

From Survive to Thrive: Living Life to the Full after Cancer Treatment

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Presentation Outline

- **Background:** What are the research findings regarding psychological interventions for those with cancer
- **Viewing the Experience of Cancer as Psychological Trauma:** Trauma and Post-Traumatic Growth
- **The Health Change Process Theory:** A holistic theory, practice framework and quantitative assessment approach to enable movement from surviving trauma to thriving because of trauma
- The Survive to Thrive Intervention
- Conclusions

Psychosocial Interventions

Previously, psychological interventions focused on aiding survivorship.

Consequently the focus of intervention evaluation was on evaluating psychosocial interventions to test for significant increased survivorship.

Study results are mixed and inconclusive but it appears that psychosocial interventions are somewhat effective in addressing anxiety, pain and fatigue for those with cancer.

However, the studies reviewed focused on participants undertaking active treatment, not psychological issues for survivors post-acute care.

The Widening Focus of Cancer Care: Survivorship

(National Cancer Institute, 2004)

- The focus has now expanded to include cancer survivorship, transforming survivorship research into practice, and developing clinical guidelines to provide attentive follow-up and health promotion to survivors.
- Issues faced by cancer survivors include maintaining optimal physical and mental health, preventing disability and late-effects related to cancer and its treatment, and ensuring social and economic well-being for themselves and their family (Dr. Julia Rowland, director of the Office of Cancer Survivorship at NCI).

PTSD, Cancer & Posttraumatic Growth

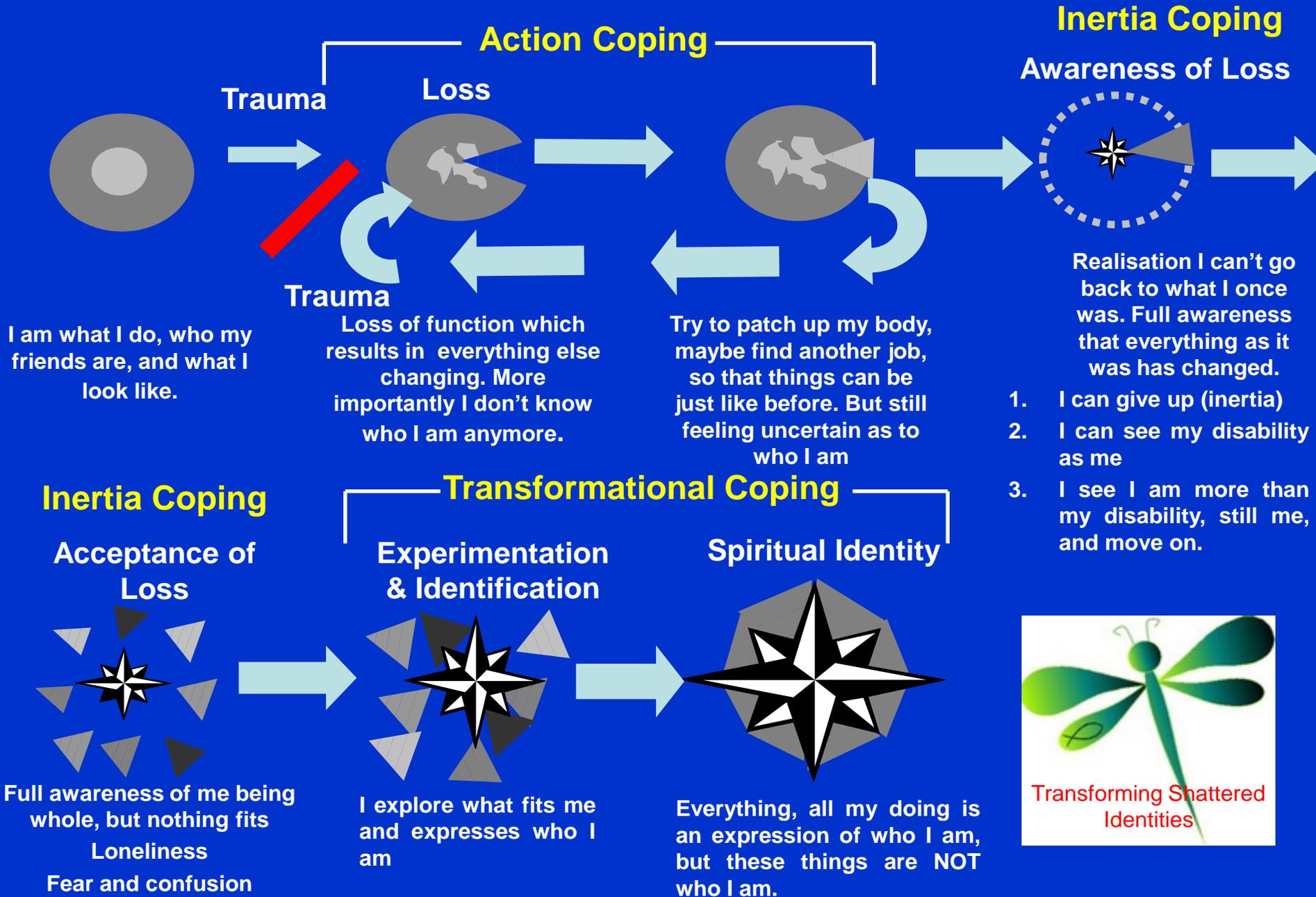
It is now generally accepted that, for many, the onset of cancer, treatments for cancer and the aftermath of these experiences are more often than not, traumatic.

