



# Coping Skills\* for Life

*"Think Smart, Live Well"*



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# Workbook For Coping Skills Workshop

*You Do Not Need To Learn Everything Today, Or Even Remember  
What You Heard! This Workbook Is Designed To Be Your Memory...  
Refer To It Often.*

***We can't control the world, but we can control how we cope with it.***

The major goal of the seminar is to help you strengthen and develop **your sense of personal control**. This goal is accomplished by learning about **good coping**, and by practicing the skills that lead to good coping. We define good coping as active problem solving that is optimistic, resourceful, practical and flexible. Good coping can lead to wellbeing, even happiness which is finding pleasure and meaning in life.

***Good coping implies personal control that lets you achieve what is important to you. Good coping also means recognizing your own strengths, and giving yourself a pat on the back.***

Practicing the tools for coping in this workshop will help you make changes in your coping. Confucius, a great philosopher and teacher explained why practice is so important:

*I hear, I forget,  
I see, I remember,  
I do, I understand,  
I practice, I master.*

One way to practice the skills you will learn in this workbook is to repeat ideas you like out loud. Remember, "where the attention goes, the energy flows." It takes from 30-60 times to practice a new skill before it's second nature to us! The good news is that only a small amount of change is needed to make a difference — only one degree!

**How many times do we need to practice these new skills?**

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ times.

**How much change is needed? Just \_\_\_\_\_ degree of change.**

*Your workbook presents:*

<b>Skill #1</b>	<b>Good Coping and Mindfulness .....</b>	<b>3</b>
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# Coping Skills for Life

## *Skill #1*

# ***Good Coping and Mindfulness***

*Good coping is active problem solving that has:*

**OPTIMISM** or an expectation that positive change is possible,

**PRACTICALITY** about the kinds of solutions that are feasible,

**FLEXIBILITY** in approach to any problem,

**RESOURCEFULNESS** in finding support or additional information that helps.

*Weisman and Worden Project Omega 1980*

*Thus, with good coping, you do not feel helpless or hopeless.*

# Mindfulness

## What is it?

### Mindfulness is:

simply the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present moment,

putting your mind to what you are doing, but not reacting to it.

a kind of meditation in daily life.

a way of celebrating in small ways the passage through the day.

### Why is it important?

Mindfulness is now linked to many well-being outcomes. It is important in stopping automatic thoughts, habits and unhealthy behaviors, and gaining new energy and a sense of joyful well being.

### How do I do it?

Like every other skill, you practice! Here is an easy exercise, called "The raisin exercise," to practice:

Hold one raisin in the palm of your hand. Look carefully at it – feel and smell it. Then put it in your mouth and pay attention to the taste and texture of it. Keep your mind on how it feels in your mouth as you chew it. Then, swallow it – still paying close attention to how that feels.

You may notice that by paying attention, you become more awake and aware. When we are mindful of the present, we discover relaxation, calmness, energy and insight into ourselves.

Try paying close attention to some of the usual things you tend to do automatically – like drinking a cup of tea or coffee, or watching how the sun filters through a window, or how clothes smell fresh from the dryer ... Each moment can be an opportunity to practice mindfulness.

Remember that the present is the only time that any of us ever has.

*"Awareness in itself is healing" — Fritz Pearls*

Through mastering the skills presented in this seminar, you will be able to cope effectively with both the changes brought about by illness and the daily stresses in your life. Mindfulness can also help master the other coping skills.

We function on three levels at the same time in relation to the world around us. Our health status is dependent on the interaction of all three. These three levels are:

- the biological (**physical/medical**),
- the psychosocial (**emotional**), and
- the sociological (**in relation to the world around us**).

Good coping is helpful to all the three levels.

We use a variety of coping methods; some more often than others, some different times than others. Some are better than others in dealing with stress. Coping methods can be divided into 2 major categories:

- 1) Behavioural methods are those actual things we do.
- 2) Emotional methods are the ways we think about a situation.

Following is a list of ways of coping we tend to use in ordinary daily life and in those times of great stress. Some are very useful, some are not. Some help in the short term only; some help in the long term too. Which ones do you tend to use? Which ones would you like to use more?

### Seeking Social Support

<i>Skills I Use Now</i>	<i>Skills I would Like To Try</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Talk to someone who could do something.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Ask a friend or relative for advice.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Talk to someone about how I am feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Talk to someone to find out more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Let my feelings out somehow.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Look for empathy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Get professional help.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. _____.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Positive Problem Solving

*Skills I  
Use Now*

*Skills I would  
Like To Try*

- 
- |                          |   |                          |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Look for a silver lining.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Change or grow as a person in a good way.      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Treat the illness as a challenge.              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Rediscover what is important in life.          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Change something.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Know what has to be done.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Try to find out as much as I can.              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Make a plan of action and follow it.           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Be inspired to be creative.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Come up with different solutions.             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Change something about myself.                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Live one day at a time.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Remind myself how much worse things could be. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Try not to act too hastily.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. _____.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. _____.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Avoiding and Denying

(these are OK to use short term, but not to the exclusion of the other ways of coping)

*What I do  
Too Much*

---

1. Try to keep my feelings to myself.
2. Try to forget the whole thing.
3. Refuse to believe it will happen.
4. Keep others from knowing how bad things are.
5. Prepare for the worst.
6. Wish the situation would go away or be different.
7. Don't let it get to me.
8. Hope a miracle will happen.
9. Avoid being with people.
10. Exercise, smoke, eat, or drink to excess.
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_

### Know your own coping style

*In general, most people are more of one or the other of the two types below. I am more:*

- Avoidant (preferring not to think about it) or
- Vigilant (wanting as much information as possible).

## Statement Of Coping Principles

1. Recognize that no thought or feeling is wrong in itself, it is what we do with it that really counts.
2. Become aware of the way your body feels as tension begins to build up— remind yourself to calm down.
3. Recognize that you don't have to go through this alone. Don't hesitate to seek information or counselling if questions or concerns arise. Help is available from a wide range of sources.
4. Work to improve communication with your family, friends and physician.
5. If you are experiencing fatigue or feeling overwhelmed, consider redistributing or reducing your responsibilities for a period of time.
6. Recognize that family and friends have to deal with their feelings too. They may be helpful or unhelpful to you. They are, however, probably doing the best they know how.
7. Your physician is your partner. Your part of the partnership is to accept responsibility for reporting honestly how you are feeling, inquiring about the concerns you have, and doing your best to deal with the adjustments you must make.
8. Do things each day that are nurturing to you. These may include fun activities, relaxation, time alone, and exercise.
9. You can work to solve some of the problems that are causing you stress.
10. Accept that guilt and worry about things you CAN'T change are useless and energy-draining.
11. Give yourself credit for whatever level of coping you are achieving. Remember, there is no "instant fix" for stress.
12. Develop a love and respect for yourself — because each of us is, with our strengths, a special and worthwhile person.

*Adapted from Managing The Stress of Cancer:  
A Handbook for Patients and their Families by Dr. Ronna Jevne, 1984.*

# S U M M A R Y

## **Skill # 1      *Good Coping***

*Good coping is \_\_\_\_\_ problem-solving that has:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_.

How many times do we have to practice these skills before we “have them?”

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ times.

How much change is needed? Just \_\_\_\_\_ degree of change.

*My notes:*



# Coping Skills for Life

## *Skill #2*

# *Ways of Thinking*

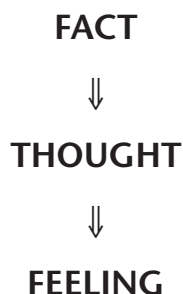
*“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by changing their minds.”*

— William James

*what kind of thinking? ... not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative ...*

### Emotional and Thinking Ways of Coping

It is widely accepted that we function emotionally in the following way:



Most of life consist of facts over which we have little or no control. Being born with a certain colour of hair, having an accident, being transferred in your job, and getting certain diseases such as cancer are all facts that we can't control. Any fact creates a thought within us, spontaneously and seemingly without any effort on our part. From that thought comes a feeling.

Here is an example to make this concept clear.

**FACT:** A friend passes by you on the street and doesn't speak to you.

**THOUGHT:** She/he is upset at me for something.

**FEELING:** Anger or Frustration.

Note that the feeling came directly from the thought and not from the fact. We have little or no control over most of the facts in our lives but we have total control over the thoughts. The more you feel you have control in a situation, the less stress and anxiety you feel. It is usually our feelings that drive our actions. You always can have some impact and some degree of choice.

## Practice:

Practice identifying the facts, thoughts, and feelings in your mind from time to time. Sort out one from the other. By simply identifying and labelling the facts, thoughts and feelings you can begin to change the thoughts which will change your feelings.

