Tired of Feeling Tired?!

A Psychosocial Approach to Fatigue and Sleep Difficulties for Cancer Patients

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Cancer Related Fatigue - CRF

Welcome

- Reviewing condensed version of “Tired of Feeling Tired” slides
  - Psychosocial Approach to CRF and Sleep Difficulties, offered by Patient and Family Counselling (Patient Education workshop)

- Agenda: Recognizing & Coping with:
  - Week 1: Fatigue & Physical Health
  - Week 2: Fatigue & Psychological Health
  - Week 3: Sleep Difficulties
  - Each week has small and large groups, and homework
Cancer Related Fatigue - CRF

All 3 parts attend to:

- Education
- Self Awareness
- Self-Care Strategies: “internal” and “external”
- Resources: Building community
Cancer Related Fatigue - CRF

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Cancer Related Fatigue - CRF

Clinically – the focus is:

• Education about CRF **AND** the strategies that are effective ... it validates and normalizes, plus provide the vocabulary to understand and discuss experience (calms and soothes), strategies that research supports to be effective

• Self Awareness: use the vocabulary to soothe and calm, plus elicit meaning and needs, decrease stress

• Self-Care Strategies: “internal” and “external” - builds increases coping, decreases stress, increase sense of self being able to adapt and grapple with experiences that are difficult

• Resources: Building community – support and validates the reality of living with a cancer diagnosis, treatment and recovery, plus post-treatment adjustment, decreases stress
The Trajectory Of Healing

The angle of trajectory varies depending on stress and demands vs. strength of treatment

The reality is that each crash decreases in intensity, frequency and duration.

All crashes can be a bit scary because every crash feels similar to how we felt when we started.

As we heal, we get smarter at recognizing the early warning signs so that when we push beyond, we catch ourselves earlier.

As we feel better we inevitably do more and eventually we do too much then we crash.

Crashes in the beginning are deeper than later on in recovery.
Your Cancer Related Fatigue
Cancer-Related Fatigue (CRF)

- *Emotional disturbance/mood disorder* — Fatigue seldom occurs by itself, and it commonly clusters with emotional distress, mood disorders, sleep disturbance, and/or pain. In particular, there is a strong correlation between fatigue and depression, and in some cases, it may be difficult to distinguish between the two as the source of distress.

- Patients with mild CRF that does not interfere with activities of daily living (ADLs) can be reassured and counseled as to coping strategies that conserve energy. CRF that is moderate to or interferes with basic or instrumental ADLs requires an assessment.

Cancer-Related Fatigue (CRF)

Definition

• Subjective feeling of tiredness
  - can interfere with function, not relieved by rest
• Most common side effect for cancer patients
• Can be distressing, persistent, and pervasive (physical-cognitive-emotional-social)
• Not related to recent activity.
Fatigue

• Patients may hesitate in reporting fatigue...why?
  – expected, inevitable, must be tolerated
  – fear of being labelled “a complainer”
  – fear of not receiving best or maximum cancer treatment
  – fear that fatigue is a “bad sign”

NCCN Cancer-Related Fatigue. v.2.2005
Fatigue, like pain, is best described by the person experiencing it.
Causes of Fatigue

General
• Physical: Hunger, sleep, chronic stress, aging, limited exercise, Dehydration, infection, nausea, pain, Anemia, thyroid, lack of vitamin D, chronic illnesses, medications
• Depression, anxiety

Cancer
• Cancer itself
  – Type, stage, location, individual characteristics
    • Brain cancer, lung cancer
• Cancer treatment
  – Surgery, Radiation, Chemotherapy, Other Medications (HRT)
  – Physical Deconditioning and Pain
Fatigue and Surgery

- Almost 100% of patients have fatigue
- Often worse about 7 days after surgery
- Most people return to normal about 1-3 months after surgery
Fatigue & Chemotherapy

• Almost 100% of patients experience

• Fatigue usually lower prior to next chemotherapy treatment

• Increases over course of treatment

• Begins to lessen 2-3 months after treatment is finished
Fatigue & Radiation Therapy

- Close to 50% of patients experience
- Often begins to build around treatment #10
- Increases over the course of treatment
- Begins to lessen 2-3 months after treatment is finished
Cognitive symptoms of fatigue

Difficulty with:
– Multi-tasking
– Focusing or paying attention
– Memory

May Impact:
– Completing daily tasks
– Returning to work
– Levels of energy (especially post-treatment)
Example: Small group discussion
- Breakout Rooms

How do you describe your cancer-related fatigue?

