

# cancer answers

Cancer Answers is a series of free public lectures, presented by *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*, on a variety of cancer-related topics. The lectures, delivered by cancer experts, are designed to raise awareness and educate participants about issues related to prevention, screening, early diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and palliative care.

Following each lecture, the presentations are posted on the *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* website.



# **After Cancer Treatment Then What?**

**Tom McNeil**

**October 5, 2010**



“There is a cruel myth about surviving cancer. In this myth, when medical treatment is successful, the story ends.”

Halvorson-Boyd & Hunter (1995)



# For Your Consideration ....

Choices

Healing

Meaning

Openness

Integration

Support

Transition

Doing

Change

Deciding



# Survivorship

“The life-altering burden of cancer has frame shifted from a narrow focus on the direct effects of anti-cancer therapy and overall survival to a spectrum of medical and non-medical issues termed cancer survivorship.”

In Feuerstein (2007)



# Lance Armstrong Foundation Survey (2004)

- 83 questions
- Medical support, emotional support, patient attitude, secondary health problems, financial issues, social relations, employment problems, concerns about activities of daily living
- 1024 respondents
- Survey bias



# Survey Findings

- Decreased income 83%
- Reduction or loss of sexual function 82%
- Loss of insurance coverage 74%
- Suffered depression due to cancer 72%
- Physician unable to assist with identified non-medical issues 70%
- Would volunteer to assist in survivorship activities 70%



# Survey Findings (con't)

- Currently experiencing good health 62 %
- Problems with relationship with spouse/partner 60 %
- Optimistic that will die from something “besides cancer” 59 %
- Had to deal with chronic pain 54%
- Secondary health issues caused or exacerbated by cancer 53%



# Survey Finding (con't)

- Emotional needs harder than physical needs  
53%
- Had unmet non-medical cancer needs 49%
- Dealing with cancer (“made life better”)  
47%
- Talk about cancer more than a few  
times/month 46%



# Survey Findings (con't)

- Life still affected by cancer (“more than a little”) 40%
- Some/few/no resources available for emotional needs 33%
- Turned down treatment option due to finances 12%
- Incurred financial debt due to cancer of > \$25,000 9%

Feuerstein (2007)