*Questions to ask yourself are:*

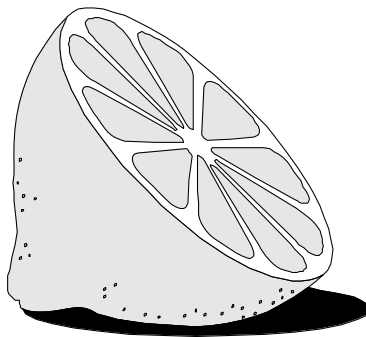
- 1) Is this a fact? Can it be changed? Do I have control over it? What thought results from this fact in my mind?
- 2) Is this a thought? If so, is it a helpful or unhelpful one to me? Can I change it?
- 3) Is this a feeling? If so, what thought did it come from? Is this a pleasant or unpleasant feeling? Do I want to change it?

Thus, a sense of personal control comes from our thoughts. This is a simple statement and it is extraordinarily powerful. It says that we have control over what and how we choose to think. The notion of choice is clear. For many of us from time to time, it is easier and less painful to believe that we have no control over our thoughts than to admit that we can take responsibility for them.

So the next step is to see if we can change our thoughts, even though we frequently do not believe that it is possible!

We do this by first understanding and accepting that although the brain is an intelligent organ, it also is very naive. It responds to whatever messages we give it whether they are true or not ! Here is an example to prove that point called, "THE LEMON EXERCISE."

Changing thoughts is also called "reframing."



## ***Lemon Exercise: How We Can Trick The Brain***

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“Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your kitchen. Find a lemon; notice the colour of it. Feel its weight in your hand, feel its size, shape and pebbly texture. Bring it to the table. Put it on a wooden cutting board, take a sharp knife and cut the lemon in half. Smell the sharpness. Now bring it up to your mouth and take a bite. What do you notice? There is no lemon but we can still feel its taste in our mouth. We can and often do trick our brain to react to things that are perceptions, by the deliberate use of thoughts.”

Now refer back to the fact of the person who passed you by on the street without speaking. What different thoughts might you have about that fact? What feelings would then arise?

Here is a second example to try: “THE TRAFFIC JAM.”

Imagine yourself caught in a major traffic jam that will probably make you late for work. You could choose to think: “This is terrible. I’m going to be so late — my boss will be angry.” You could concentrate on frequent lane changes trying to beat the traffic and you will end up feeling increasingly distressed, anxious and angry.

You could rather choose to think of the situation as beyond your control and decide to use the enforced time to plan your day, organize your thoughts for work, enjoy the music on the radio, allowing you to feel calm, relaxed and in control.

## *Distorted Thinking*

Researchers have categorized the negative thoughts (that are not helpful to us) we have about the facts in our lives and have labelled them distorted thinking. The value in labelling them is that we are then able to first, identify them and second, change them more easily into appropriate, logical and positive thoughts.

*Here is a list of illogical and distorted ways of thinking that we commonly use to our disadvantage:*

- All or nothing.
- Generalizations.
- Disqualifying the positive.
- Emotional reasoning.
- Using “should” too often.
- Personalizing events.

You have a choice! You can control the way you feel by controlling the way you think.

First you accept how you feel – emotions are neither right nor wrong. If you are aware of your illogical thinking in a non-emotional way, you will weaken your attachment to it. When you are aware of your thoughts and you are in the moment, you clear a path in your mind for your values to emerge again.

*It is important to remember...*

***Every Feeling Has a Thought Behind It.***

**A. Examples of Distorted Thinking, with the facts, thoughts and feelings that follow.**

<b>DISTORTED THINKING</b>	<b>FACT</b>	<b>THOUGHT</b>	<b>FEELING</b>
I think in terms of "All-or-Nothing."	You fail an exam.	I'm a failure.	Sad
I over-generalize.	Your doctor rushes you out of his office.	All doctors care about is the number of patients.	Anger
I disqualify the positive.	A friend brings flowers.	She felt she had to.	Demeaned
I use emotional reasoning.	I'm asked to make treatment options/choices.	I'm dumb, so I can't make any right choices.	Anxious
I use the word "should" a lot.	My daughter wants me to babysit her son.	I should babysit but I made other plans.	Guilty
I personalize.	Your teenager failed his exams.	It's my fault.	Depressed

***B. Examples of Logical and Rational Thinking and the feelings that follow.***

<b>DISTORTED THINKING</b>	<b>FACT</b>	<b>MODIFIED THOUGHT</b>	<b>MODIFIED FEELING</b>
I think in terms of "All-or-Nothing."	You fail an exam. eg.	I'll study harder.	Hopeful
I over-generalize.	Your doctor rushes you out of his office. eg.	I'll choose another doctor.	Personal control
I disqualify the positive.	A friend brings flowers. eg.	She chose to do it, regardless.	Appreciative
I use emotional reasoning.	I'm asked to make treatment options/choices. eg.	I'll get help from someone. Getting information is a smart thing.	Competent
I use the word "should" a lot.	My daughter wants me to babysit her son. eg.	I'll offer to babysit another day when I'm free.	Relieved
I personalize.	Your teenager failed his exams. eg.	He didn't study or ask for help. I'll help, but I'm not responsible.	Blameless

## **What IS a positive attitude?**

It's not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative!

It is a sense of connectedness to something bigger than the self.

It is a sense of control over how we handle the events in our lives.

It is an ability to visualize a life with hope.

## **Self-talk**

Self-talk is another way to help modify our thoughts. Here are examples of self-talk statements for you to use. Pick a few to practice.

### **A. Preparation for Stress**

I've succeeded with this before.

What exactly do I have to do?

I know I can do each one of these tasks.

It's easier once I get started.

I'll jump in and be alright.

Tomorrow I'll be through it.

I won't let negative thoughts creep in.

or \_\_\_\_\_.

### **B. Facing a Challenge**

I will take it step by step, I won't rush.

I can do this, I'm doing it now.

I can only do my best.

Any tension I feel is a signal to use my coping exercises.

I can get help if I need it.

If I don't think about fear, I won't be afraid.

If I get tense, I'll take a deep breath and relax.

It's OK to make mistakes.

or \_\_\_\_\_.

### **C. Coping with Fear**

Relax now !

Just breathe deeply.

There's an end to it.

Keep my mind on right now, on the task at hand.

I can keep this within limits I can handle.

I can always call \_\_\_\_\_.

I am only afraid because I decided to be. I can  
decide not to be.

I've survived this and worse before.

Being active will lessen my fear.

or: \_\_\_\_\_.

### **D. Self Congratulations**

I did it!

I did alright.

I did well.

Next time I won't have to worry so much.

I am able to relax away anxiety.

I've got to tell \_\_\_\_\_ about this.

It's possible not to be scared...

All I have to do is stop thinking I'm scared.

or: \_\_\_\_\_.

### **E. Affirmations**

Everyday in every way I grow stronger and stronger.

I enter this day with a peaceful heart.

or: \_\_\_\_\_.

It is important that you accept that you may not, and indeed do not have to believe in the thoughts that you substitute for the negative ones. Remember the lemon!

*Now quickly read the following:*

**O P P O R T U N I T Y**  
**I S N O W H E R E**

What did you read? How else can you read it?

The next 2 pages provide you with a guide to practicing the facts-thoughts-feelings way of coping.

## Exercise: Practice Identifying and Modifying Thoughts

	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	ALTERNATIVES	
			MODIFYING THOUGHTS	MODIFIED FEELINGS
<p><i>Describe the situation:</i></p> <p>Where ?</p> <p>When ?</p> <p>Who is involved?</p>	<p><i>Describe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your self-statements</li> <li>• Any thoughts or images that went through your mind</li> <li>• Concerns</li> <li>• Worries</li> <li>• Beliefs/Rules</li> <li>• Memories</li> <li>• Doubts</li> <li>• Meanings</li> </ul>	<p><i>Identify:</i></p> <p>Physiological sensations</p> <p>Emotional sensations (feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a list of 3 other interpretations and examine each of them</li> <li>• Challenge your first impression</li> <li>• Self-talk: talk to yourself as if you were your best friend</li> <li>• How can you see this situation differently?</li> <li>• So what?</li> <li>• What resources can I use?</li> <li>• Always? No exceptions?</li> <li>• Must? Should?</li> <li>• I need to verify my hypothesis</li> <li>• Am I realistic?</li> <li>• What about nuances?</li> <li>• Bird's eye view vs worm's eye view</li> </ul>	

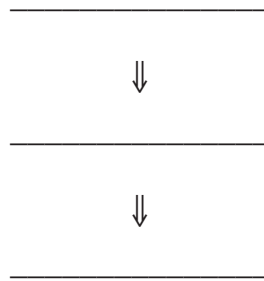
## *Cognitive Reframing Worksheet*

FACT	THOUGHT	FEELING	MODIFIED THOUGHT	MODIFIED FEELING
Told by doctor that I must have more chemotherapy than expected.	The chemotherapy is not working. (hopelessness)	Sad 85 %	Some people require more chemotherapy than others and my body is responding positively.	Sad 30 %

# S U M M A R Y

## **Skill # 2      *Ways of Thinking***

1. Facts, thoughts and feelings fit together like this:



2. The feeling comes from the \_\_\_\_\_, and not from the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. We may not have control over the \_\_\_\_\_ but we do over the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ exercise shows that we don't have to believe a thought to have it work.
5. How many times do we have to practice to learn a new skill? \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ times.