• 10 minutes for the small group discussion
• Remember to give all members in your group time to share
• Choose one person to share key points of discussion during large group debriefing

• Large Group Debrief – 15 minutes
Managing fatigue

Physical health strategies to decrease fatigue:

• Exercise
• Nutrition
• Energy Management
Exercise

• Research has shown us that exercise:
  – Lowers fatigue by 40-50%
  – Improves survival
  – Lowers the risk of breast cancer recurrence
  – Is important, even during treatment

Muscle deconditioning (inactivity) can create fatigue
Exercise

- Thought of exercising can be overwhelming
- Do regular, mild to moderate exercise.
  - **DON’T** do infrequent, intense workouts ...fatiguing
- Resting too much increases fatigue (muscle deconditioning)
Exercise – Self Care Goals

• Identify what exercise you enjoy doing (more likely to do it)

• Start slowly and increase your activity over time, e.g., start out walking for 5-10 minutes 2-3 times a week. The slowly increase to 20-30 minutes 3-5 times per week
  – Start from where you are at and build from there

• Use the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely)
Exercise Resources

• 811 Exercise Specialist

• Inspire Health: online exercise classes, Exercise Physiologist for individual guidance

• BC Cancer Website
  - http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/exercise-support
Nutrition

Fuel for the fire
Eat well

• Drink fluids regularly
• Protein and snacks
• Anemia – common with chemotherapy, can create fatigue, follow up with a Registered Dietician for foods high in iron
Protein

For information on the importance of protein and high protein food choices, go to:

http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/nutrition/nutrition-handouts
Nutrition Resources

• 811 Oncology Dietician (Mon-Fri, 830-430), plus online
  https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/your-condition/nutrition-people-cancer

• BC Cancer – Registered Dieticians – patients at high risk of malnutrition

• BC Cancer Medical Librarian – 250-519-5517

• Inspire Health
Homework – Week 1

• Education: What new information did I learn?
• Self Awareness: Reflect on your fatigue. When is it highest? Lowest?
• Self-Care Strategies: What strategies do I want to begin?
• Resources: Did I learn about any resources that can help me build community and support?
Part 2: Fatigue: Psychological Health & Coping
Welcome Back!

House Keeping and Homework Review

Me: I need to do a thing.

Body: You did a thing yesterday. That's enough things.
Example: Breakout Rooms

What do you find tiring mentally and emotionally?

• 8-10 minutes
• Give all members in your group time to share
• Choose one person to share key points of discussion in large group

Large Group

• 10 minutes
• Key points or “ah ha” moments
Energy Management: Your "Energy Bank"

"Energy Conservation“...A balance needs to be maintained between energy spent and energy saved
### Awareness

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![Thermometer with energy levels](image)

- **Plenty of energy**
- **Some energy**
- **No energy**
Review your Activities

• Make a list of activities that need accomplishing and prioritize. Be realistic about finishing tasks yourself

• Determine which activities you could ask for help with

• Think about what friends, family members or community groups are willing to help with and delegate
  – This helps them as well... “love jar”
Energy Saving Strategies

**Saving energy**
- Planning
- Pacing
- People (drain, sustain)
- Activities
- Positioning

**Prioritizing**
- Meal preparation
- Childcare
- Work
- Leisure
## Offers: “The Love Jar”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>What are they good at?</th>
<th>My ask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>Making me laugh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>Cleaning &amp; hugging</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Stamina: Your "Gas Tank"

• Stamina: physical, cognitive, emotional, social

• Metaphor: “gas tank"
  – Cancer and treatment has depleted gas tank
  – You will forget the above daily
  – “Gas tank” is invisible to you and others
  – Can take 6-18 months to rebuild, but it’s a “bell curve”
  – Human response: impatient and unrealistic
  – Ability to handle stress can be reduced (less resilient)
Building Skills

• Acknowledge & accept changing personal limitations

• “It’s not just me” (pressure, self-judgment, isolation)

• Learn to communicate your new personal limitations, even to yourself
"Common Humanity" (Kristin Neff)

- Fatigue & Energy Scales helps communicate level of fatigue

- Learn to talk about your level of fatigue to family members & friends (use Scales)

