Scananxiety: How to Cope

Kelly M. Trevino, PhD
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

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Aims

- Understand anxiety symptoms
- Understand treatment options other than medications
- Identify one new coping strategy to explore further
Overview

• What is anxiety

• Experience of cancer and anxiety

• Coping strategies
  – Behaviors
  – Thoughts
What is Anxiety

How do you know when you are anxious?

How does your body feel?

What emotions do you have?

What do you do?
What is Anxiety

• Cause: Threatening or dangerous situation
  – i.e., scan, cancer

• Symptoms
  – Psychological: worry, nervousness
  – Physical: muscle tension, racing heart, shortness of breath, tingling/numbness, difficulty concentrating

• Normal and helpful
  – The problem is…
Cancer and Anxiety

• Symptom overlap
  – Racing heart: Anxiety or Steroids?
  – Shortness of breath: Anxiety or De-conditioning?
  – Tingling: Anxiety or Chemotherapy?

• Be aware of your physical symptoms
  – Discuss physical symptoms with your medical team
  – Physical symptoms can trigger anxiety
  – Anxiety can make physical symptoms worse
  – Physical symptoms can help identify anxiety early
Cognitive-Behavioral Model

- Anxiety
- Thoughts
- Behaviors
- Physical Symptoms

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Cognitive-Behavioral Model

- High Anxiety
- Shortness of breath
- “My body is so weak.”
- Avoid physical activity

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Cognitive-Behavioral Model

High Anxiety

Nausea

“This is going to be bad.”

Eat less

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Coping Strategies: Behaviors

• Counter fight or flight
  – Deep breathing
  – Progressive muscle relaxation

• Activity based
  – Distraction
  – Schedule worry time
Deep Breathing

Breath In
Lungs Expand
Diaphragm is pushed down

Breath out
Lungs get smaller
Diaphragm pushes up

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Progressive Muscle Relaxation

• Overview
  – Releasing the muscle tension in different parts of your body in succession
  – End by scanning your entire body for tension and letting go of any remaining muscle tension

• Exercise

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Distraction

• Focus your mind on something else

• Why is this important?

• Experiment with different activities

• Examples?
Coping Strategies: Behaviors

• Schedule worry time
  – Pick a time of the day and length of time
  – Use the total time
    • Re-evaluate length of worry time
  – Postpone worries that emerge at other times of the day until your scheduled worry time
Coping Strategies: Thoughts

What worries cause you the most distress?

What thoughts do you have over and over again?

What thoughts make it hard to sleep at night?
Cognitive-Behavioral Model

- High Anxiety
- Nausea
- "This is going to be bad."
- Eat less

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Coping Strategies: Thoughts

• Thoughts are automatic

• Three types of thoughts
  – Examination folder
  – Acceptance folder
  – Problem-solving folder
Examination Folder

• Ask yourself these questions:
  – What is the evidence for and against this thought?
  – Am I using words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated (e.g. always, forever, never)?
  – Does my thought include the word “should?”
  – Is there an alternative explanation/outcome?
  – Is this thought helpful?
  – Am I focused on my negative emotion and missing the positive in the situation or any personal strengths?
Thought Errors

• ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING
• OVERGENERALIZATION
• JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS
• SHOULD STATEMENTS
Acceptance Folder

- Contains worries that are true and cannot be resolved with action
- Cancer creates many of these worries
- These worries increase anxiety
Acceptance

Three components

1. Awareness: Recognize the stressful situation, thoughts, and emotions

2. Be non-judgmental: Do not judge the situation, thoughts, emotions, or yourself

3. Make room: Allow a distressing emotion, thought, memory, or situation to be present
What acceptance is NOT

Feeling the situation is acceptable

Easy

Resignation or giving up

Failure

Toleration
Coping Strategies: Acceptance

Driving a bus

Leaves on a stream

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Questions?

Thank you!