Resiliency and Legacy

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
Cancer Policy and Advocacy Team Symposium
Alique Topalian, PhD, MPH
The University of Cincinnati
Alique.topalian@uc.edu
Resilience

• Biological, personal, and social factors
• Not everyone reacts to adversities in the same way

“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”

-Viktor Frankl
Psychiatrist, holocaust survivor.

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Resilience and Meaning

- Critical period after someone is diagnosed
- Distress and fears
- Coping process
Meaning Making

• Situational Meaning
  – Meaning in the context of a specific event
    • i.e. Diagnosis

• Global meaning
  – Global beliefs and goals
When Meaning Leads to Distress

Searching for meaning is only helpful when meaning is found

It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering.

Viktor E. Frankl
Viktor Frankl: Man’s Search for Meaning

• The Will to Meaning
• Life Has Meaning
• Freedom of Will
What do you think when you hear these terms?

- Meaning
- Legacy
- Identity
Four Sources of Meaning

• Historical
• Attitudinal
• Experiential
• Creative
Historical Sources of Meaning

• What in your life have been sources of pride and meaning?

• Life as a Living Legacy
  – Legacy that’s been given
  – Legacy one lives
  – Legacy that one will give
Attitudinal Sources of Meaning

• Encountering life’s limitations
• Turning tragedy into triumph

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Viktor E. Frankl
Experiential Sources of Meaning

• Connecting with life through…
  – Love
  – Beauty
  – Humor

Those who have a ‘why’ to live, can bear with almost any ‘how.’

Viktor Frankl

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Creative Sources of Meaning

• Creativity, courage and responsibility
• How do you actively engage in life?

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.
The REALMS Program

• At Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital in Cleveland, OH
• With AYA Patients

Whitney Hadley, MA, MSW, LSW
whitney.hadley@uhhospitals.org

Amelia Baffa, MSN, APRN, PMHNP-BC
amelia.baffa@uhhospitals.org
Meaning Centered Psychotherapy Training

• Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

• Email PsytrainMCP@mskcc.org
Thank you!

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