  - You may look ‘normal’ to them

  - Fatigue is on “the inside”, not visible
Some challenges you may face

• Your own expectations
• What other people expect of you
• Day-to-day needs (e.g., caregiving)
• Permission to put your needs ahead of others
• Recognize, respect, pace yourself
Update Your Coping Skills and Perspective

• Give yourself permission to care for yourself
  - explore what is restorative and what is draining
• Try keeping a journal or diary for tracking purposes and the support of expression, “putting things into words”
• Seek out support – people who “get it”, what it is like to live with this kind condition and treatment
• Recognize and celebrate when you reach goals
• Be patient with yourself
Self Care Practice Exercises

• Self check-in
• Self-Soothing and Grounding
• Orienting (5-4-3-2-1)
• Breathing – google breathing exercises like “box breathing”, “coherent breathing”, “4-7-8 breathing”
Quieting the Body

Rest is often as good as sleep during the day.

Ways we are ‘hard-wired’ to relax
• Breathe and breathing exercises
• Self-soothing, grounding
• Play
• Laughter
• Touch – especially hugs & soothing touch
• Eye to eye contact – feeling seen & heard
• Music & dance
• Animals and nature
• Moderate exercise and gentle stretching
Quieting the Mind

- Physical touch – holding your forehead, hand on chest
- Self check-in
- Journaling
- Meditation
- Weighted blanket
- Calming music
- Thought stopping (Google)
- Do things that:
  - Give you a sense of hope and purpose
  - Give you pleasure and a sense of well-being
Quietening the “Heart”

*When emotions become heightened or intense, they can use a lot of energy*

- **Practice Exercise**: Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress.
- **Try to actually feel the stress & emotional discomfort in your body.**
Now, say to yourself:

1. **This is a moment of emotional discomfort**
   That’s mindfulness (awareness).

2. **Feeling discomfort is a part of life.**
   That’s common humanity (community).
   • Put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.

3. **May I be kind to myself**
   That is self-kindness.
   • You can also ask yourself, “What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?”

- [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)
- [Resources ~ RAIN: Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture - Tara Brach](http://www.self-compassion.org)
Social Support: My Community

• Consider who gives you support and who may drain your energy. Practice setting boundaries for right now.

• [https://psychcentral.com/lib/10-way-to-build-and-preserve-better-boundaries#10-tips](https://psychcentral.com/lib/10-way-to-build-and-preserve-better-boundaries#10-tips)
Resources for Support and Community

- BC Cancer website [BC Cancer](bccancer.bc.ca)
  - Support program page [Support Programs (bccancer.bc.ca)](bccancer.bc.ca)
  - Coping – Symptoms [Coping with Cancer (bccancer.bc.ca)](bccancer.bc.ca)
  - Supportive Care e-bulletin
  - Library [Library (bccancer.bc.ca)](bccancer.bc.ca)
    - Pathfinders – Exercise, Stress, Life After Cancer
Resources for Support and Community

• BC Cancer website cont’d
  – Relaxation Group – see next slide
  – Community Virtual Programs list [Support Programs (bccancer.bc.ca)]
  – BC Cancer audio recordings for relaxation
    [https://soundcloud.com/phsabc]

• Inspire Health: online class schedule [https://www.inspirehealth.ca/]

• Wellspring: online support program [https://wellspring.ca/the-wellspring-approach/]
Relaxation & Music Therapy Group

Do you often feel anxious, nervous, or notice that you can’t relax? Do you want to learn ways to calm your mind and relax your body?

Tuesdays, 2:30 pm and Thursdays, 10:30 am

Join us for an online guided imagery and music therapy experience designed to promote relaxation and nervous system regulation.

Groups are led by certified music therapist Carolyn Neapole, and co-facilitated by a team of counsellors from BC Cancer locations across the province.

No prior experience is necessary, and all patients, family members, and caregivers are welcome.