The findings of Green, et.al. (2000) highlight the important roles of trauma history and recent life events in adjustment to cancer.

Posttraumatic growth is an area in which investigations are now being undertaken in many different parts of the world. The view that individuals can be changed--sometimes in radically good ways--by their struggle with trauma is ancient and widespread. However, the systematic focus by scholars and clinicians on the possibilities for growth from the struggle with crisis is relatively recent.

Calhoun & Tedeschi, Handbook of Posttraumatic Growth, (2006).

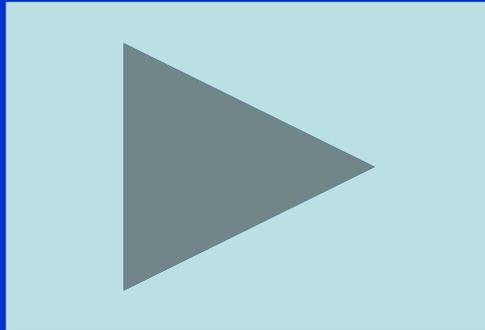
THE HEALTH CHANGE PROCESS THEORY



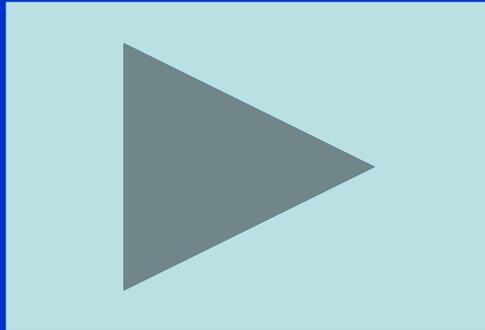
Survive to Thrive Pilot Outline

- Developed and carried out for people traumatised from the experience of cancer.
- The programme aims to facilitate transition from cancer patient and identity crisis to transformed meanings concerning self, life and occupation.
- Based on the Health Change Process Theory
- Holistic assessment process is at initial screening for programme suitability, repeated at Survive to Thrive workshop admission and discharge.
- Workshop structure is four three hour sessions over four days with two held on consecutive days of one week and the other two on consecutive days of the following week.
- 'Homework', is a key component between each workshop. Homework involves structured self-reflection, problem solving and trying new behaviours.
- Workshops are generally limited to people post treatment.

The HCPT Scale



Applying the HCPT to Practice: The HCPT Patient Profile



Quantitative Results

- 17 participants
- The HCPT Scale results:

	Admit Assessment	Discharge Assessment
Anxiety	6.95	2.63
Self-worth	4.12	6.86
Motivation to Change	5.80	7.05
Awareness of Possibility to Change	4.80	6.27
Identity	3.25	6.36
Sustainability	4.50	8.53

Trends:

1. All subscales showed improvements of a large size, particularly between admission and discharge to the intervention
2. The changes were statistically significant (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test) between admission and discharge)

Qualitative Results: Pre Survive to Thrive

- I was lost...felt like a stunned mullet
- I felt so guilty...everybody was so good and helpful but I felt so bad and ungrateful
- I had the mask up but I was living life like that silent scream
- I felt isolated – people didn't understand what I had been and was going through...and neither did I!
- I felt an actor in my own life
- Work...even friends and family to some extent...all had lost their zing.
- I feared I was going to die. I had no focus. I was stuck in a haze – couldn't see my way forward
- I felt there was no support
- I blamed my partner for everything...I was angry with life really
- I was living life like it was a formula...eat 'right', no stress, always be 'happy', exercise 'right'...then EVERYTHING would be RIGHT!

Qualitative Results: Post- Survive to Thrive

- Everybody dies but now – for the first time in my life - I'm going to live!
- Cancer wasn't the problem...the cancer triggered all that pain and unresolved trauma from what happened to me when I was a child
- Now I've claimed back and am listening to me! I'm living my dreams and got a job ahead of 200 applicants
- I found that because I survived cancer, I can thrive through everything
- I am responsible for my life no one else is.
- So many gains BECAUSE of cancer...my relationship with my partner is better than ever; I have ME back in my life!
- I let go of blame – for lots of things that I have happened to me - and got a life
- I have peace and excitement
- I now know how to turn EVERY life experience to my advantage
- Survive to Thrive is the:
 - 'Best thing I could possibly have done for myself'
 - 'Changed my life completely – redesigned it'
 - 'Gave me the knowledge and self-awareness to carve out my place in my life'

Conclusions

- For many (a review of research suggest approx 30% of those with cancer) cancer can be traumatic and/or trigger unresolved historical trauma.
- It is critical that for this significant subset of people with cancer that trauma is transformed from an adverse experience into a positive life-enhancing experience.
- Surviving cancer needs to be transformed to thriving from the experience of cancer.
- Survive to Thrive facilitates transition from cancer patient and the experience of identity trauma to reintegration, normalcy and full holistic health.
- Survive to Thrive focuses on the addressing person-specific barriers for those who are 'stuck' in the trauma of the cancer experience
- Survive to Thrive has the potential to enable significant improvements in health status for many people who have experienced cancer