*My notes:*

**Skill #3**

***Relaxation  
and  
Imagery***

## *The Benefits of Relaxation:*

1. **Gain Control of the Mind.** This clears the mind of negative thoughts (and feelings), promotes creativity and enhances problem solving as alpha brain waves are increased. Alpha waves are associated with peace of mind and feelings of well being.
2. **Never out of Control.** The participant allows himself to relax to the degree that he chooses, and is able to terminate the experience at will.
3. **Inoculation against future stress.** With experience, the participant learns to recognize stress and tension when it starts to build up, and can correct it before it becomes a headache, backache, pain in the neck, etc.
4. **Useful for people with chronic pain.** Relaxation helps to release endorphins, the body's own natural pain killers. Relaxation combined with certain visualization techniques helps to lessen pain, especially secondary pain.
5. **A general calming response.** Can be used at anytime regardless of surroundings. Once familiar and practiced, the relaxation response can be elicited in a very few minutes, in any place, at any time.

The positive effects of relaxation are usually not experienced immediately. In fact, it is a response which most of us learn, allowing for adequate practice over time.

Nearly everyone can learn to relax their body in a short time, but wayward thoughts are the most common difficulty. The attitude to unwanted thoughts should be that of an uninvolved observer. Allow any thoughts to roll on, to come and to go, and they will eventually stop.

We recommend that you practice daily for 2-4 weeks. After this time you will be able to elicit the relaxation response by breathing deeply and using the cue word "Relax", or your own cue word.

Mental anxiety, stress and physical tension are interrelated. If we break that cycle at any point, relaxation will occur.

Relaxation training requires a passive, "let it go" attitude. An effort to relax is usually a failure to relax. Relaxation is part of each of us. All we are doing is allowing it to occur by retraining the body and mind to recognize the difference between tension and relaxation.

The research supporting the use of relaxation techniques is extensive. As a treatment for pain, stress and medical conditions, relaxation has been clearly shown to be effective. It helps to achieve a sense of peace by letting go of tensions, clearing the mind and allowing release from problems. It is almost impossible to think or feel negatively when one is relaxed. Relaxation is the starting point in the process of calming emotions and changing thoughts. Thus, relaxation acts both as a distraction and an energizer. It allows the body to function in a healthier way, for example by lowering high blood pressure, and strengthening the immune system.

**Practice** at home so that relaxation becomes another coping tool to be used to help you accomplish what you value.

Reading, watching TV, talking to a friend, being on holiday, jogging or walking, enjoying nature, etc. are all examples of light relaxation. Just as there are different stressors for different people, different types of relaxation will appeal to different people. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), however, brings about a deeper, more profound sense of well-being, and can be used with other forms of relaxation.

With practice, relaxation clears the mind and rids the body of unwanted tension in minutes.

### *Set the Scene*

It is important to be free of distraction and interruptions. Become as comfortable as possible, whether lying down (preferable) or sitting in a chair, by loosening any tight clothing and removing shoes and glasses. Support your head if you are sitting in a chair. This exercise takes about 3 – 4 minutes.

a) Close your eyes and put your hands on your lap. Put your attention on your breath. Notice how you inhale and exhale. If your mind wanders, just bring it back to your breath.

b) After you have focused your mind on your breathing for a few moments, put your hands on your lap and then bring your attention to your hands resting on your lap. Be aware of your hands resting there—the position of your palms and fingers. Enjoy that awareness. You do not have to do anything to your hands—simply be aware of them. Enjoy the sensation of awareness. Now say to yourself, quietly or under your breath, "My hands are heavy, my hands are heavy." Again, you do not do anything just enjoy that awareness and sensation. If your mind wanders, just bring it back to your hands. Again, say to yourself, "My hands are heavy," and once more, "My hands are heavy." Enjoy feeling your hands resting on your lap. Now you are ready to end this

exercise on a count of three — one, to take a deep breath, two, to open your eyes, and three to look around and stretch. Congratulate yourself on what you have done! (This exercise is the first step in a series called Autogenics).

c) Choose a favorite piece of instrumental music that reflects your mood or will bring about the quality of feeling you would like to experience. Simply let the music flow through you and focus on the beauty in it.

Be certain that you will not be disturbed, so that you can give your full attention to the moment. Remember that imagery is easy, and trying hard doesn't work. Be patient with yourself.

## **Imagery & Relaxation**

Imagery is an effective way to gain insight, build self-esteem, Relieve pain, resolve inner conflicts and help people to actively participate in their own healing process. With a sense of playfulness we will explore our imagination which may be our most significantly under utilized healing source.

Essential to imagery work is relaxation. Try out several techniques for relaxation and discover what works best for you.

Find yourself a comfortable place to sit or lie down, and put your attention on your breath. Just notice how you are breathing, don't attempt to change anything. Simply be aware of the rhythm of you breathing, and how effortless it is to breathe. Let th air breathe you. Then imagine one of the following:

- a) You are like a pad of butter melting in the warm sun. Feel the warmth of the sun on your body. The warm rays feel soothing and nurturing. Your body releases tension and gently relaxes.
- b) You are in an elevator that is slowly descending floor by floor. At each floor you become more ad more relaxed. Feel the gentle sensation as the elevator takes you safely and gently into a deep state of relaxation.

## Quick Relaxation Techniques

1. The clenched fist: Clench your fist tightly for a count of ten. Release and let your whole body go completely limp.
2. The deep breath: Take a full deep breath and hold it for a count of ten. When you exhale let it all out at once, letting your body go completely loose and limp. This is related to the first technique in that it too involves an initial tightening (holding the breath for a count of ten followed by a sudden and complete release as you let your breath out all at once.) In addition, it takes advantage of another basic principle — the fact that the body is most relaxed when exhaling.
3. The breathing countdown: Breathing normally, let go more and more as you release each breath, while counting slowly from 10 to 0, one number per breath. By focussing on the “letting go” feeling as you let out each breath let go even more to produce a cumulative effect. Counting backwards (one number per breath) helps create the effect of descending (as if you were in an elevator going down another floor with each breath) — becoming more relaxed with each breath.
4. The warm hands: Imagine yourself basking in the warm sun on a beach or soaking in a hot tub until you can actually feel warmth come into your hands. This technique uses the principle that the power of thought directly affects the body. An example of this principle in action is what happens when you’re hungry and begin anticipating your favourite meal. Your mouth automatically starts watering—a physiological response (salivation) caused by a thought. In the same way, the thought of warmth can have a direct effect on circulation. And since we know that the blood flowing out to the extremities is directly linked with relaxation, thoughts of warmth—especially warm hands—will cause an automatic relaxation response.

### *Practice:*

Anticipate the fact that time will fly by. Think of a time right now when you could fit relaxation into your routine and write it into your agenda.

To practice at home, set aside a period of time, preferably at the same time of day (to establish habit), when you will not be disturbed. “Setting the scene” is an important part of the relaxation process. Also, although relaxation is usually not used for sleep disturbances until several practice sessions have occurred, if you fall asleep while practicing, congratulate yourself on your success!

*Remember that relaxation is a gift you give yourself.*

**Skill #4**

***Goal  
Setting***

Think back to the good feelings you felt when you successfully met one of your goals. Did you know that people who set goals are more likely to succeed than people who don't?

Goal setting is important because it has been found to:

1. Help re-establish a normal, daily routine.
2. Help set priorities when there are many demands on your time and energy.
3. Help accomplish tasks that are important in the here and now.
4. Help experience a sense of being while working on goals.

Goal setting can be done in 2 ways. Some like to set very small goals, and others prefer big goals. Whichever you prefer, breaking your goals into manageable pieces is the way to make them happen.

The guidelines for goal setting are:

- Your goal must be do-able in the time frame you have allotted.
- It must be important to you and you must be committed to it.
- It must help you on your way to accomplishing what is important to you.

Write a goal you have for today:

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***Goals are indispensable to a happy life  
—to be happy we need goals that are  
pleasurable and meaningful.***

— Ben-Sharar

If it seems difficult to think of an important goal for yourself, it helps to ask, "Given that I don't always get what I want, what would I be willing to settle for?"

At same time we must ask ourselves... what is really important to me?

Once determined, we can then focus our attention on what really matters. This activity can reduce worry, support greater peace of mind and better relationships, and help with goal setting.

It's not so much about reaching goals as it is about just having them.

Think about your ideas. Remember that this list will change over time.

**MY LIST** of things I value most.

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When you find yourself worrying about something, ask yourself, "Is it on **MY LIST**?". If not, let it go.

We are told that happiness is about the fulfillment of our goals. But research found that lottery winners returned to their former levels of well being in about a month. Accident victims who became paraplegic are often within a year as happy as they were before the accident. The message is that goals free us to enjoy the here and now. Having goals and working to make them happen is crucial for happiness.

## **Successful Goals Are:**

- Important and meaningful to you
- Realistic / Achievable
- Specific
- Written
- Measurable
- Activity based
- Time framed
- Demanding

## *The Advantages of Goal Setting*

- Helps to establish a normal daily schedule.
- Helps to prioritize at a time when there may be many demands.
- Is a realistic means of accomplishing tasks that are important to you.
- Clears thinking on a day to day basis.
- Increases self-esteem and self-confidence through a sense of accomplishment.
- Reaffirms the future.
- Gives meaning and purpose to life.
- Encourages better use of the imagination.

