

STEPS THROUGH COVID-19



Objectives

Address Mental & Emotional Health Challenges: Gyn Cancer & COVID-19

- Present Context for Experience
- Offer Specific Coping Tools
- Provide Resources for Support

Physical and Emotional Realities of Pandemic



The Crisis of COVID-19:

Pandemic initiates upheaval and rapid change in lifestyle for people across globe, creating health & financial crises



COVID-19

The Crisis of Cancer:

Gyn cancer diagnosis creates personal upheaval and rapid change in lifestyle & may be experienced as family crisis



**Gyn
Cancer**

Similarities

**Gyn
Cancer**

**COVID-
19**

Challenges

**Gyn
Cancer**

COVID-19

Physical and Emotional Realities

Physical Challenges

- Diagnosis
- Surgery
- Treatment
- Hospital Resources
- Community Resources
- Virus Risk

Emotional Challenges

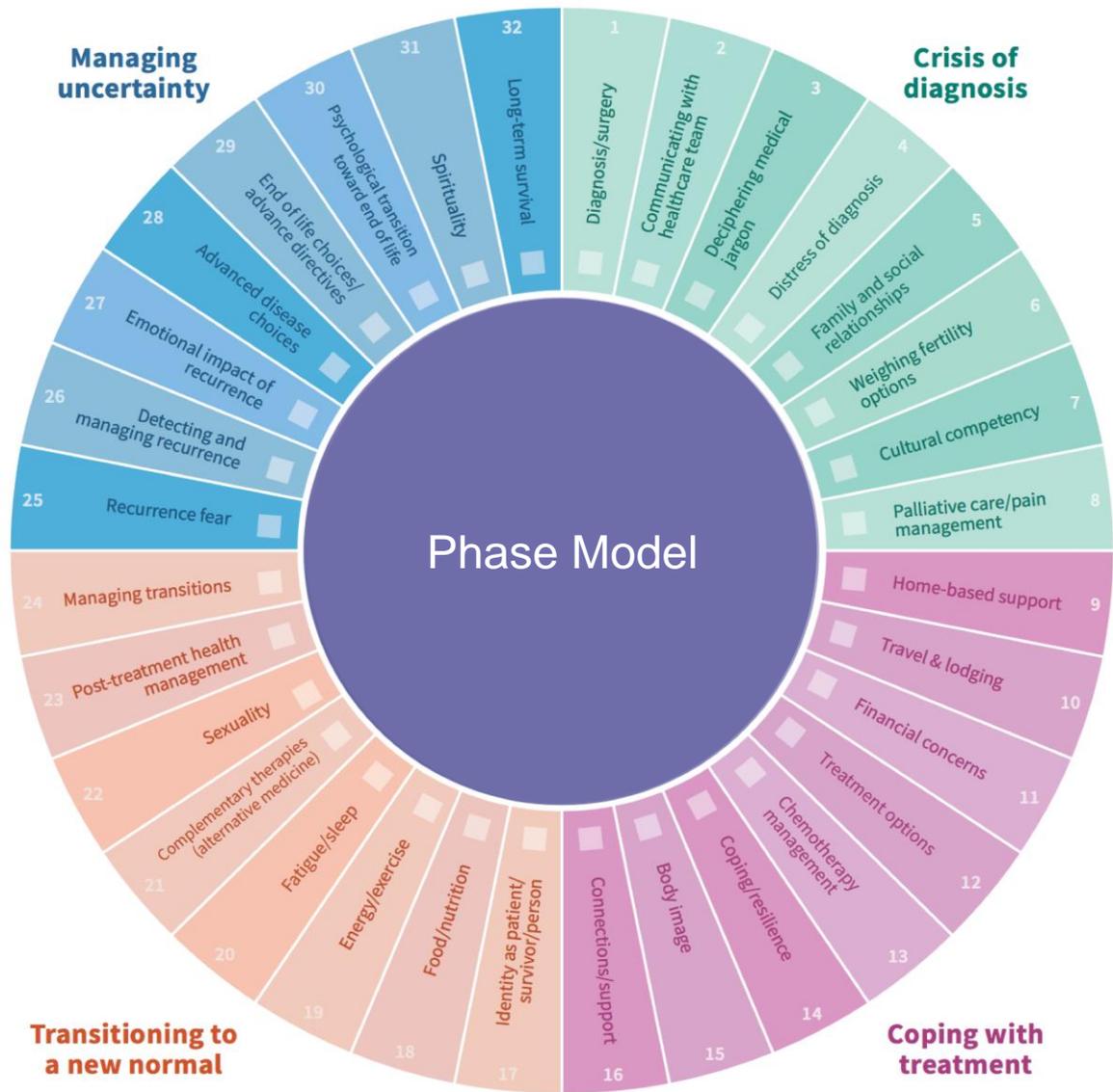
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Anger
- Stress
- Loneliness
- Sadness
- Depression

Psychosocial Support Parallels Pandemic



My OC Coordinates[®]

