

Coping with Body Image and Sexuality Concerns

Focus on Head and Neck Cancers
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Workshop Goals

- o Regarding body image and sexuality
 - o To bring attention
 - o To offer suggestions
 - o To help you talk with others



Workshop Topics

- o Issues in body image
- o Issues in sexuality
- o Coping with emotions
- o Coping with body image
- o Coping with sexuality



Head and Neck Cancer

- o Relatively rare cancer
 - o About 5 % of all cancers
- o Common emotional experience
 - o Affects body image
 - o Affects sexuality
 - o Affects communication



Definitions

- o Body Image

- o The way a person thinks about his or her body and how it looks to others

- o National Cancer Institute, 2007

- o Sexuality

- o Feelings about one's body, the need for touch, interest in sexual activity, communication of one's sexual needs to a partner, and the ability to engage in satisfying sexual activities

- o Thaler-DeMers, 2001



Body Image

- o Body image affects many parts of your life
- o Head and neck cancer is not easily hidden
- o Head and neck cancer changes appearance and function
- o Changes are short-term and long-term



Impact on Body Image

- o Wounds and scarring
- o Surgical reconstruction
- o Tracheotomy/Laryngectomy
- o Dental extractions/Prostheses
- o Feeding tubes
- o Weight changes
- o Hair loss/skin changes
- o Lymphedema



Impact on Body Image

- o Changes in speaking
- o Changes in eating
- o Problems with mucus and saliva
- o Changes in vision, sense of smell and hearing



Impact on Body Image

- o Problems with tiredness and inactivity
- o Problems with odor and drainage
- o Changes in intimacy, sexual activity



Changes in Facial Appearance

- o Your face is
 - o First thing others see about you
 - o Reflection of what you think and feel
 - o How you communicate with others
 - o Connects you to your family
- o Head and neck cancer can
 - o Change the way your face looks
 - o Change the way you speak
 - o Change the way you eat



A Quote to Remember!

- o "I have tried to cultivate the art of wearing my new face with pride. Above all, my face has opened new doors in my understanding of life and people. I refuse to see it as a handicap."
 - o Partridges Changing Faces Group Member



Body Image

- o Internal body image
 - o Illness disrupts our sense of self
- o External body image
 - o Illness can change our appearance
- o Sexuality and body image
 - o Illness impacts
 - o Our sexual feelings
 - o Our need for touch
 - o Our need for sexual activity



Impact on Emotions

- o Losses

- o Function
- o Activity
- o Relationships
- o Employment

- o Fears

- o Cancer diagnosis
- o Treatment and side effects
- o Future and prognosis



Your Emotional Reactions

- o You might feel:
 - o Anxious
 - o Depressed
 - o Lower self esteem
 - o Socially awkward
- o You might have:
 - o Sexual difficulties
 - o Difficulty with relationships
 - o Difficulty with work



Impact on Family

- o Fearing diagnosis and prognosis
- o Feeling effects in jobs, activities
- o Seeing changes in interaction
- o Feeling emotionally upset



Impact on Family

- o Dealing with treatment
- o Managing activity restrictions
- o Wondering about future
- o Sexual relationship changes



Changes in Social Interactions

- o Changes in your face and body
 - o Can create
 - o Intrusion
 - o Stares
 - o Remarks
 - o Questions
 - o Laughter
 - o Ridicule
 - o Avoidance



Sexuality and Sex

- o Sexuality is part of normal life
- o Sexuality is part of quality of life
- o Sexual response includes
 - o Thinking response
 - o Emotional response
 - o Physical response



Sexuality and Sex

- o Sexuality includes
 - o Fantasy
 - o Arousal
 - o Orgasm
 - o Behavior
 - o Interest
 - o Satisfaction



Impact on Sexuality

- o Sexuality is connected to
 - o Body image
 - o Emotions
 - o Relationships
- o Head and neck cancer can change
 - o Your appearance
 - o Your sense of being attractive
 - o Your voice and sexual communication
 - o Your experience of sexuality



Impact on Sexuality

- o Head and neck cancer can cause
 - o You to feel distressed about your body
 - o You to have a negative self-image
 - o You to lose self esteem
 - o You to feel less attractive
 - o You to feel socially isolation or lonely
 - o You to feel like withdrawing



Problems That Affect Sexuality

- o Breathing problems
- o Odor and drainage
- o Hair loss
- o Nausea
- o Mouth problems
- o Pain and discomfort



Problems That Affect Sexuality

- o Weight changes
- o Fatigue
- o Depression
- o Anxiety
- o Alcohol/tobacco use



Impact on Your Partner

- o Head and neck cancer can affect
 - o Partner reactions
 - o Partner communication
 - o Sexual relationship
 - o Non-sexual intimacy



Impact on Fertility

- o Cancer treatment can cause
 - o Problems with ovary function
 - o Problems with menstruation
 - o Changes in sperm count
- o Ask about fertility before treatment
- o Request genetic counseling
 - o Genetic links to cancer
 - o Pregnancy after treatment



Adapting To Your New Body Image

- o Body image reintegration
 - o You work to reorganize your sense of self
 - o You work to know your new body image
 - o You achieve a new sense of unity in your body
 - o Dropkin and colleagues 1982



Positive Coping Strategies

- o Being creative
- o Trying to adapt
- o Being assertive
- o Taking initiative
- o Using social skills
- o Answering questions



Positive Coping Strategies

- o Trying counseling
- o Relying on prayer and spirituality
- o Getting involved
- o Making self care routine
- o Using humor



Positive Body Image Coping Strategies

- o Using accessories
- o Adapting your clothes
- o Changing your hairstyle
- o Growing a beard – men only!



Positive Body Image Coping Strategies

- o Look at yourself in the mirror
- o Spend time on caring for yourself
- o Groom yourself to feel attractive
- o Spend time with partner, friends
- o Leave your house for social time



Coping Strategies for Sexuality

- o Working on communication
- o Using non-sexual intimacy
 - o Work toward sexual intimacy
- o Getting treatment for depression
- o Getting treatment for anxiety



Coping Strategies for Sexuality

- Exploring individual/group psychotherapy
- Exploring sexual rehabilitation counseling
 - Helps develop communication
 - Teaches alternative ways to express intimacy
 - (The American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists)



Less Helpful Coping Strategies

- o Avoiding or denying
- o Being aggressive or angry
- o Using alcohol, tobacco, drugs
- o Pursuing unrealistic options
- o Withdrawing from family, friends



Resources

- o American Cancer Society
 - o www.cancer.org
 - o 800-ACS-2345
- o American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
 - o www.ent.org
 - o 703-836-4444
- o International Association of Laryngectomees
 - o www.larynxlink.com
- o Let's Face It
 - o Resources for patients with facial difference
 - o www.faceit.org
 - o 360-676-7325



Resources

- Oncology Nursing Society Resource on Cancer Symptoms
 - www.cancersymptoms.org
- Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer
 - www.spohnc.org
 - 800-377-0928
- WebWhispers-Support for Laryngectomees
 - www.webwhispers.org
- Yul Brynner Head and Neck Cancer Foundation
 - www.headandneck.org
 - 843-792-6624

Questions and Comments



Thank you!

