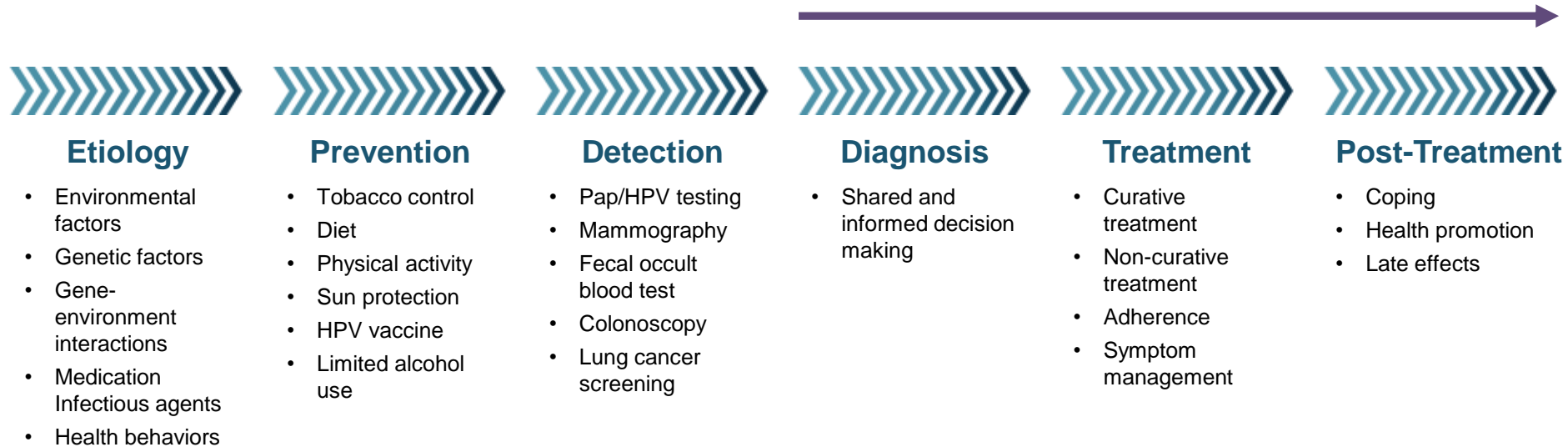


Coping with Complicated Emotions

Survive & Thrive 2019

Patricia I. Moreno, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Medical Social Sciences
Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Cancer Continuum



Objective

Provide a framework for understanding difficult emotions and thoughts in the cancer experience as well as approaches to help manage them.

Complicated feelings, like anger, guilt, uncertainty,
are very common in the cancer experience.

– *However, we often don't talk about them enough.*

Why?

