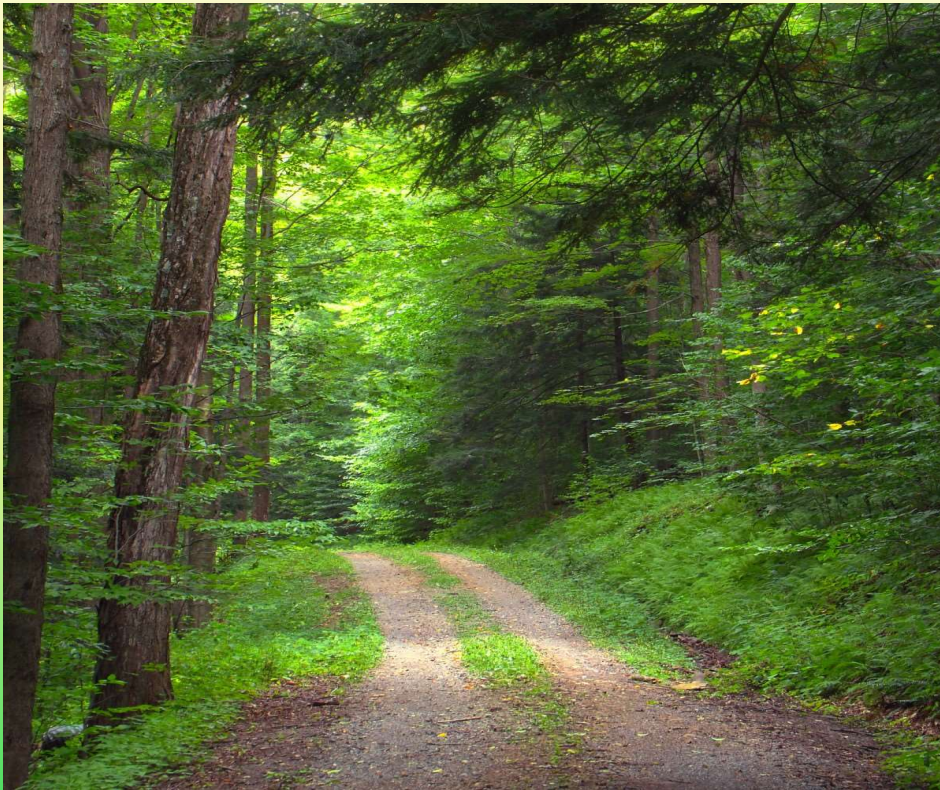


The Road Back to Happiness



Kay Ryan, Ph.D., RN
Co-Founder, ***A Time to Heal***



Objectives

- 1. Examine current research findings about the positive impact of happiness on longevity among cancer survivors.
- 2. Describe practical evidence-based strategies for increasing health and happiness along the survivorship journey.
- 3. Demonstrate a simple practice intervention documented to improve positive affect and increase compassion.

What is Happiness?

- “Positive Affect”
- Definitions are individual
 - Born with it?
 - Moment in time?
 - Lifelong pursuit?
 - Comes and goes?
 - Conditions?
 - YOU?



Cancer Survivorship

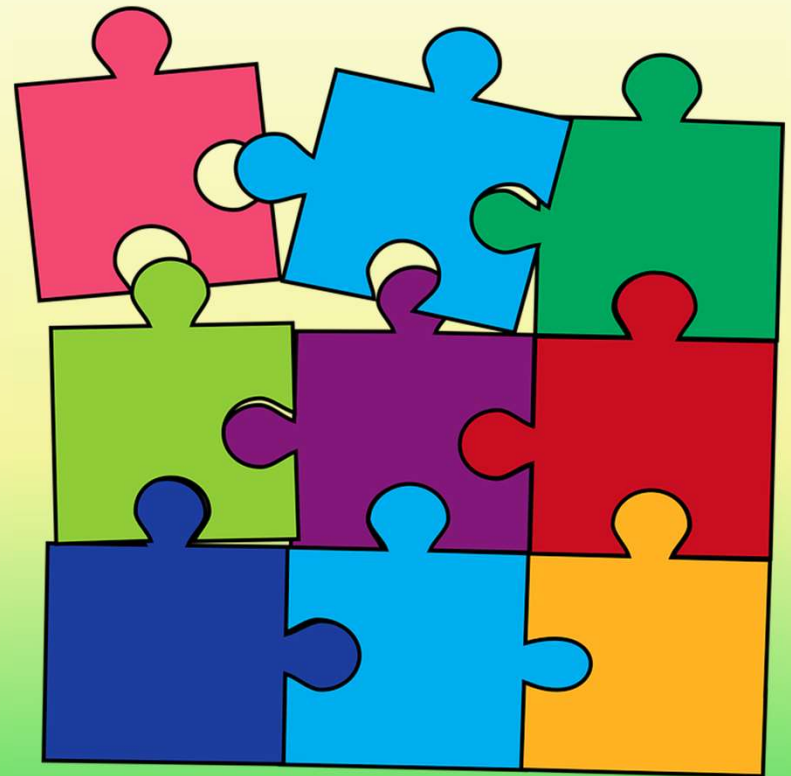
- Began with a cancer diagnosis
- SO MANY CHANGES
- Symptoms and Side Effects
- Worries and Fears
- Can I ever feel HAPPY again???