A phase model of the ovarian cancer experience



Phase Model of Psychosocial Support

1. Crisis of diagnosis

2. Coping with treatment

3. Transition to new normal

4. Managing uncertainty

Phase Model Variations

Crisis of
diagnosis

Coping with
treatment

Transition to
new normal

Managing
uncertainty

- Each arena requires different coping skills
- Phases experienced differently depending on diagnosis and course of treatment
- Not always experienced in order
- Cycle often repeated after recurrence

Phase Model Parallels Pandemic

1. Crisis Phase

shut down, medical overwhelm

2. Treatment Phase

testing, tracing, vaccine

3. Transition Phase

loss of old, adjust to new

4. Managing Phase

live fully, ongoing risk

Overwhelm and Mental Health

- Overwhelming to process all phases at once: crisis, treatment, transitioning, management
- Address one phase at a time
- History of trauma, substance abuse requires additional support
- Mental health diagnosis: stay in close touch with psychologist/psychiatrist
- Build coping skills one at a time

Phase Model of Coping Skills



Emotional Experience and Flashpoint Concerns



Flashpoint Concerns of Crisis Phase

Anxiety of
hospital-based risks

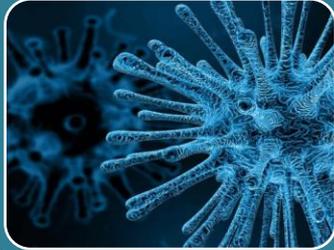
Sadness of increased
social distancing

Crisis Phase
Cancer & COVID-19

Worry about limited
access to doctor

Fear over virus
outcomes

Emotions of Cancer & COVID-19



Fear

- Anxiety
- Stress and Traumatic Stress



Sadness

- Sorrow
- Depression



Isolation

- Loneliness
- Uncertainty

Emotional Concerns Common To GYN Cancer

Worry about discussing illness with loved ones

Sadness and grieving “former self”

Scan anxiety

Fear of recurrence

Uncertainty about the future

Finding meaning in life

Facing mortality

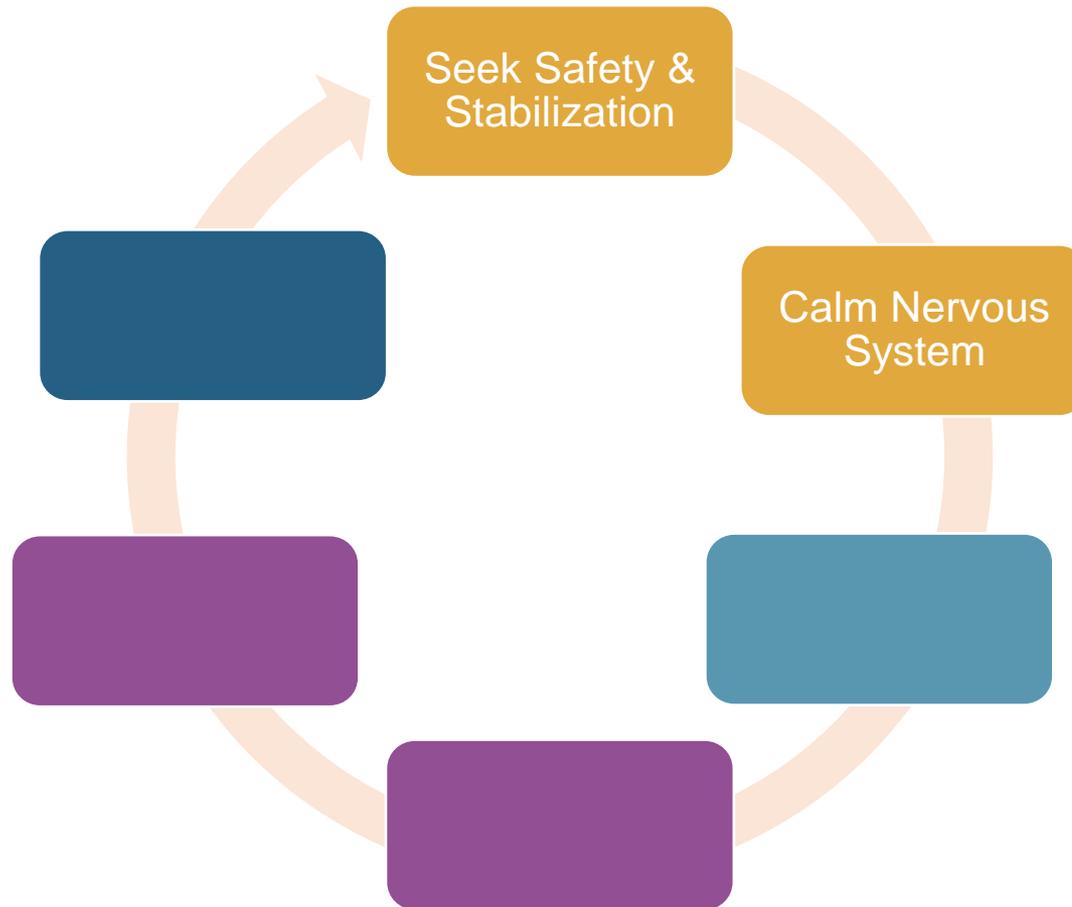
Strengthening Coping Skills



Step 1: Crisis Phase

Addressing Fear, Stress and Traumatic Stress

Crisis Phase: Coping Skills



Seek Safety & Stabilization

SAFETY

Cancer

- Acquire best medical information and care possible

Coronavirus

- Listen to and follow advice of trusted medical experts

STABILIZATION

Cancer

- Obtain concrete treatment plan from doctor and make plans for lifestyle changes ahead