Registration required: Please contact Patient & Family Counselling
BC Cancer – Vancouver
604.677.6000 ext. 672164
or toll-free 1.800.663.5353 ext. 672164
Resources

• Anxiety BC. Mindshift Groups and Mindshift app
  https://www.anxietycanada.com/mindshift-groups

• BC Association of Living Mindfully. Art of Living Mindfully -
  https://www.bcalm.ca/what-we-offer/art-of-living-mindfully
  (limited e-classes available)

• Palouse: free, 8-week, online mindfulness-based stress reduction
  program (curriculum/program accessed at any time of day)
  www.palousemindfulness.org
Resources

• Fatigue Dr. Mike!  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTFPMYGe86s

• Mind over Mood apps & books  
  www.thriveport.com/products/moodkit/

• Stop Panic & Anxiety Self-Help app

• Emotions:  http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/emotional-support

• Inspire Health  https://www.inspirehealth.ca/
Home work

• **Education:** List any questions you may have from Session #2

• **Self-Awareness and Self-Care:**
  • Create a brief message of support you would have said to yourself during treatment or healing if you knew then what you have experienced now
  • Bring 2 specific tips that you have found most helpful in managing fatigue

• **Resources:** Look up some of the resources identified in Session #2
Home work Review

Please share your experience in the last week’s session in the chat box:
• Education: questions you may have
• Self-Awareness and Self-Care: tips you found most helpful
• Resources: you found useful
**SLEEP HABITS**

Use this form to identify your current sleep habits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habit or condition</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to bed at the same time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use bed for other things than sleep or sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nap during the day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drink caffeine, alcohol or smoke in the evening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedroom is noisy or doesn’t block out light</td>
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<tr>
<td>I toss and turn in bed for hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise before going to bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eat before going to bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use sleep medication</td>
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Benefits of Sleep

• Sleep prepares our brains for making new memories and then cements those new memories and prevents forgetting.

• Sleep also helps our “system”, both physically and psychologically, to repair itself.
Strategies for a Better Sleep

• Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each and every day. A schedule positively reinforces a “sleep habit”.

• Sleeping in on the weekends will not make up for lack of sleep during the week.
Strategies Cont’d.

• Exercise is excellent ... but not too late in the day. Try to finish any exercise at least 2-3 hours prior to bedtime.
Strategies Cont’d.

• Avoid caffeine (e.g., coffee, black tea, chocolate, and colas) in late afternoon or early evening. This process can take up to 8 hours in some people.

• Avoid beverages containing alcohol before bed. Alcohol can cause you to wake up in the middle of the night.
Strategies Cont’d.

• Avoid large meals late at night. A light snack is fine.
• You also want to avoid going to bed hungry. Some light and healthy snacks that will not disrupt sleep are: slice of cheese and crackers; a handful of almonds; a small serving of fruit; a boiled egg.
Relaxing activities to promote getting back to sleep are knitting; jigsaw puzzles; listening to soothing music; reading a good book.

If possible, try to avoid napping in the day if you are reconfiguring your sleep and wake times. If you do nap, try to have your short nap (20 minutes) prior to 3 pm.
Strategies Cont’d.

• Take a warm bath before bed. The drop in body temperature after getting out of the bath may help you feel sleepy.
• Try relaxing activities before bed such as reading or listening to music.
• BC Cancer audio recordings for relaxation - https://soundcloud.com/phsabc
Strategies Cont’d.

• Design your bedroom for optimal sleeping: dark, cool, and no blue screen lights from electronic gadgets. The bedroom is for sleeping and sex only.
• Remember – if you are going to watch, read or listen to anything in the middle of the night, pick something that is boring or “non-stimulating”.
Strategies Cont’d.

• Do not stay in bed awake for longer than 20 minutes. Get up and choose a relaxing activity from your list. Return to bed when sleepy.
Body Scan Exercise for Sleep

- www.paulousemindfulness.com

Sleep Podcasts

- Various podcasts for sleep, relaxation and an interesting lecture on sleep science.
  
  https://www.healthline.com/health/podcasts-for-sleep

  https://sendmetosleep.com/best-sleep-podcast/
Resources

• **Why Do We Sleep: Unlocking The Power of Sleep and Dreams** (Mathew Walker, 2017)


• [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)


• **The Trajectory of Healing**, Dr. Andrew Neville [https://www.healing.org/](https://www.healing.org/)
For Reflection...

• Education: what information did I learn?

• Self Awareness & Self-Care Strategies: what strategies do I want to practice moving forward?

• Resources: are there resources I would like to explore further?
Thank you and References

- Escalante Carmen P (Author), **Editor:** Paul J Hesketh, MD, **Deputy Editor:** Sadhna R Vora, MD. *Cancer-related fatigue: Prevalence, screening, and clinical assessment* (2023)