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Improving Health/Wellbeing in Survivorship

- Cancer & Treatment
- Symptoms & Side Effects
- *A Time to Heal (Survivorship 101)*
 - Relaxation and Stress Management
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Relationships
 - Spirituality
 - Expression
 - Mindfulness
 - Gratitude
 - **Happiness**



2025 World Happiness Report

CARING AND SHARING CAN MAKE US HAPPY!

- Feeling and Being CARED ABOUT/CARED FOR
- Benevolence (CARING) = double impact
- “People are too pessimistic about the benevolence of others”
- In the US, more people are eating alone

The Research on mental health, emotions and traits on Cancer Survival

Past Research Directions

- Negative mental health
- Negative affect
- Depression

Newer Directions

- Positive mental health
- Positive affect
- Optimism
- Happiness



Happy Thus Survivor?

A systematic review on
the association between cancer survival and positive states,
emotions, and traits (Psycho-Oncology 2023;32:1631-1643)



Findings: **WOW**!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



("Happy, Thus Survivor.... Psycho-Oncology 2023;32:1631-1643)



“This study reveals that, to the best of currently available knowledge, **POSITIVE AFFECT SUCH AS HAPPINESS, WELLBEING, or OPTIMISM** constitute protective prognostic factors regarding mortality and **HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON SURVIVAL DURATION IN CANCERS.**”

Bottom Line:

Creating the most healing environment for cancer survivors

MUST INCLUDE BOTH:

- Addressing the negative
- Promoting what is (or could be) positive



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Hardwiring Happiness... (Dr. Rick Hanson, 2013, New York: Harmony Books)

1. Our brains are “wired” by experiences*****

2. Neuroplasticity

3. Positive emotions → HAPPINESS

4. Rewiring with experiences:

- Have
- Enrich
- Absorb
- Link



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Remember “caring and sharing makes us happy”?

- **Have**
- **Enrich**
- **Absorb**
- **Link**



Other Happiness practices

1. AFFIRMATIONS: I am happy!
2. Alternative Mirrors
3. Finding your “heart space”
4. Daily Practices
 1. Gratitude
 2. Mindfulness
 3. Lovingkindness Practice



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Summary

- Life isn't easy
- Survivorship can be a very difficult journey
- Happiness?
- “Caring and sharing” can make people happy
- Happiness is good for you!!!
- Neuroplasticity – your brain can be hardwired for happiness
- Practices for Happiness



The Practice of Lovingkindness



- Metta
- “A quality of the heart that wishes well for self and others” (Sharon Salzberg)
 - “You don’t have to like others or let them move in but realize that if their heart was “better”, they might cause less harm!”
- Simple repetition, passive attitude, offering...
- Positive effects on affect and compassion
- Research: 2024 Meta-analysis, Petrovic, et al.,

Lovingkindness

- May I be SAFE
 - May I be HAPPY
 - May I be HEALTHY
 - May I LIVE WITH EASE.
-
- May YOU be safe
 - May YOU be happy
 - May YOU be healthy
 - May you live with ease



May my loved ones be safe
May they be happy
May they be healthy
May they live with ease

May those who are struggling be safe
May they be happy
May they be healthy
May they live with ease

May all people and all creatures be safe
May they be happy
May they be healthy
May they live with ease

The MOST Important

By Henry James

- Three things in life are important:
- The first is to be kind
- The second is to be kind
- And the third is to be kind



THANKYOU
for ALL you do!!

Bedankt

Gracias

Obrigado!

Vielen
Dank

Thank You

Köszönettel

Díky

תודה

Hvala

Grazie

Ευχαριστώ

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