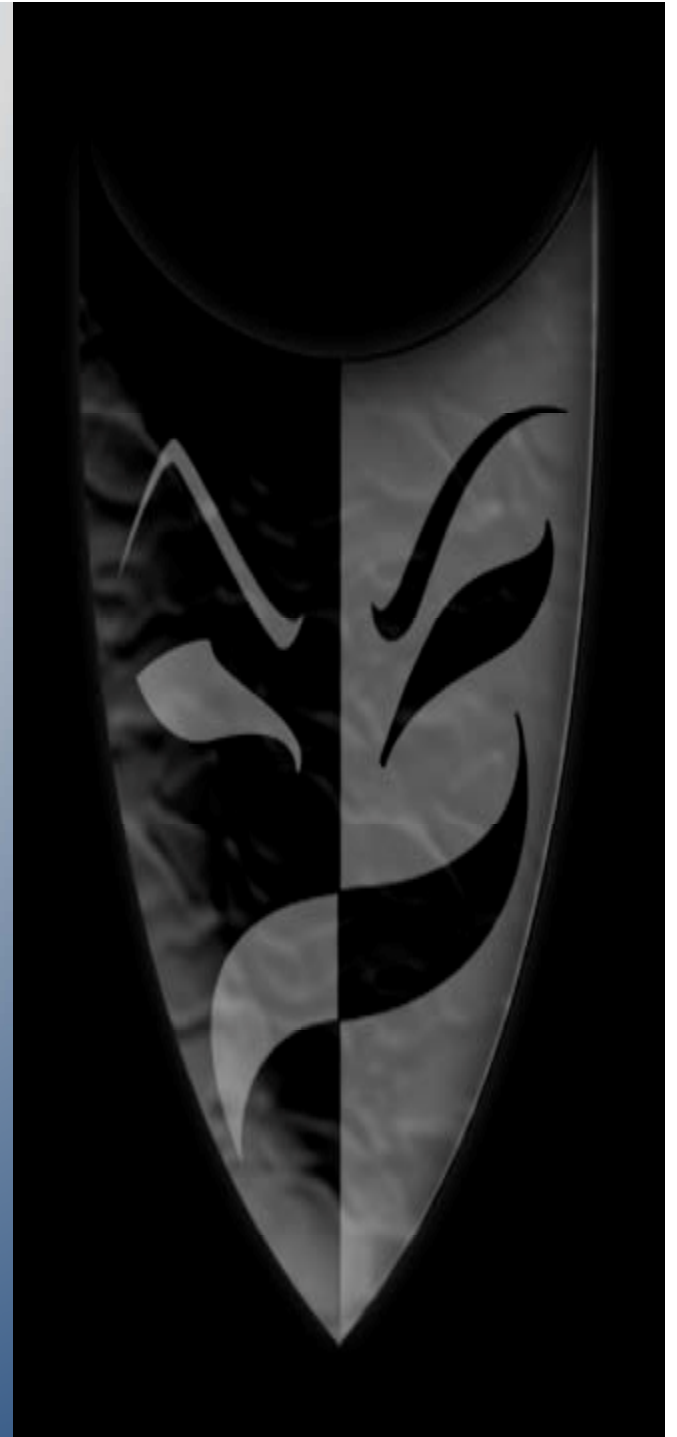
- ★ Two people with same condition can have different outcomes

- ★ “When darkness falls they act as if they’re on the edge of the dawn



Enemy in Disguise (Masked Depression)

- Fixation on the functional loss
- Loss of will to modify harmful behaviors
- Loss of will to initiate healthful behaviors
- Loss of will to live