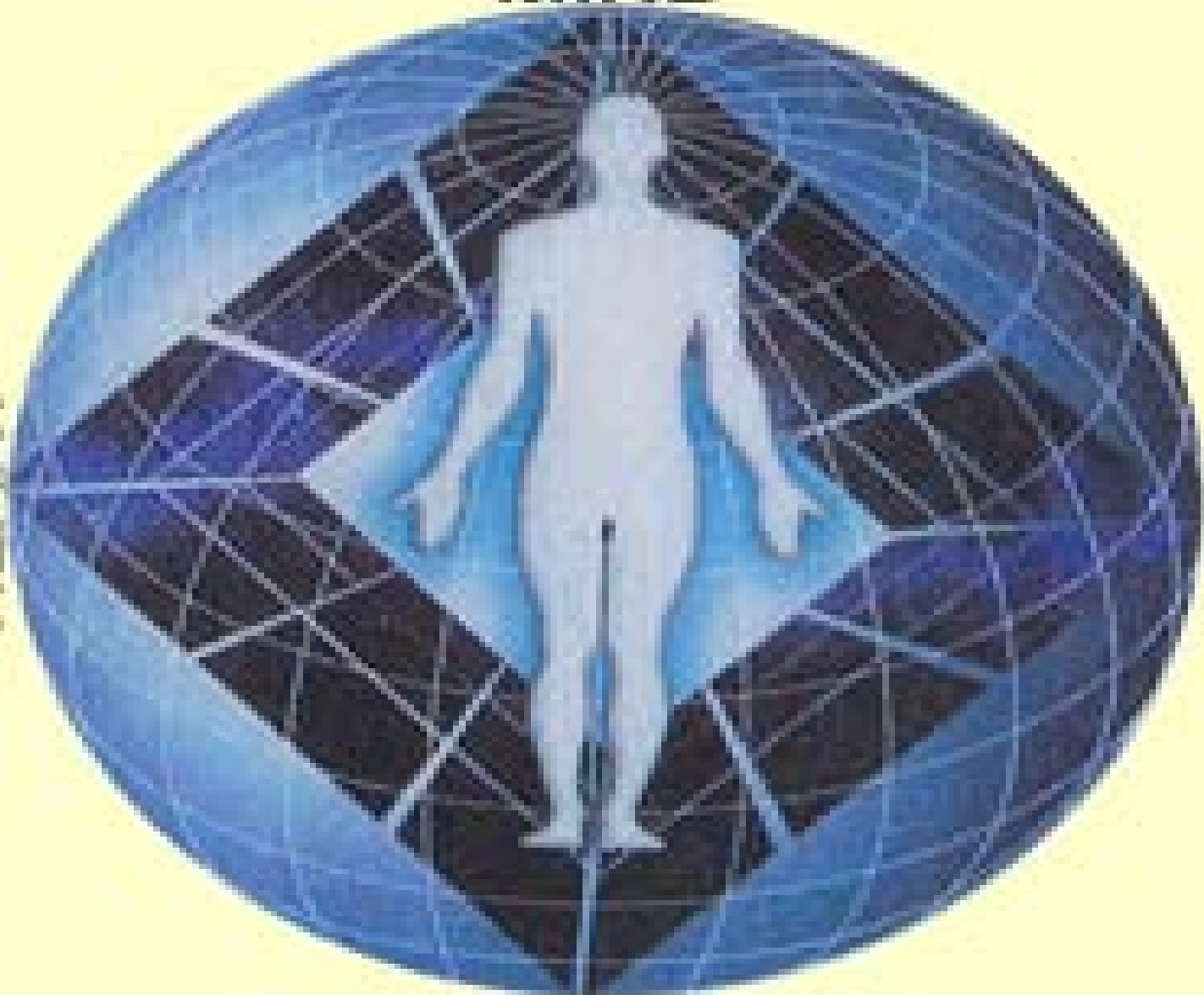


**MIND**

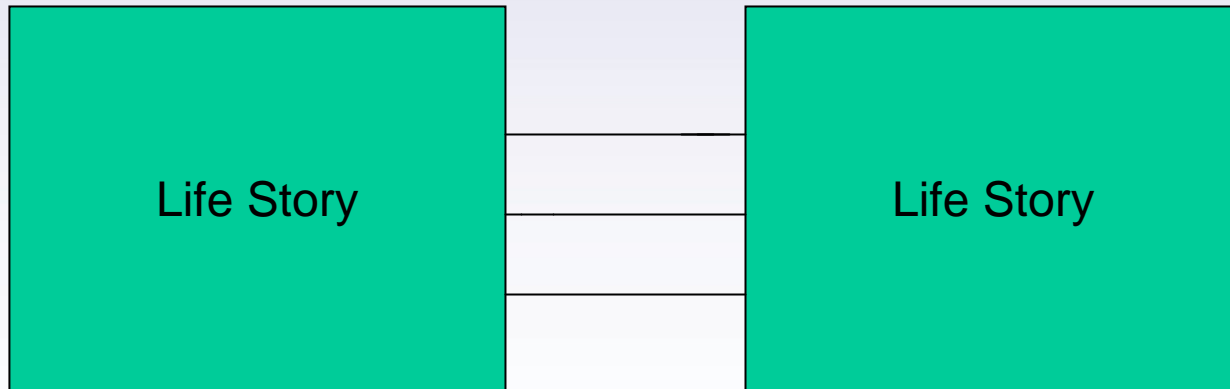
**HEART**

**SOUL**

**BODY**



# Before and After



~~Traumatic Event~~

# Cancer

Is a traumatic, horrifying experience (not unlike a terrorist attack, plane crash, war, rape, kidnapping).

Leaves one feeling:

Disoriented

That life is out of control

That you are in a state of limbo

That life is uncertain, unpredictable

That you are entering the unknown





“Before cancer, our lives were based on an admittedly absurd and absolutely human assumption: we were immortal.”

