



# Coping with Chronic Illness and Therapies

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# Financial Disclosure

- The presenter has no potential conflicts of interest or financial disclosures to report regarding this presentation.

# OVERVIEW

- Common psychosocial issues related to chronic illness
- Coping strategies for chronic illness
- When to seek outside help for coping with a chronic illness

WHAT ARE COMMON RESPONSES  
AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES  
RELATED TO CHRONIC ILLNESS?

# ADJUSTING TO CHRONIC ILLNESS

- Some changes in mood are normal
- Changes in lifestyle and roles are typical
  - Economic changes
  - Social changes
  - Quality of life

# FACTORS THAT AFFECT ADJUSTMENT

- Course of illness
- Treatment complexity
- Impact of illness on functioning
- Perceptions of control regarding illness
- Social support
- Coping style

# HPEN SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Poor sleep
- Fatigue
- Difficulty traveling and socializing
- Changes in the meaning of food and eating
  - Eating for survival
  - Eating for health
  - Socializing around food
- Increased risk of substance abuse
- Body image
- Sexuality

# STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS



# COPING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

- Your coping mechanisms depend on what's important to you
  - There is no one size fits all coping strategy
- Almost any coping strategy can be helpful
  - It depends on how you use it
  - Exception: coping strategies that involve self-harm or high use of avoidant coping strategies

# FIGURING OUT YOUR COPING

- Start with identifying what you enjoy doing now or in the past
  - You may need to change how you do them
  - Look for themes
- Social support
  - Communicate your needs to others
  - Social media

# RESEARCH ON COPING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

- Focus on strengths
- Active coping styles are associated with better adjustment
- Finding meaning in the situation

# WHY IS COPING IMPORTANT?

- How we cope does not affect the illness
- But it does help to live a meaningful life within the limitations of the illness
- It can also help us to better manage our illness

# ADJUSTING TO CHRONIC ILLNESS

- Adjusting to a chronic illness is not an epiphany, it is a process
  - Acceptance ebbs and flows, which is normal
  - Acceptance is not passive, it is active

WHEN IS IT TIME TO SEEK HELP?

# WHEN TO SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY

- If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or someone else
  - If you are unsure if you can keep yourself or others you care for safe.
- Go immediately to the closest emergency department

# WHEN TO CONSIDER PSYCHOTHERAPY

- When your mood is not improving and is starting to affect your functioning
  - The sooner you seek treatment, the sooner you are likely to start feeling better
- When you are consistently feeling overwhelmed
  - Sometimes feeling overwhelmed is normal
- When your usual coping mechanisms aren't helping
  - Or they are starting to interfere in your life



# HOW TO SEEK THERAPY

- Contact your insurance company for a list of in network providers
- Contact your health care providers to see if they have psychology services available or referrals
- Contact patient organizations or others with the illness for recommendations

# SUMMARY

- Some temporary changes in mood are normal with chronic illness
  - Chronic illness impacts your life in many different ways
- Your perceptions are important and impact your coping
- Coping strategies are individual
- Help is available if you need it

- QUESTIONS?
- THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!