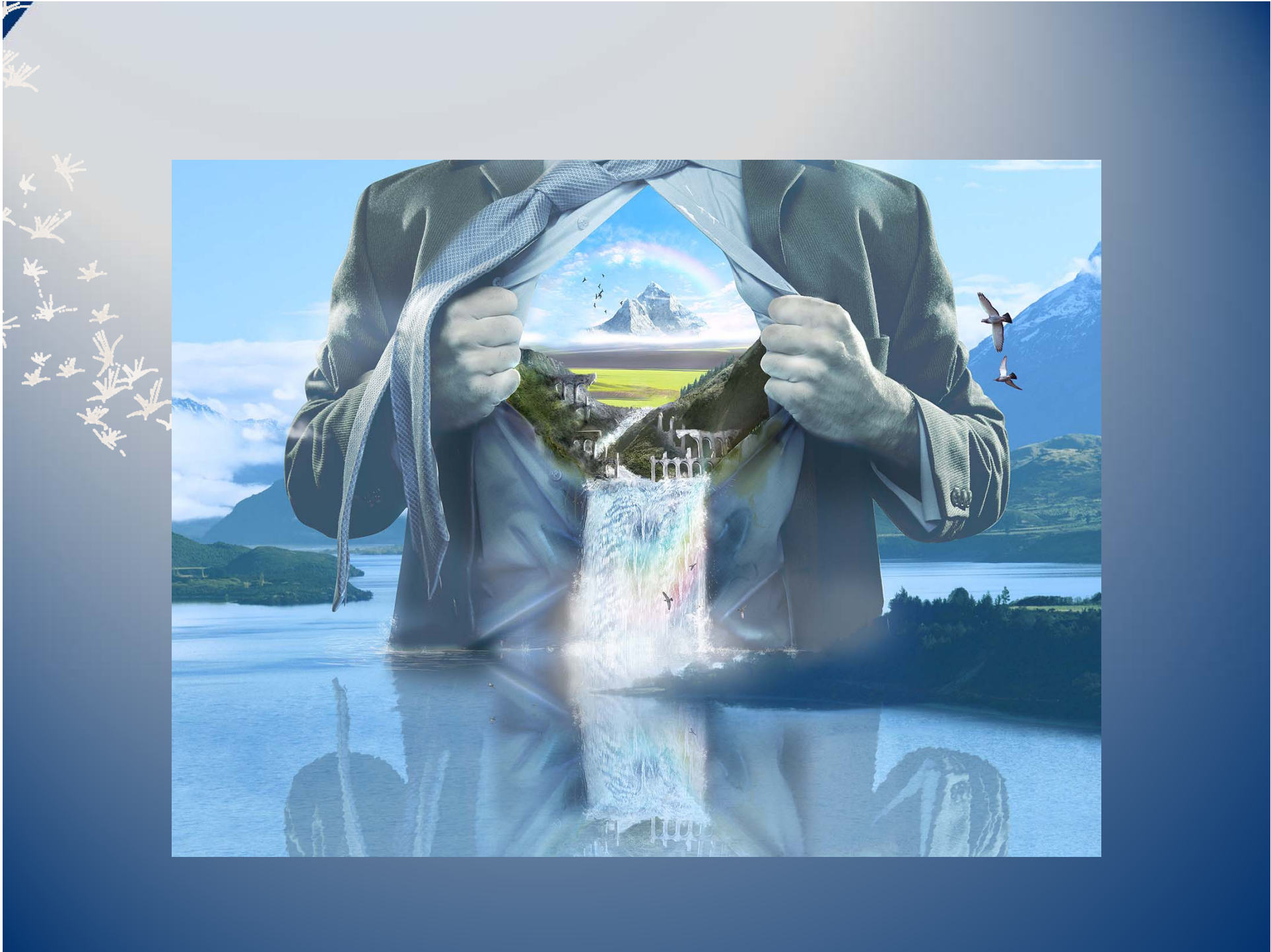
Mindfulness vs. Mindlessness

- ✿ Be mindful of the whole (healthy- sick, weakness-strength, hurting-not hurting, hope-doubts and uncertainties, etc.)
- ✿ Whole body awareness (whole body breathing or mindfulness) for relaxation and meditation



✿ “Certainty is a cruel mindset”

✿ Ellen Langer





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