## Goal Setting

List your Goals below : *Start at the top or the bottom of the list!*

Lifetime Goals:

One Year Goals:

3 Month Goals:

Tomorrow Goals:

Today Goals:

You may choose to set a priority beside each of your goals: 1 for most important, 2 for next most important, and so on.

What do you expect you might do to sabotage your attempts to reach your goals?  
Just knowing what that may be can help to prevent it!

# S U M M A R Y

## Skill # 4

## Goal Setting

1. Goal setting helps you to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Goals can be short or \_\_\_\_\_ term.
3. It **is** the \_\_\_\_\_, not the \_\_\_\_\_ that matters.

*My notes:*

**Skill #5**

***Problem  
Solving***

Coping is active problem-solving. When we are stressed by events, we are unable to be good problem-solvers as we either see no solution or one we don't like. There are steps to good problem-solving that we can follow no matter how stressed we are. Following the steps gives us a plan and results in better solutions being found. It is similar to following the steps in a recipe.

### **Steps in Problem Solving**

1. Define the problem.
2. Recognize how you feel about the problem. Accept your feelings.
3. Relax and try not to think about solutions for a while.
4. Consider all possible solutions.
5. Try to imagine how other people might solve the problem or how to obtain the information needed to solve the problem.
6. Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution.
7. Arrange the solutions into a list starting with the least practical or least desirable one, all the way to the best.
8. Make a choice.
9. Briefly consider some favourable or positive aspects of the original problem. Can you think about it differently? Undesirable events often produce spectacular strengths.

## *Problem solving explained...*

**Step 1:** Define clearly the one problem you want to try and solve now.

Here are some examples:

- I want to get more information from my doctor on my treatment plans.
- I want to get back to work soon.
- I want to get the household tasks arranged.

The problem may also be a preoccupation with something or a feeling that you have. For example:

- I need to feel useful.
- I want to look more attractive.
- I want to be closer with my spouse.

The problem may be a task you have to do. For example:

- I have to go to the hospital for a few days.
- I have to decide on what treatment to take.
- I have to get more exercise.

**Step 2:** Identify and recognize how you feel about the problem: Thinking, feeling and behaving are all very much related and it is important not to ignore any of these. In the same way that thinking can affect your decisions, many of your feelings about a problem may lead to some very creative solutions.

**Step 3:** Take time out. Take time not to think about solutions or coping strategies. This phase of problem-solving is used to get away from what is on your mind, to relax for a while, using the relaxation exercises. By getting away from your problem for a brief period of time, you may uncover new and creative solutions.

**Step 4:** Think of as many different solutions as possible. Often when we are experiencing a great deal of distress we tend to focus only on one solution. Step 4 encourages you to list as many alternatives as possible, whether they be good, bad, or indifferent. This is a time for brainstorming, not evaluating. All solutions are valuable as often times a poor solution may trigger a better one and/or afford a contrast to those already known.

**Step 5:** Consider or imagine how other people would respond to the problem. In other words, sit back and say to yourself, "How might my friend solve this problem?" In this way, you may be able to shift your attention from your own approach or style and suddenly become aware of a totally different solution(s).

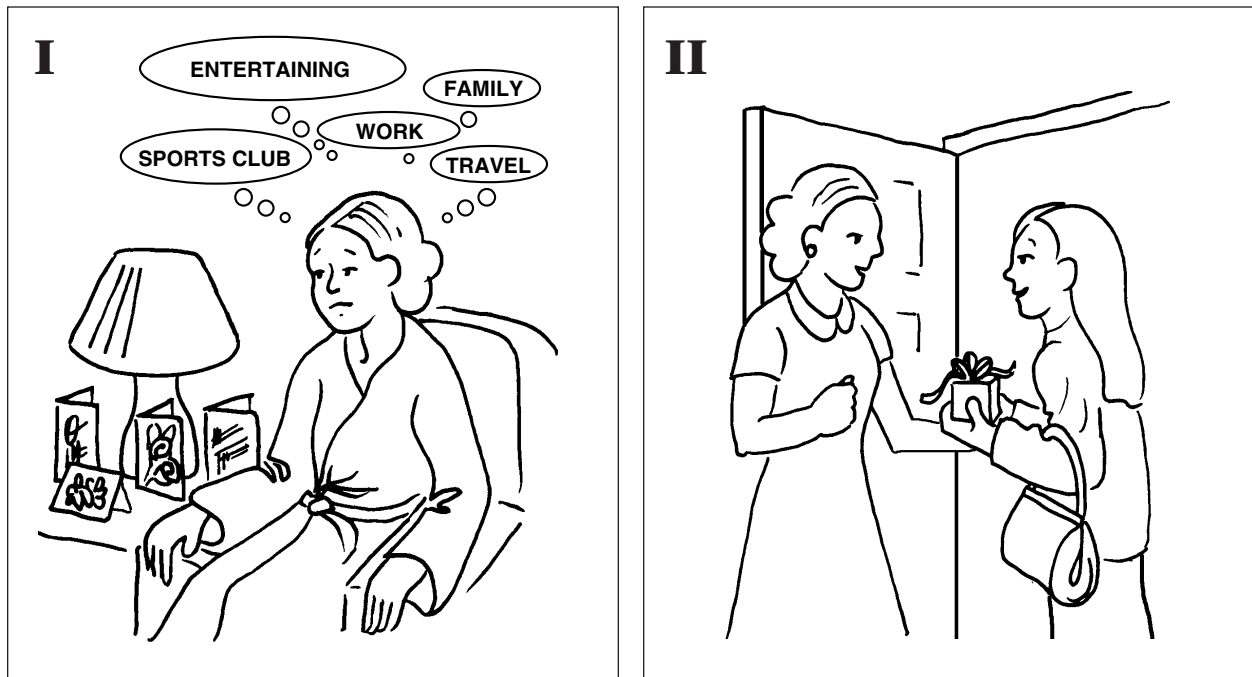
- Step 6:** List the advantages and disadvantages of each of the solutions which you generated previously. Now is the time to evaluate, to consider the possible consequences of all the different solutions. Be conscious of the fact that you are still not choosing a solution, merely assessing the validity of each one.
- Step 7:** Arrange the proposed solutions into a list, starting from the least practical or least desirable solution all the way up to the best solution or those solutions which seem to have the most likely chance of resolving the problem.
- Step 8:** Make a choice. The actual choice is quite simple and often readily apparent if all of the preceding steps have been followed carefully.
- Step 9:** Re-examine and re-define the problem. Go back to the original concern or problem and ask yourself, “Can it be thought about differently?” or “Is there anything positive that I can understand about this situation?” Many can go back to their original concern and see it in a different light or from a different perspective. For example, you may go back to a particular problem and discover that one of the positive things which comes out of the situation is that you are closer to people or you are better able to understand a particular person in your life. Thus, not everything that confronts someone with cancer is necessarily terrible and catastrophic. You can, through effective problem-solving, always discover at least one positive aspect to a difficult situation. This is a vital dimension of flexible coping.

*My notes:*

## An example to practice...

An example to practice involves moving from the problem depicted in scenario I (below) to the solution seen in scenario II. Try it with a friend or by yourself. When you have practiced with this one, work on one of your own problems this way. You may want to put the steps in a spot where you see them frequently.

### **The Situation:**



Pauline is married and has two children. She has recently had surgery for cancer of the uterus. Happily, she has good support from her husband and children and she will soon be able to return to work. The thought of dealing with her friends' and co-workers' questions is making her anxious. She worries what they will ask her about the operation, how things are at home, and the changes in her lifestyle as she has curtailed many of her household and social activities.

Once you have made a list of your problems or concerns, choose which problem to start with first.

## **Pauline's Practice with Problem Solving**

### **Step 1: What is the one problem to be solved now?**

Pauline has listed several problems — the curtailing of her activities at home, her husband's reactions to her surgery, the changes in her activities, etc., feeling different now from others, etc. Specifically she fears the questions about all that's happened and feels incapable of responding to them.

### **Step 2: How does she feel about it?**

She is afraid. She fears being judged by her peers and co-workers. She is avoiding contact with others. She is anxious.

### **Step 3: Pause. Take some time out.**

Pauline focussed on good memories of vacations with her husband and children. She practiced some calm, regular breathing while imagining herself on a holiday again with her family at their favourite spot on the beach with the warm sun and gentle breezes.

### **Step 4: Think of solutions.**

Here are some of Pauline's ideas.

- Talk with someone who had the same surgery and ask how she handled the situation.
- Ask her doctor for suggestions.
- Avoid social situations for awhile.
- Anticipate questions and think up answers in advance.
- Just do her best to answer the questions and help the questioner out if they ask awkward ones.
- Refuse to comment and say that she isn't ready yet to talk about any such private matters.
- Ask her husband to warn her friends to avoid any embarrassing questions, or even ask him to answer for her.
- Relax before she goes out to remain calm when speaking to others.
- Rehearse certain responses with her husband.

