

Adjusting to your Diagnosis

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Outline

- Adjustment and Resilience
- Stages of Grief
- “Strengths” exercise
- Depression/Anxiety
- Strategies for Coping
- Questions & Comments

What is Adjustment?

- Our ability to accept or change when we are faced with challenging situations

What is Resilience?

- Our ability to **cope** with challenging situations and to build upon our strengths

New Diagnosis

- Shock OR Relief
- Overwhelming emotions and feelings of loss
- Grieving process will likely occur due to these losses

Grief and Loss

- Awareness and acceptance of where you are in your processing of these emotions
- This is a personal process and there is no “right” way to go through these emotions
- Practice self-compassion and being kind to yourself
- Adapting to this new reality and committing to moving forward

Stages of Grief

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Denial

- First reaction - denying the reality of your situation
- Our brain uses denial as a *defense mechanism* that buffers the immediate shock of diagnosis
- Usually a temporary response

Anger

- Reality starts to set in painful feelings may still be present
- Emotions are re-directed and often expressed as anger
- Typically causes guilt or shame makes us more angry!

Bargaining

- This stage is often sparked by the need to regain control
- Involves persistent thoughts about what could have been done to prevent the illness or diagnosis

Depression

- Some may experience this when they come to realize the extent of their loss or the reality of their situation
- Feelings of sadness, emptiness, lack of motivation, isolation, lack of energy or concentration may all be symptoms of depression

Acceptance

- Coming to terms with the various emotions you have been facing
- Accepting that the diagnosis has occurred
- Stop feeling stuck and move forward
- Surviving to Thriving

Accepting change

- Focusing on what your life used to be will keep you stuck
- Isolating yourself and stopping activities/hobbies you used to enjoy
- Learning to adjust and cope by adapting to your new life
- Creating new goals and expectations

Accepting Change cont'd

- Stressful situation = 2 responses
- **1) Changing the Situation**
 - Avoid
 - Alter
- **2) Changing your Reaction**
 - Adapt
 - Accept

- **How to Adapt**

- Reframe your thoughts
- Turn fear of unknown into curiosity – educate yourself
- Adjust your expectations – focus on what you can do
- Take a positive and proactive stance

- **How to Accept**

- Share your feelings
- Learn to forgive and let go
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle: BODY and MIND
- Don't try to control the uncontrollable

“Strengths” Exercise

- Think of a challenging situation that you got through in the past?
- Write down or think about 2-3 ways you got through the situation
 - Ex) - Sought support
 - Organized things/made lists
 - Connected with nature

Depression and Anxiety

- Approximately 50% of people with Parkinson's disease experience mood changes
- Depression and anxiety are two-fold in PD:
 - 1) An understandable psychological reaction
 - 2) A clinical symptom of the disease itself - due to changes in the brain's chemistry

What is Depression?

- A term used loosely in society
- More than simply feeling sad or “blue”
- Persistent sadness and lack of interest along with several other symptoms
- Impairment in several areas (socially, occupationally, relationally, etc.)

What is Anxiety?

- An alarm system in our body – evolved over millions of years
- Our body's response to a threat (real or perceived)
- Fight-or-Flight Response

Relaxation and Anxiety Management

Relaxation Response:

- Deep diaphragmatic breathing
 - Imagery and 5 senses
 - Mindfulness meditation
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- Practicing these strategies for 10-20 minutes DAILY when you're feeling calm

Strategies for Coping cont'd

- Journalling or creating art
- Practicing mindfulness
- Seek counselling
- Thought challenging – changing negative self-talk
- Ask for help
- Humour!

Treatment for Depression and Anxiety

- Exercise!
- Implementing stress and anxiety management strategies
- Counselling & Support Groups – contact PSBC for more info
- Medication – *consult with doctor or neurologist first
- Rehabilitative therapies – Physiotherapy, SLP, occupational therapy - *consult with doctor or neurologist first
- Alternative therapies – *consult with doctor or neurologist first

Motivation to exercise

- Start small – set realistic goals
- Getting to gym vs. Going on treadmill for 45 minutes
- Once you start it will encourage you to continue
- Find a buddy or join a group

Summary

- Educate yourself –
 - Know your symptoms and their treatments
- Learn to Adjust and Adapt
- Seek support – PSBC, Counselling, Friends/Family
- Implement coping strategies that work for you!
- Learn to be positive and proactive

Resources

- www.anxietybc.com
- www.tarabrach.com - guided meditations
- www.calm.com

**Remind yourself that you are
still YOU and that your
diagnosis does not define
you.**

Questions or Comments?

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