

# **The Psychology of a Prostate Cancer diagnosis**

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# Objectives

- 1. Identify the phases that you might go through when diagnosed with prostate cancer
- 2. Outline the psychological impact through each of the stages
- 3. Identify coping mechanisms

# Phase One of Prostate Cancer

## Diagnosis:

- PSA
- Digital rectal exam
- Biopsy

Emotions: shock, denial, anger.

Task: processing information, sharing the news.

# Phase Two of Prostate Cancer Treatment Decision:

- Radical Prostatectomy
- Radiation
- Hormone Therapy
- Chemotherapy
- High Intensity Focused Ultrasound
- Cryotherapy
- Active Surveillance

Emotions: confused, overwhelmed, scared.

Tasks: information gathering, decision making.



# Phase Three of Prostate Cancer Treatment Process

Emotions: mortality and other anxieties,  
relieved, resigned, stressed.

Tasks: staying calm, accepting the patient role.

# Phase Four of Prostate Cancer

## Convalescence and Recovery

Possible Side effects: Erectile Dysfunction,  
Incontinence

Worries about Family and Work

Emotions: shaken, fragile, vulnerable, anxious

Tasks: absorbing the impact, accepting emotions, dealing with side effects, managing family and caregivers.



# Phase Five of Prostate Cancer

## Living with Cancer / Fear of Re-occurrence

Emotions: relief, anticipatory anxiety, grief for what is lost, gratitude.

Tasks: healthy living, accepting “new normal”.

# Coping Mechanism One

- **Manage your Anxiety:**
  - Distinguish between useful versus useless worrying
  - Delaying worrying
  - Exhalations
  - Normalize
  - Seek support

# Coping Mechanism Two

## Make Friends with your Emotions

- Accept the frailties of being human
- Be non judgmental of your own emotions
- Turn self pity into self compassion
- Seek out support

# Coping Mechanism Three

## Stay in the Present

- Be here now.
- Don't react to news you have not had yet.
- Find small pockets of pleasure daily
- Mindful meditation

# Coping Mechanism Four

## Examine your own Theories

- Look at how you are making meaning of what is happening to you
- Seek out psychotherapy?

# Coping Mechanism Five

## Be mindful of your Partner and Family

- Reciprocal caring
- Intimacy
- The importance of communication

# Coping Mechanism Six

**Mourn your losses,  
Celebrate what Remains.**

- Mourn what you have lost
- Stay open to new possibilities

# Conclusion

- Gratitude?
- Moving beyond prostate cancer.