### **Step 5: Imagine what others would do.**

- Her husband would joke about it.
- Her friend Ghislane would say, "it's none of your business!"
- Her mother would become depressed and pity herself.
- Her friend Christiane would talk about her experiences and focus on the positive parts of it.
- Her priest would shift the conversation to the other person.

**Step 6: Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the solutions in Steps 4 and 5.**

*Here are some:*

<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
Talk with someone who had the same surgery and ask how she handled the situation.	She surely would understand me.	It would take a lot of energy to find such a person.
Ask her doctor for suggestions.	She has confidence in him.	He has never experienced this. He'll just tell her that she has to find the answer herself.
Avoid social situations for awhile.	She can gather her strength.	She feels isolated already. The longer she waits the harder it will be.
Anticipate questions and think up some answers in advance.	She'll feel more in control if she takes the initiative.	This takes a lot of energy. They may not even have thought of asking!
Just do her best to answer the questions and help the questioner out if they ask.	Once she's answered she won't have to do it again.	She can't choose the time or the place or the person.
Refuse to comment and say that she isn't ready yet to talk about any such private matters.	She's protecting herself.	She risks alienating her closest friends.
Ask her husband to warn her friends to avoid any embarrassing questions, or even ask him to answer for her.	She'll feel protected and secure.	She is being dependent on others, and he doesn't know all her friends well.
Relax before she goes out to remain calm when speaking to others.	She'll be in a good mood to answer.	She doesn't know in advance when she's likely to meet them.
Rehearse certain responses with her husband.	She'll feel at ease with him.	It will take time for both of them. Role playing isn't like reality.
Joke about it.	Joking relaxes the atmosphere.	Some people don't have a sense of humour.

<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
Say, "it's none of your business."	It's clear and direct.	It may offend some people.
Become depressed and pity herself.	It may make her feel better temporarily.	It will increase her isolation and loneliness.
Talk about her experiences and focus on the positive parts of it.	It projects a good image of her.	They may still ask difficult questions.
Shift the conversation to the other person.	It prevents her from thinking about herself.	It increases her isolation.

**Step 7: Rank the solutions from least workable to best.**

*Pauline ranked them as follows:*

14. Become depressed and isolated.
13. Avoid being with others for awhile.
12. Shift the conversation to the other person
11. Ask her doctor for suggestions.
10. Ask her husband to warn her friends not to ask questions, and ask him to answer if they do.
9. Meet someone with the same experience.
8. Say, "it's none of your business!"
7. Answer questions before they are asked.
6. Answer questions and even add more information.
5. Talk about the positive aspects.
4. Refuse to elaborate about it.
3. Joke.
2. Relax before meeting anyone.
1. Rehearse certain responses with her husband.

**Step 8: Make a decision. Write it here.**

Pauline decided to practice with her husband some likely situations. She thought it might help her to become more confident in her abilities to respond successfully.

**Step 9: Look for a positive aspect of the original problem.**

Pauline learned how much support her family has for her, and she became more aware of her own strengths and abilities.

# S U M M A R Y

## **Skill # 5      *Problem Solving***

1. Coping is active \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Why is it important to define the problem? \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Relax before thinking of solutions so that \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Why is it important to “brainstorm” (no evaluation)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. The evaluation step helps to \_\_\_\_\_.

*My notes:*



# Coping Skills for Life

## *Skill #6*

# ***Communication***

Here is a quote that sums up the importance of communication in our lives.

*I see Communication as a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings. Once a human being arrives on earth, communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he/she makes with others and what happens to him/her in the world.*

— Virginia Satir

Did you know that Communication is:

- 7 % Verbal
- 35 % Facial Expression
- 35 % Body Language
- 23 % Tone Of Voice

Communication is simply the sending and receiving of messages, intentional and unintentional, verbal and nonverbal. Being able to communicate well is a skill that most of us have not learned about and yet it is an essential part of good coping. It affects our feelings and our health. In dealing with cancer, it can affect the treatment we receive and our quality of life. No wonder then that communication is basic to every human relationship.

## **Tools For Successful Communication**

### **1. Being Committed**

- Wanting to develop a clear and healthy relationship.

### **2. Allowing Growth**

- Realizing that every relationship is changing and growing.

### **3. Feeling Equal In The Relationship**

- Feeling as if you share a common goal, with equal responsibility and authority.

## Assertive Communication

Another step to good communication involves knowing how to be assertive. There is a clear difference between being assertive and being aggressive. Assertive communication is expressing yourself — your needs, your feelings, perspectives — in a manner which is clear, direct and neither threatening nor attacking.

### *Basic rights*

- Your feelings are legitimate.
- You have the right to ask questions, state feelings.
- It is OK to negotiate for change.
- It is your right to set boundaries, to say “no.”
- You know better than anyone what you think, feel, and want.

## About anger

There is always another feeling behind anger. An old proverb says that if you can be patient in one moment of anger, you will escape 100 days of sorrow. Anger is an off-the-mark judgment that affects everyone around in a negative way. When you are angry count to 10; when you are very angry, count to 100. Compare being angry to being assertive.

Here is a specific technique for good communication in a situation where the other person is disagreeing with you — it may be a child, a spouse, a nurse or doctor, etc.... It works !

- Step 1.** Listen and find some truth in what the other person is saying.
- Step 2.** Listen and put yourself in the other person’s shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.
- Step 3.** Listen and ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.
- Step 4.** Find something positive to say to the other person.
- Step 5.** Express your feelings with “I” statements.
- Step 6.** Real listening is active listening – not waiting to talk.

*Note how important listening is and how often it is used.*

The most important step in good communication is being able to use “I” statements.

“I” messages have 3 parts:

- I think.
- I feel.
- I want.

“I” Messages Are Used To:

- A. Disclose thoughts, feelings and wants.
- B. Assert self: say yes/no.
- C. Prevent disappointment in the future.

"I" messages are a healthy way, as Shakespeare wrote, "to give sorrow words."

On the next page is an example of how you can turn a message into an “I message” that communicates how you think, and feel and what you want.

Try to avoid blaming others. Try not to use “you” messages.

### **A. Disclosing thoughts, feelings, wants**

eg: “I am frustrated when I trip over school bags in the entrance hall...

“I need help carrying in the...

“I want to have 10 minutes to myself before...

**Exercise: Using “I” messages**

<b>SITUATION</b>	<b>“YOU MESSAGE”</b>	<b>“I MESSAGE”</b>
	Blame	Ownership
Your mother calls everyday to ask you how you are doing.	“You are driving me crazy, — stop asking how I feel.”	“Mom, I feel frustrated having to report about my health everyday. I’m really trying to live a normal life.”

**Fill in an example of your own here:**

<b>SITUATION</b> <i>example</i>	<b>“YOU MESSAGE”</b> <i>example</i>	<b>“I MESSAGE”</b> <i>example</i>

The scenarios with “I” messages let us avoid problems by telling others what our needs are, and how others can best help. You will notice that the message is given in a clear and non-threatening way.

## B. Asserting self: yes/no

How many people say “yes” when they really want to say “no”?  
What is our “yes” worth if we never say “no”?

### **Making And Refusing Requests**

When making requests be clear, specific and factual. In order to appear confident, expect your requests to be accepted. Avoid long apologetic statements...

“Do you suppose... Kind of... Maybe... Perhaps... ”

### **Saying “No”**

**Brevity is crucial.** Be as brief as possible, i.e. give a legitimate reason for your refusal, “I don’t have the time”. Avoid long elaborate explanations, justifications.

**Actually say the word “no” when declining.** The word “no” has more power and is less ambiguous than “well, I just don’t think so...” ,  
“I really can’t just now...” etc.

**Broken record technique.** Repetition and persistence may be necessary. You may have to decline several times before the person “hears” you. It’s not necessary to come up with a new explanation each time; you can use your original reason over and over again.

**Shake your head when saying “no”.** Often people unknowingly nod their heads and smile when they are attempting to decline or refuse ... this is a double message. Make sure your non-verbal gestures mirror your verbal messages.

**Limit the words “I’m sorry” when saying “no”.** Try to be conscious about using this phrase to excuse your refusal or to otherwise weaken your credibility. (Habitual use of this phrase can be distracting to your real intent.)

**Buy time for yourself.** Say, "let me get back to you on that," or "I'll think about it."

#### **Practice:**

Turn to your neighbour or friend and practice declining:

- an invitation to dinner
- being on a committee
- buying something

### ***C. Preventive I messages: to prevent disappointment in the future***

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“I am going out tonight and do not want to find dirty dishes in the sink when I return.”

“I would be so happy to celebrate my birthday next Wednesday by going out to dinner.”

“I would really appreciate getting an early morning phone call on Mother’s Day.”

## Family Communication

How families function is important to health and coping. Good communication is one of the best ways to have a family that functions well.

What is important to you and your family?