Halvorson-Boyd & Hunter



# Vacillating Emotions

Anger and resentment

Depression

Embarrassment and shame

Gratitude and love

Guilt and blame

Joy and happiness

Sadness and grief

Fear

Magee & Scalzo (2006)



“One day you may feel cheated, the next grateful to be alive. One day may bring feelings of confidence; with the next comes feelings of despair.”

in Magee & Scalzo



# The Physical

Chronic pain or numbness

Fatigue

Sleep disturbance

Sexual dysfunction

Disfiguring scars

Incontinence

Weight gain or loss

Mouth or teeth problems

Colostomy bag

Artificial voice box

Loss of a breast or breasts

Memory/concentration concerns



# Cancer is a Life Crisis



# Crisis

~~Shock~~

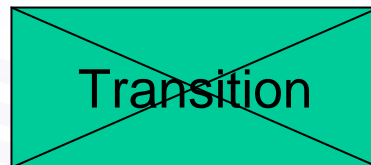
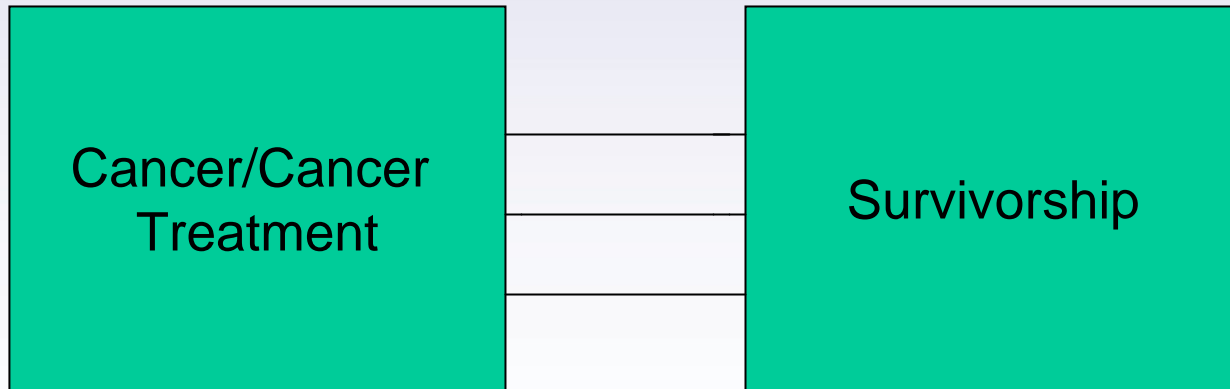
Reorientation

Reaction

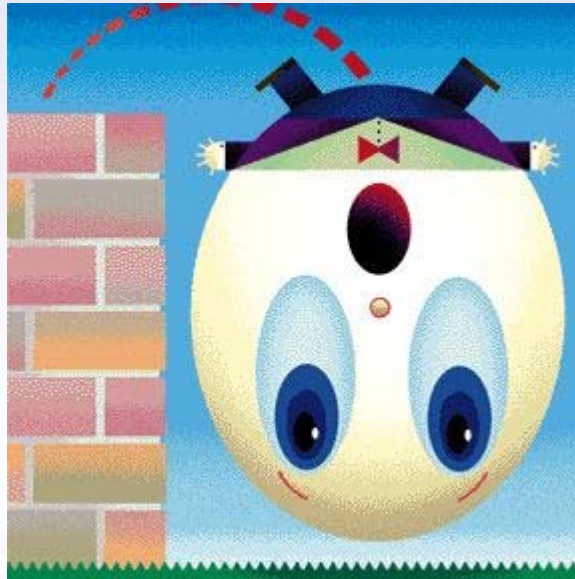
Work Through



# Transition and Integration



**We cannot put ourselves back  
together in the same old way.**



**“The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.”**

Mohammad Ali



# The Existential and The Spiritual

“A heightened awareness of mortality and death is typically evoked in persons diagnosed with cancer. But rather than be a wholly traumatic experience, cancer can signal a life transition offering the possibility of both positive and negative psychosocial outcomes.”