Language

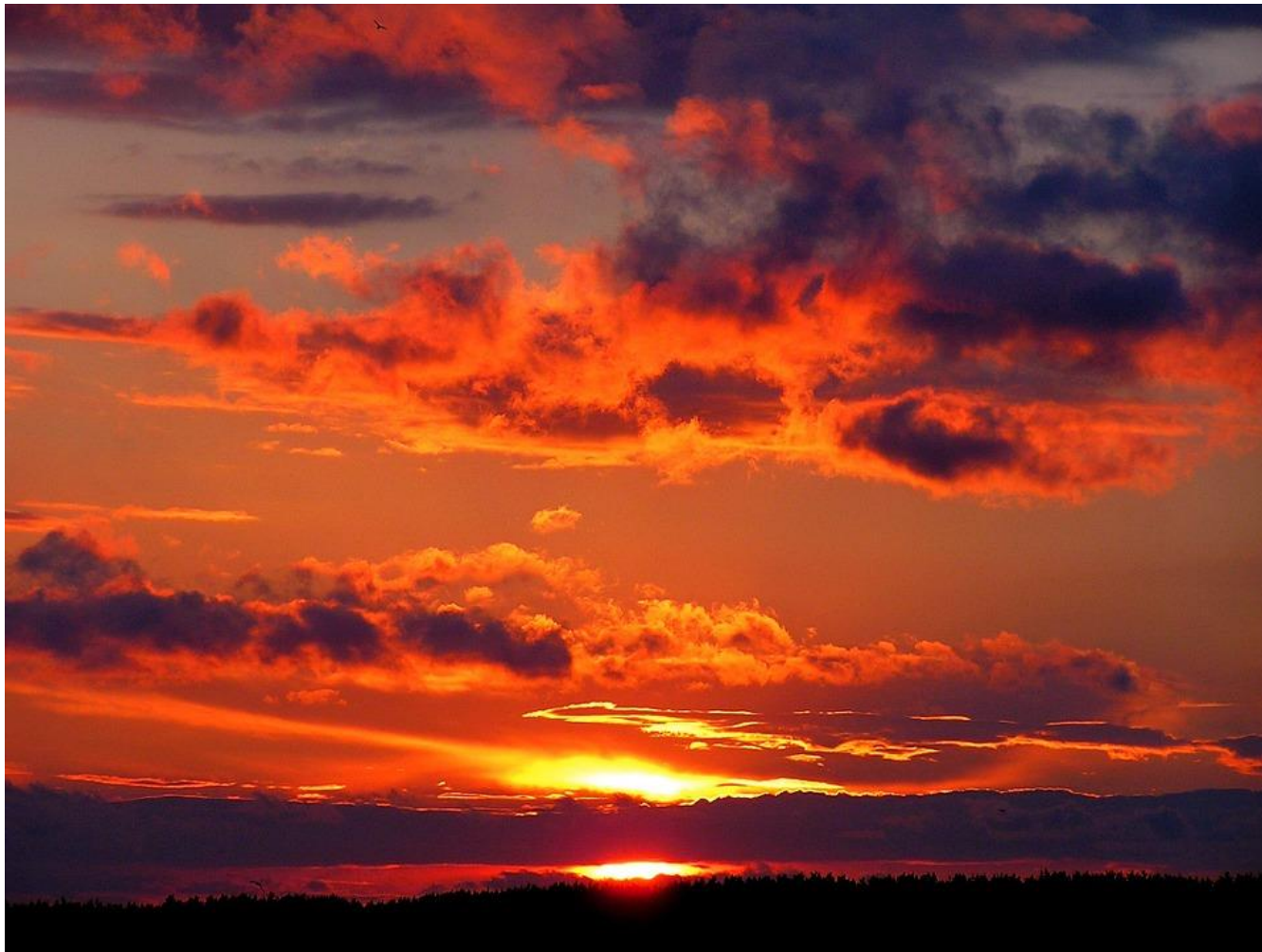
lose
lost
survivor **win**
won
hero cancer
language fight
heroic hope
fought
battle

WordItOut

Attitudes



It is psychologically healthy to have both painful and complicated feelings alongside feelings like gratitude and happiness when coping with cancer.



M Northwestern
Medicine®



Cancer Survivorship Institute
Enhancing Life Beyond Cancer

How do we typically cope?

Problem-Solving

- Very common, generally adaptive
- Focuses on dealing with the cause of a problem by reducing or eliminating the source of stress

*However, this strategy is most effective when stressors are **controllable**.*

What can we do differently?

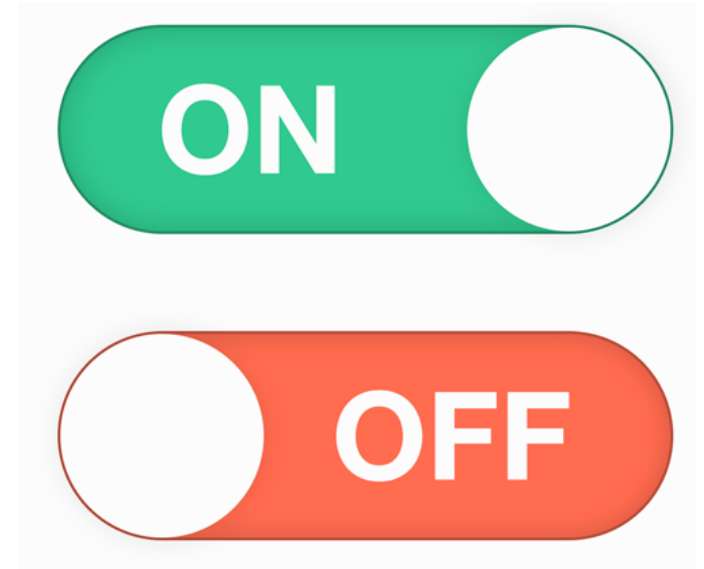
Creating Space

- Observe
- Honor
- Acknowledge
- Normalize
- Breathe



Self-Compassion

- Let go of judgment
- Notice the suffering switch
- Take a different perspective
- Engage in self-affirmation



Self-Compassion

- Compassion is *not* finite or zero sum
- Difficult emotions and thoughts can, and often do, *co-exist* with gratitude



If your compassion does not include yourself,
it is incomplete.