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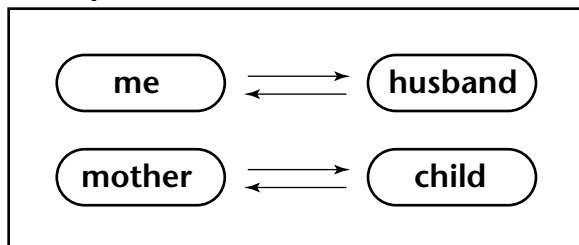
What are your strengths as a family?

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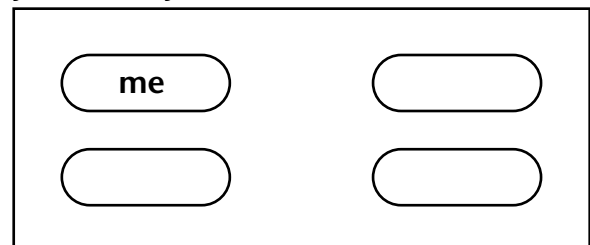
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How do you communicate with each other?  
Read the example, then complete your own diagram.

**example:**



**your family:**



"me" and my husband talk freely to each other. I don't communicate as easily with my mother or my child, but there is good communication between the two of them.

Who in your family is most supportive to you?

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Family functioning is determined by three factors:

- how cohesive or "together" the members of the family feel, and how they support each other.
- how members can express what they feel and think.
- how problems are talked about together and solved.

Good family communication is an important part of good coping.

*Practice your communication skills at home too!*

## **Doctor-Patient Communication**

Remember to use the strategies in this section in the important relationship between your doctor and you !!! Here are more tips;

1. Write down a few questions or make a list of what you want to talk about. This can be your "prompt sheet."
2. Let the doctor know what is most important to you. He/she needs to know to help him/her choose the best treatments with you.
3. Ask a friend or family member to be with you to take notes.
4. Ask your most important questions first.
5. If you don't understand, ask your doctor to repeat in a way that is clearer to you.
6. Take a small tape recorder with you and tell your doctor you would like to record the visit to help you remember.
7. Regard your doctor as your ally and partner.

*Following are some assertive rights which we have:*

## **Assertive Bill Of Rights**

### *I have the right...*

To be responsible for my own life.

To accept and respect myself and others.

To feel happy, satisfied, and to allow inner peace.

To take good care of my whole being; my body, my mind and my spirit.

To be imperfect.

To be aware of and to fulfill my own needs.

To have dreams, goals and ideals... and to make them happen.

To have and to express all my emotions.

To tell others how I want to be treated.

To allow people to help me without feeling guilty, unworthy or dependent.

To set my own priorities about my use of time, money, space and energy.

To get what I pay for.

To have healthy, life-enhancing relationships, where clear communication is valued and to make conscious decisions to change relationships.

To change, emerge, expand in new directions.

To have my own beliefs, ideas, values without apology to anyone.

To live in the present moment, free of guilt about the past and worry about the future.

To relax, to let go... and "DO NOTHING."

...and to remember that when I accept these as my rights,  
I also accept them as rights of others!

*Adapted from POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES  
123 Queen St. West, Brampton, Ontario, L6Y 1M3*

# S U M M A R Y

## **Skill # 6 Communication Skills**

1. "I" messages start with "I" \_\_\_\_\_, or "I" \_\_\_\_\_, or "I" \_\_\_\_\_.
  
2. Being assertive means \_\_\_\_\_ yourself in a clear, non-aggressive way.
  
3. Two tips to use when visiting your doctor are:
  - \* Write down a few \_\_\_\_\_ before your visit  
and \_\_\_\_\_ them with you.
  
  - \* Let the doctor know what is most \_\_\_\_\_ to you.

*My notes:*

**Skill #7**

***Social  
Support***

People need people. Although that statement seems obvious it is only in the last few years that we have come to learn just how important others are for our well being. For example, we know that people who have a close confidant(e), friend, or spouse live longer and are healthier than those who do not! People give social support to each other in ways that are both practical and emotional.

Social support includes giving and receiving encouragement, practical help, positive feedback and rewards, understanding and caring, and role modelling.

Another aspect of social support is knowing where to go to obtain the right type of social support. People's social support network usually extends to friends, family, health care workers and co-workers. It is not the number of people you know but the quality of care and support those people provide that matters.

### **Benefits Of Social Support**

- Sociological studies show that as part of our involvement with others, we are more likely to engage in positive health behaviours such as exercise, medical check-ups, and health screening tests.
- In a study of older people, researchers found that having a confidant(e) significantly helped people avoid psychiatric symptoms.
- Two studies of women showed that having an intimate and confiding relationship significantly reduced the incidence of depression.
- In a study of 7000 adults, a strong correlation was shown between social involvement and length of life; it was shown to be more important to health than smoking, drinking, exercise, or diet.

***From A Medical Perspective, Social Support Helps to:***

- Maximize our resistance to disease.
- Give us the best fighting chance if we are ill.

***From A Social Perspective, Other Benefits Emerge:***

- Friends help us feel good about ourselves; they reassure us that we belong and that it's OK to be who we are.
- Friends provide emotional support — someone to talk to about our thoughts and feelings.
- Friends help us in tangible ways — help us solve problems, give us advice.
- Assist others in attaining the same benefits.

**Sources of Social Support**

Another important aspect of social support is knowing where to go to obtain the right type of social support. This exercise is to help you identify what type of support would be helpful and to know what resources are available.

List the people you would turn to for *emotional* support:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

List the people you would turn to for *practical* help:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

You may notice that your social network is not only comprised of your family and relatives. People's social support network usually extends to friends, health professionals, or whoever provides you with the particular type of support that you need.

This brings us to the idea of quantity versus quality of social support. As in many instances, it is not the number of people you know but the *quality* of care and support that people provide and that we come to rely on the most.

## **Risks Associated With Asking For Social Support**

A common fear we all share is the risk associated with asking for support. “What is the risk involved if I ask person X to help me, or if I refuse to help?” Some of the risks involved in asking for support include the following:

- threat to self-esteem
- embarrassment
- fear of being seen as dependent on others
- possibility of rejection by others
- guilt
- possible loss of confidentiality
- lack of comfort in accepting support from others

Despite the risks associated with asking for or declining support, it is important to weigh the benefits that come from receiving the help of others. In order to weigh the pros and cons of asking for social support, you may use problem-solving to help you in your decision. The important thing to remember is that YOU alone have the control to ask for or refuse support.

## **Offering Social Support to Others**

Another important tool for obtaining social support is by offering support to others. By making yourself available to others, you not only meet their needs but at the same time have the company and support of another person. Social support is reciprocal; i.e., both people involved in the interchange benefit from being with each other.

## **Receiving support from others**

Accepting help and support can be a gift that you give. Friends and family are usually doing the best that they can.

# S U M M A R Y

## **Skill # 7      *Social Support***

1. People need \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Social support means help that is \_\_\_\_\_ and emotional.
3. It is not the \_\_\_\_\_ of people you know but the quality of support that matters.
4. Social support is reciprocal — that is, both people in the relationship \_\_\_\_\_.

*My notes:*

**Skill #8**

**A**  
***Healthy***  
***Lifestyle***

## **What makes a healthy lifestyle?**

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Laughter
- Handling Fatigue
- Hope
- Spirituality
- Forgiveness
- Self Trust
- Seeking Meaning in Cancer
- Pain Management
- Sexuality

*...and so on*

# Exercise

Health means exercise!

Everyone needs to get active. In fact, many of the changes that occur in our bodies as we get older may not be due to aging but to a lack of physical activity.

A more active lifestyle has been proven to reduce the risk of many diseases as well as reduce the symptoms of chronic conditions, and prevent the recurrence of some cancers.

In short, the proven benefits of exercise are many and the side-effects are few. The exercise connection can be taken one step further: people who are in good shape tend to develop other positive lifestyle habits, like a healthy diet, not smoking and moderate use of alcohol.

There is no definitive information on just how hard or how long one has to exercise but daily physical activity is important. A good general guideline to aim for is to exercise at least 3 times a week for 20 to 45 minutes at an activity you like: walking, swimming, cycling, dancing. Even a few minutes every day helps your body – whatever your age! Graduated weight training has been proven to be beneficial to people of all ages... check it out with your doctor.

*Practice:*

List the activities you enjoy:

_____	_____
_____	_____

*My notes:*

***Did you know that exercise is the closet thing we have to a magic bullet in the fight against cancer?***

# Nutrition

## *We are what we eat*

### Eating well:

A nutritious diet is always vital for your body to work at its best. Good nutrition is even more important for people with cancer. Why?

- People who eat well during their treatment are better able to cope with the side effects of treatment. People who eat well may even be able to handle a higher dose of certain treatments.
- A healthy diet can help keep up your strength, prevent your body tissues from breaking down, and rebuild tissues that cancer treatment may harm.
- When you eat enough food, particularly the right kind of food, your body has nutrients as a source of energy. As a result, your natural defences are strong and your body can fight infection effectively. Your immune/defence system is especially important to you now.