“Many people diagnosed with cancer describe personal growth consequences of their illness experience. Those impacted by challenging life events like cancer often perceive associated benefits such as improved relationships, greater appreciation of life, and increased resilience.”

A cancer diagnosis may actually provoke patients to initiate an inner quest for greater clarity and a renewed sense of meaning and purpose.”

In Feuerstein (2007)



**“This is the first day of the rest of  
my life—I better get it right.**

RyLee Madison



A large pile of unsorted, multi-colored puzzle pieces scattered on a light-colored surface. The pieces are in various colors including blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple, and white. A yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Picking up the Pieces: How Do I Recover; How do I Heal?".

Picking up the Pieces: How Do I Recover; How do I Heal?

# It's About Choices

Fear-Based Choices ..... Purpose-Based Choices

Magee & Scalzo



# Four Phase Process of Recovery

- The Inquiry Phase—Recovering a sense of Self
- The Discovery Phase—Recovering a sense of control
- The Growth Phase—Recovering a sense of meaning
- The Reflection Phase—Recovering a sense of the future

Magee & Scalzo



# Four Approaches to Healing

- **The Physical Approach** .... Managing side effects. addressing aches and pains. The complements. Taking charge of your physical health. You are what you eat. Move your body. Leisure activities. Stress management. A healing environment.
- **The Connected Approach** .... Connect with yourself. Reconnecting with others. Support groups. Professional support. Social Support. Reconnecting with a higher power.
- **The Creative Approach** .... Writing. Music. Cooking. Visual Arts.
- **The Contributing Approach**

Magee & Scalzo



# Personalized Healing Plan

Magee & Scalzo



# My Healing Plan

I want to focus my healing on:

**Intentions**

**Actions**



# I want to focus my healing on ... *my physical health.*

## Intentions

1. To improve my immune system
2. To improve my physical strength and increase my energy

## Actions

1. Start dietary changes—eliminate sugar, caffeine and alcohol, and add one more fruit and/or vegetable to each meal.
  2. Begin taking anti-oxidant vitamins and supplements.
  3. Work with traditional Chinese medicine doctor.
- 
1. Exercise in gym 3x/week for 45 minutes; begin weight training, stretching and 15 minutes of aerobics.
  2. Go to bed by 10 pm to get eight hours of sleep.

I want to focus my healing efforts on ...  
*rekindling my passion and sense of purpose  
through creativity*

### **Intentions**

1. To reconnect with myself  
through art

### **Actions**

1. Daily journal writing to  
explore feelings.
2. Make time to paint  
3x/week.
3. Take daily walks with my  
dog by the ocean to  
stimulate my creative  
spirit.



I want to focus my healing efforts on ...  
*connecting with my emotions, with my family  
and with God.*

## **Intentions**

1. To address my emotional volatility and mood swings
2. To spend more time with my family
3. To find a church and become an active member

## **Actions**

- See a psychiatrist or counsellor.
  - Work for 30 minutes each day in the garden.
1. Be home for dinner 4x/week.
  2. Spend some alone time with each son.
1. Meet with the clergy of three local churches, attend services, meet members of the congregation and make a commitment to join one.



*... physical healing and connecting with others to get the support I need.*

## **Intentions**

1. To start a pain management regime
2. To improve my body image
1. To make peace with my losses

## **Actions**

1. Get a referral from my GP to a pain specialist.
2. Investigate the local pain clinic.
1. Attend a yoga class 3x/week.
2. Speak with a sexuality counsellor.
1. Join a support group.
2. Start a grief journal.



**“Surviving cancer is a big deal: a big, wonderful, horrible, important, mundane, crazy, sad, and joyous long-running event.”**

Judy (cancer survivor) in Halvoson-Boyd & Hunter



Choose life—only that and always, and at whatever risk. To let life leak out, to let it wear away by the mere passage of time, to withhold giving it and spreading it, is to choose nothing.

Sister Helen Kelley



# Q & A