- Jack Kornfield

Clarify Priorities

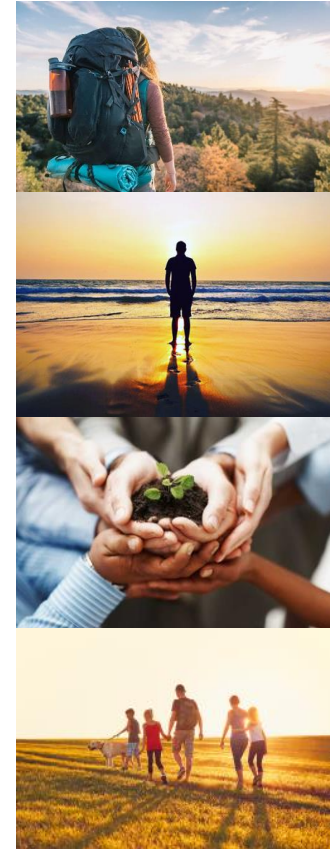
What have I learned about

- my values and what's important?
- myself and my strengths?
- what I want more of in my life? less of?



Life Domains

- Relationships
- Community
- Health
- Leisure & Self-Care
- Education & Growth
- Work & Hobbies
- Spirituality





M Northwestern
Medicine®



Cancer Survivorship Institute
Enhancing Life Beyond Cancer

Creating Meaning

1. Choose a life domain that is high priority
2. Choose a value to pursue in this domain
3. Develop goals, guided by the value
4. Take action





Cancer Survivorship Institute

Enhancing Life Beyond Cancer

Being Present

Mindfulness is paying attention, on purpose, in the present, and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.

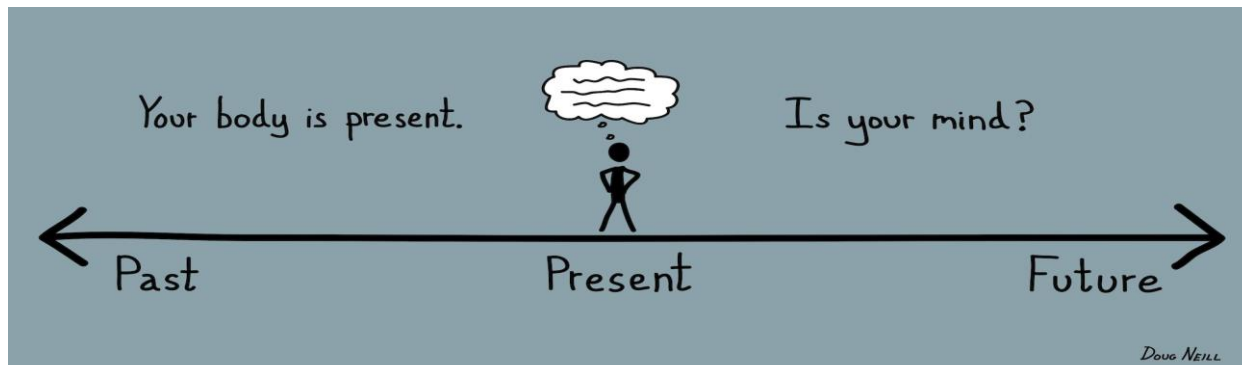
- Jon Kabat-Zinn



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Being Present

- Be still and bring your attention to your breath
- Slow breathing and do a body scan
- Notice thoughts and feelings without judgment





Cancer Survivorship Institute

Enhancing Life Beyond Cancer

Being Present

- Creates awareness of your experience
- Allows room for difficult feelings without judgment
- Helps manage stress
- Facilitates self-compassion



Summary

- **Honor** and understand complicated feelings
- Cultivate **self-compassion**
- Identify values and strengths to **create meaning**
- Be **mindful** and connect to the present moment
- *Reach out for more help*