### What kinds of food do I need?

A good rule to follow is to eat a variety of different foods every day, and avoid junk food. No one food or group of foods contains all of the nutrients you need. A diet to keep your body strong will include daily servings from these food groups:

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Raw or cooked vegetables, fruits, and fruit juices provide certain vitamins (such as A and C) and minerals the body needs. From 5–10 servings a day.

**Protein Foods:** Protein helps your body heal itself and fight infection. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, cheese, beans and nuts give you protein as well as many vitamins and minerals.

**Grains:** Whole grains, such as bread, pasta and cereals, provide a variety of carbohydrates and B vitamins, that provide a good source of energy and fibre.

**Dairy Foods:** Milk and other dairy products provide protein and many vitamins and are the best sources of calcium.

#### NOTE:

*Eating well does not mean becoming overweight! In fact, some studies have found that gaining too much weight was harmful to the treatments and the person's future well-being.*

## So... how's your diet ?

Practice:

### *Daily, I eat —*

- |  |                              |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Fruits and Vegetables:</b><br>5-10 servings per day | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| <b>Protein:</b><br>2-3 servings per day                | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| <b>Grains:</b><br>5-12 servings per day                | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| <b>Dairy Foods:</b><br>3-4 servings per day            | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| And I drink several glasses of water                   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |

*The hospital dietitian is available to help you, ask your nurse or doctor for a referral.*

*A good book on foods that fight cancer is "Foods that Fight Cancer",  
published in 2006 and written by Beliveau and Gingras.*

# Laughter

## Humour promotes:

- Simplicity.
- Change in how we see things.
- Delight.
- Optimism and Hope.

## The benefits of humour:

1. Aids circulation of blood.
2. Decreases blood pressure.
3. Lowers heart rate.
4. Increases respiration and cleans foreign matter out of the respiratory tract.
5. Increases the level of endorphins (the body's natural pain killers).
6. Stimulates the endocrine system (hormone production).
7. Stimulates the immune system (disease prevention).
8. Reduces stress.
9. Relieves muscle tension.

***Laughter is internal jogging !***

We have to learn not to take ourselves too seriously.

## **PRACTICE !**

*Some thoughts to make you smile:*

Save time — see it my way.

Go with the flow ... and don't forget to play and engage in life.

Warning: Humour may be hazardous to your illness.

Never underestimate the unimportance of everything.

Dogs have owners, cats have staff.

We don't laugh because we are happy ... we're happy because we laugh.

To avoid pollution, a person shouldn't blow his stack.

Laughter is the shortest distance between 2 people.

Give yourself the courage to be imperfect.

Humour prevents a "hardening of the attitudes" — helps you to stay flexible.

Even though we have pains, we don't have to be one.

# Handling Fatigue

In addition to exercise, setting aside time for simple restorative activities three times a week for about 30 minutes may be helpful in dealing with feelings of fatigue. These simple restorative activities include:

1. Walking or sitting in a natural environment such as a park.
2. Tending to plants.
3. Gardening.
4. Bird Watching.
5. Reading.
6. Doing crossword puzzles.
7. Watching a movie.
8. Listening to music.
9. Taking a bath.
10. Others \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Practice:*

Schedule into your weekly agenda one of the above activities. Just as we make appointments with the doctor, we need to make time for non-medical healthy activities. Learn your own rhythm and energy cycles and stop activities before deep fatigue sets in. It's easier to recover that way.

Some find it energizing and helpful to keep a journal or diary where they write their thoughts, feelings and observations about life.

# Forgiveness

Forgiveness has 2 benefits:

- it reduces stress – anger, fear, bitterness
- it increases social support

*“If you devote your life to seeking revenge, first dig 2 graves.”*

— Confucius

# Hope

*Hope is not a way out — it is a way through.*

Hope is much more than a desire to get well. Hope must include effort, hard work, and determination to reach that goal of wellness. Hope looks to the future but rests in the present. It guides your present experience and reflects your love of life.

Hope has proven to be a powerful ally in the struggle to find balance in life. You are not a statistic; as some patients have said, “if 20 % of the people with this type of cancer are cured, I want to be part of that 20 %.”

*“Cancer patients recovering from surgery, chemotherapy and radiation know that daily survival and well-being requires the presence of hope. Hope differs from survival. Hope is the stuff on which productive energy is built.”* Elizabeth Simpson, cancer survivor, The Globe and Mail, Spring 1996

*“There is no cancer for which there is no treatment; and there is no cancer from which some people have not been cured.”* Richard Block (H&R Block) cancer survivor

Learn to believe in miracles. Then picture yourself as part of one.

*“We have hardly begun to learn. We have not come to the end of knowledge by a long shot; we have only come to the edge of it.”* Johnson and Klein, Staying Healthy with Cancer, 1988.

It’s an uplifting thought. The decades ahead hold great promise. No one can predict what is around the corner for the individual diagnosed with cancer today. There is certainly reason for hope.

Hope is much like optimism in action. Optimistic people are more likely to detect possible problems and then take the right steps to solve or prevent them. Optimists are realistic, practical and active and have better overall health and strong emotional coping skills.

“A poor monk in war-torn Tibet was asked why he was so optimistic in the face of so much tragedy. He replied, “Because it makes me feel better.”

*Hope is always deep within us — even though  
the nature of what we hope for changes,  
the hope itself remains.*

# Spirituality

For many people spirituality and prayer have always been a part of their lives. For others, they have not been important. The relationship between spirituality and health is being explored by a number of universities and research centers. It turns out that there are more than 100 scientific studies in the general area of spirituality and prayer. A good summary of the evidence is common sense: use what works. In medical situations there will be a place for both prayer and modern medicine.

“In its simplest form, prayer is an attitude of the heart — a matter of being. Prayer is the desire to contact the Absolute, however it may be conceived. When we experience the need to make this connection, we are praying, whatever the words, and even whether or not we use the words. Prayer is not better than modern medicine. Prayer, medications and surgery — they are all a blessing, a grace, a gift. Why not use all of them, with reverence and gratitude?” asks Larry Dossey, MD., author of *Prayer is Good Medicine*.

The body does not distinguish between prayer, meditation and relaxation techniques. They all come from the heart and have many similarities. Although our minds may distinguish between them, our bodies do not.

You may ask if you should pray? As Dr. Dossey responds, “If you need to ask, you’ve probably already begun.”

Prayer or spiritual belief is like running to your mother when you fell and scraped your knee as a child. You didn’t think she would take away the scrape and pain but that you would be comforted and strengthened.

# Self Trust

Self trust is a strong inner core that says we know we can handle whatever life throws at us.

It's being authentic and arises from the use of the FACT-THOUGHT-FEELING way.

It's very much like love and self-respect, from our wisdom and intuition.

*When you are stressed,  
put your hand over your heart or touch your cheek  
as you might touch the cheek of a child you love,  
and say simply, "**I understand.**"*

## Self trust leads to self-management

Here are 5 core self-management skills:

1. Problem-solving
2. Decision-making
3. Using resources
4. Forming partnerships with the health care system
5. Taking action—small steps immediately.




It is necessary to be fully aware of the present moment, and to accept what you are feeling without criticizing yourself before you can move forward.

# Seeking Meaning in Cancer

Making sense of what cancer has meant to your life is an important task for most people. The search for meaning is asking questions about the personal importance of a life happening, such as cancer, to give it purpose and to place it within one's total life pattern. Finding meaning can help put your life back on the path to self-realization or becoming the best you can be. Here is one way to find meaning in what has happened to you.

## A. Learn about transitions

Transitions are moves from one life event to the next. They occur in 3 phases:

<p><b><u>Phase 1</u></b> <b>An Ending</b> When you recognize what you have lost through the cancer experience.</p> 	<p><b><u>Phase 2</u></b> <b>A Neutral Zone</b> When you may feel disconnected from the past and the present, and uncertain about the future.</p> 	<p><b><u>Phase 3</u></b> <b>A New Beginning</b> When you find a new normal and recognize new opportunities, new priorities.</p> 
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## B. Use the lifeline

**Step 1. Acknowledge the present.** Where are you now? Draw a lifeline with the beginning and end of the line to symbolize “birth” and “death”. Draw a circle anywhere on the line to show where you think you are in your life. Tell your story since your diagnosis to a friend, write it down in a special journal, or speak it out loud to yourself.

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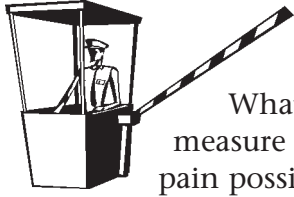
*Birth*

*Death*

**Step 2. Contemplate the Past.** Your ability to get to this point is a testament of your resilience. Think of the important life events (positive or negative) before your cancer diagnosis, and add them on the lifeline. Think of how you coped with those events. Identify what strengths helped you live through those events. Can these strengths help you today? Would you do things differently today?

**Step 3. Live the present for the future.** Wisdom is being able to make important life decisions in the face of uncertainty. Think of your life goals and priorities, and add them to the lifeline. Think of what would allow you to lead a life with least regret. What would lead to a most fulfilling life? Has the experience of cancer changed what you value?

