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Simple Ways to Help You Cope With Stress During Cancer

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Living with cancer can be stressful. From facing your diagnosis and undergoing treatments to keeping up with family, friends, and your day-to-day life, there can be a lot to juggle.

You may find that there are certain ways you can reduce your stress and prevent it from building up. This article explores three strategies that can help keep stress in

perspective, along with **Microsteps** that can be taken for each. As always, consult with your care team for the stress management strategies that are best for you.

Cognitive Restructuring

This technique may help you notice negative thought patterns and then reframe them in a more positive way. If you tend to assume the worst, this may be a helpful strategy to try.

When a negative thought comes along, try asking yourself a few simple questions:

- Is this thought based on emotions or on facts?
- What evidence is there that this thought is accurate?
- What other ways could this information be interpreted?
- Is this a black-and-white situation or could there be shades of gray?

Self-Compassion

If you tend to be hard on yourself, practicing self-compassion can be a powerful tool to help you manage stress. People who are self-compassionate can be less likely to:

- Assume the worst is going to happen
- Feel anxiety after a stressful experience
- Avoid challenging tasks because they’re afraid of failing

Reframing Limiting Beliefs

Reframing is the process of choosing a new story about your own life. It can start with identifying a belief that might be holding you back and then trying to see that belief in a new, more positive light.

Here are some examples of limiting beliefs and positive reframes of those beliefs:

Limiting Belief: "I have no control over my life anymore."

Positive Reframe: "I’m still able to make some choices that positively impact my health and my life."

Limiting Belief: "Cancer will ruin all my plans and dreams."

Positive Reframe: "I can adapt my plans and find new ways to achieve my dreams, even with cancer."

Limiting Belief: "I’m a burden to my family and friends."

Positive Reframe: "My loved ones care about me and want to support me, just as I would want to support them in the same situation."

Reframing isn’t simply forcing yourself to be positive. It’s a technique and way of thinking that you can practice. Over time, it may help you build the muscle of challenging negative beliefs and asking yourself if there’s a more positive way to think.

Microsteps that may help you cope with stress

Taking a breath and asking yourself if there’s evidence for a negative thought you’re having about your health.

Consider asking yourself: Is this thought based on emotions or on facts? Are there other ways to think about this?

Writing down any negative thoughts that are causing you stress.

Try jotting down and answering questions about your negative thoughts. Is this thought completely true? Or could there be another way to think about it?

Showing yourself the same compassion you would show a good friend.

We’re often harder on ourselves than we’d ever be on others. Instead of putting yourself down after a setback, imagine what you’d say to a friend in the same situation. For example, “You’ve done hard things before and you’ve got this.”

Telling yourself “I don’t” instead of “I can’t.”

This small shift in the way you talk to yourself may help you more confident and less negative. For example, instead of saying “I can’t go to the gym and lift weights like I used to,” you could say “I don’t lift weights at the gym anymore. And I’m doing a new workout that suits me better.”

Repeating a morning affirmation that shows compassion for yourself.

An affirmation is a short, positive statement you can repeat to yourself. Consider starting your day with a simple statement that makes you feel good about yourself, such as “I am enough,” “I am strong,” or “I am loved.”

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