*Thanks to Virginia Lee, N,PhD*



# Pain Management

What is pain? Pain is whatever the person says it is! We can accurately measure our pain on a scale of 0 (meaning no pain) to 10 (meaning the worst pain possible). Pain can be managed and relieved so do not believe that pain is necessary. Pain is like having *an open gate* in the spinal cord and brain, and research has shown how to *close the gate*. Not only medication but exercises, the use of heat and cold, massage, distraction, relaxation, imagery, and special techniques are all able to help reduce pain either on their own or with medication and *close the gate*.

## Six Misconceptions About Pain Management

**1. Myth: Pain medication is addictive.**

**Fact:** People with pain caused by illness do not get “high” from pain medicine, and very, very rarely become addicted. Taking narcotics for pleasure is the problem!

**2. Myth: Pain medication will stop working if you use it for along period of time.**

**Fact:** People sometimes get used to a drug if they take it over time and they need a larger dose to achieve relief, or a different drug. This is called “tolerance.”

**3. Myth: If the medication doesn't work right away, it won't work at all.**

**Fact:** Everyone responds differently to medication. It may take time to reach the correct dose and the best combination of medicines for you.

**4. Myth: Pain should be endured for as long as possible before taking pain medication.**

**Fact:** Taking pain medicine when the pain is starting to build up means that you may need to take less overall and the medicine has a better chance of doing its job well. Taking pain medicine regularly means that the pain stays under control.

**5. Myth: Good patients do not complain about pain.**

**Fact:** Saying that you have pain is not complaining but is a matter of fact. Pain cannot be managed until you first admit that you have it.

**6. Myth: Pain means that something is wrong, and shouldn't be relieved.**

**Fact:** Once the cause of pain is identified, pain then no longer is useful. Pain prevents us from sleeping, eating, moving about, taking deep breaths, and doing the things that we need to do to get well.

## The Pain Medicine Ladder

Medicine for pain follows a pain ladder—over the counter pills, like Tylenol, Aspirin and Advil are the first rung and can be very effective. When they no longer work, the 2<sup>nd</sup> rung includes pills with codeine, and then the 3<sup>rd</sup> rung has narcotics and other types of pain medicine. Move up the ladder as needed, step by step.

# Sexuality

Sexuality is important to everyone – whether they talk about it or not! The biggest sex organ is the one between your ears, and it is definitely affected by your diagnosis and treatment. It is also the organ that you have total control over, as you’ve seen in this workbook.

Sexuality includes both the feelings and physical characteristics that makeup your sexual identity. Your genetic background, your sexual experiences, your religious and cultural beliefs and your hormones all affect your sexuality.

Your sex life isn’t just about having sex – in fact, it’s mostly about how you feel about yourself sexually, and your body, and being touched and loved. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to feel about your sexuality.

If your sex life seems difficult since your illness, these are steps that can help:

1. Learn about your sex organs, your sex hormones, the parts of your body that respond to sexual stimulation A good web site is [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk).
2. Realize that if you and your partner feel comfortable with your sex life, than that is normal and right for you.
3. It may be difficult to talk about your sexuality but good communication is essential to a good sex life. Besides your partner find a close friend, counselor, sex therapist or health professional to talk to. Review the section in this workbook on communication.
4. Some people have sexual problems that existed before their illness. The illness becomes a good opportunity to deal more openly with the problem.
5. Men and women can remain sexually active until the end of life. Physical expressions of caring, touch and pleasure where both partners work to find a way that satisfies them both can work. Taking more time, relaxing, stroking, sexual vibrators are some suggestions.
6. Change your goals for what you want to rekindle in your sexual function. Visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).
7. Here’s an example, for people with a colostomy—attractive pouch covers can make appliances look less medical, smaller pouches can be worn during sexual activity, choose positions to keep your partner’s weight off the ostomy, or put a small pillow over the ostomy, choose a time when your ostomy isn’t active.
8. Remember the worst enemy of sexual health is silence.

What one thing will you do if sexuality is a problem for you or your partner?

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# Conclusion

## The Nucares Workshop

Thank you for participating in this workshop. Besides the tools you have learned (the gifts you have given yourself) you'll find that a simple thought with a single idea will be of great help to you too. Here are a few for you that we use too:

*Love is strength.*

*Love is healing.*

*I will live today to the fullest I can.*

*If every day is lived that way, I will have done what I can do.*

*I will trust my sense of myself.*

*When I am tired I will rest.*

*When I am energized I will act.*

*But through all of this I will be.*

*When I trust myself, I am at peace.*

*Remember:*

*I hear, I forget.*

*I see, I remember.*

*I do, I understand.*

*I practice, I master.*

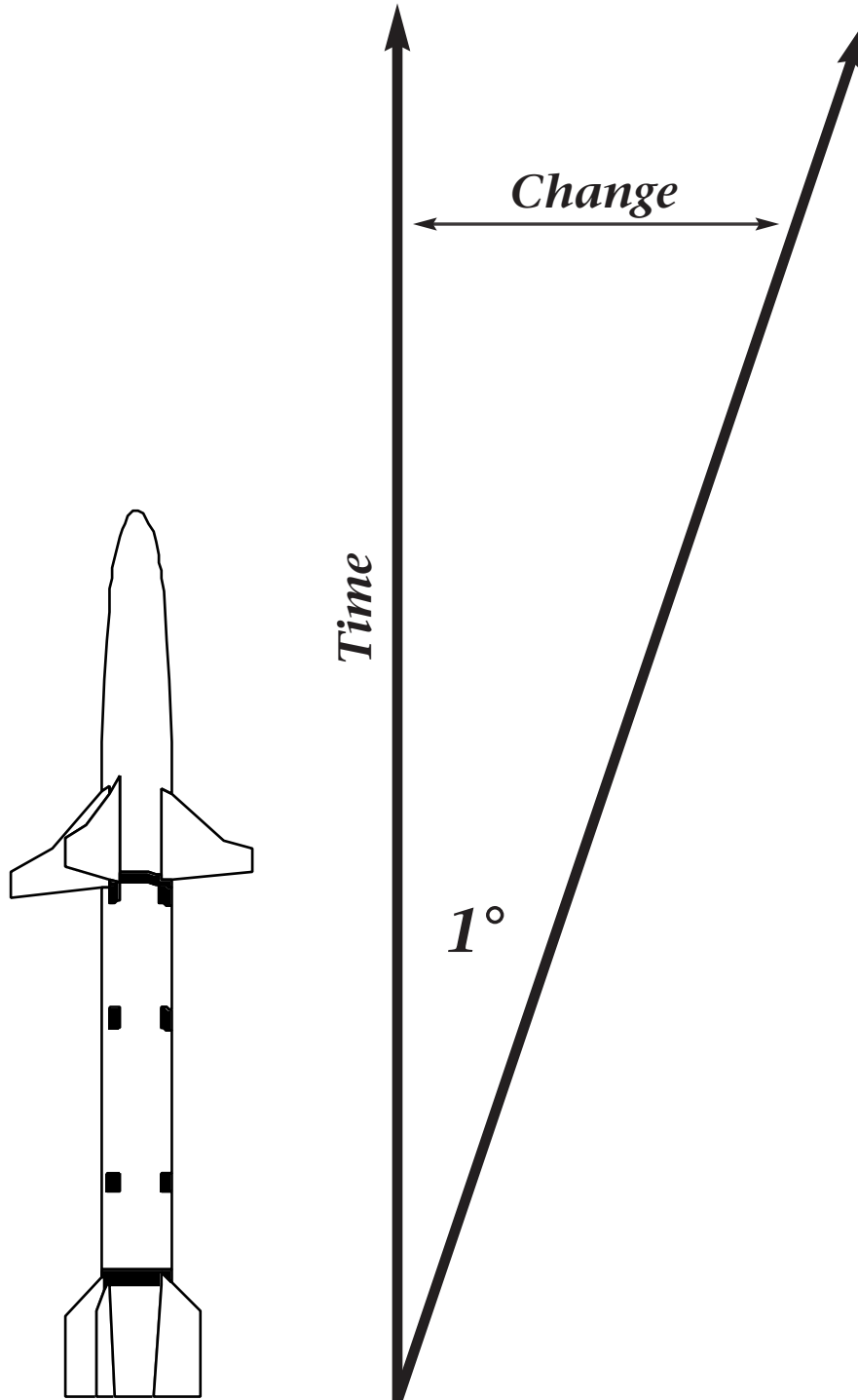
*I will take joy in my hope,*

*my sense of control and*

*my coping.*

**Just how much change is needed? Only \_\_\_\_\_ degree of change !**

# 1 Degree of Change



## Acknowledgements

This program is the product of a team of people over several years. The research of Weisman, Worden and Sobel (1980), Burns (1980), Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Benson and Klipper (1976), Kabat-Zinn (1990) and Gottlieb and Rowat (1987), all contributed to the theoretical framework and practical development of the workbook.

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I would like to thank not only the people listed above but also the many patients who provided useful comments and suggestions gained from their experience with the workbook.

Sincerely, Linda Edgar, N., PhD  
*Principal Developer*

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