Coronavirus

- Decide on concrete plan for social distancing, acquire life essentials and maintain healthy routines

Traumatic Stress

Shock and Disbelief

Abrupt mood swings and intensity

Forgetfulness

Reduced ability to deal with ordinary stress

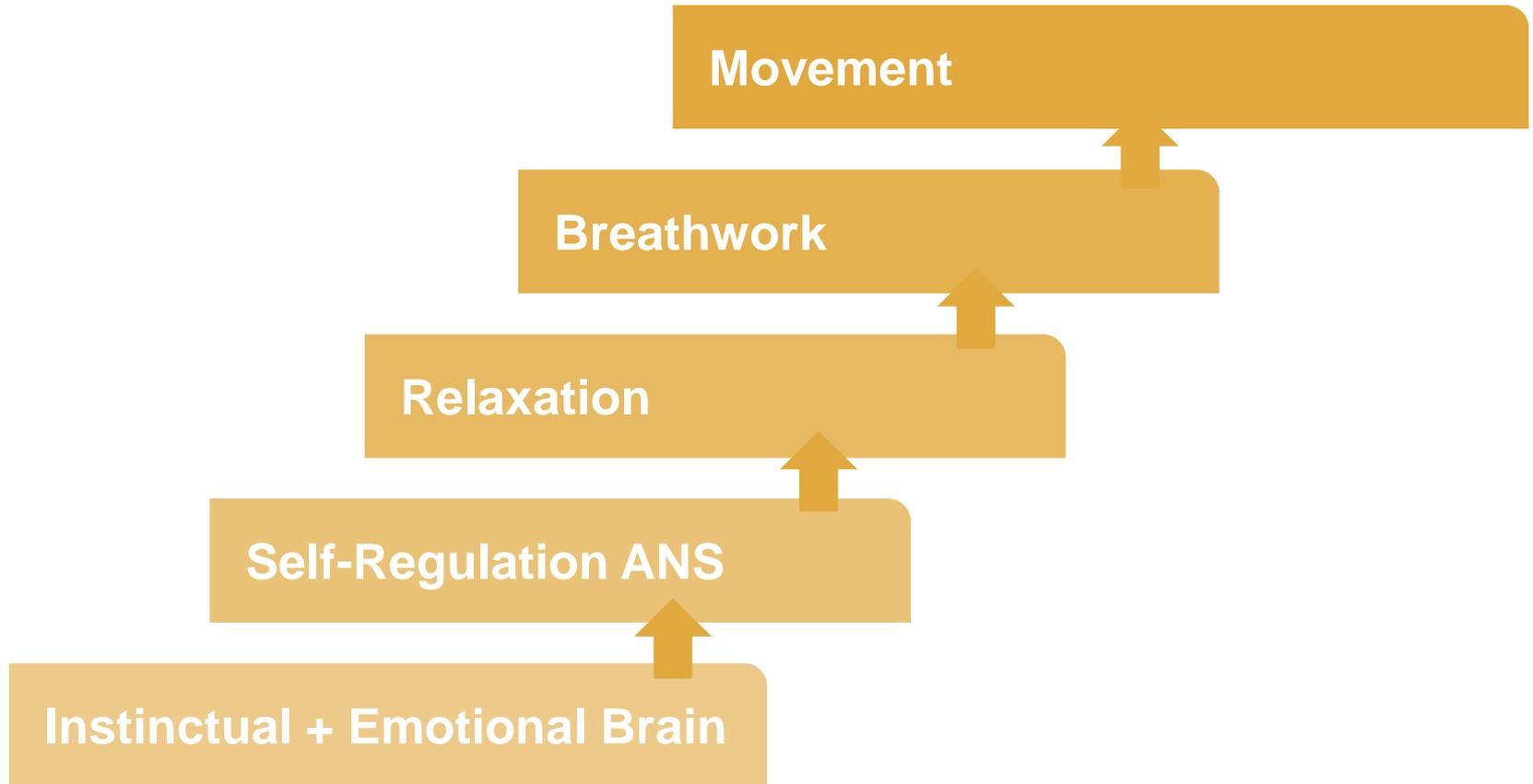
Difficulty sleeping

Mental
“Spaciness”

Helplessness

Fear of dying

Calm Nervous System: Body-Centered



Exercise: Crisis Phase

Breath & Movement

Exercise: Breath & Movement

From sitting or standing position, imagine warm sunlight streaming into your heart. Raise arms overhead, palms together, and imagine sunlight circling around and through heart space. Take a deep breath in and out with palms together overhead. Move hands down to top of head, clasp hands behind head and take another deep breath in and out, stretching chest. Move hands, palms together, down to heart and take a deep breath in with sunlight, breathing light out. Release arms to sides, shake arms and body, releasing stress and tension out through hands and fingers

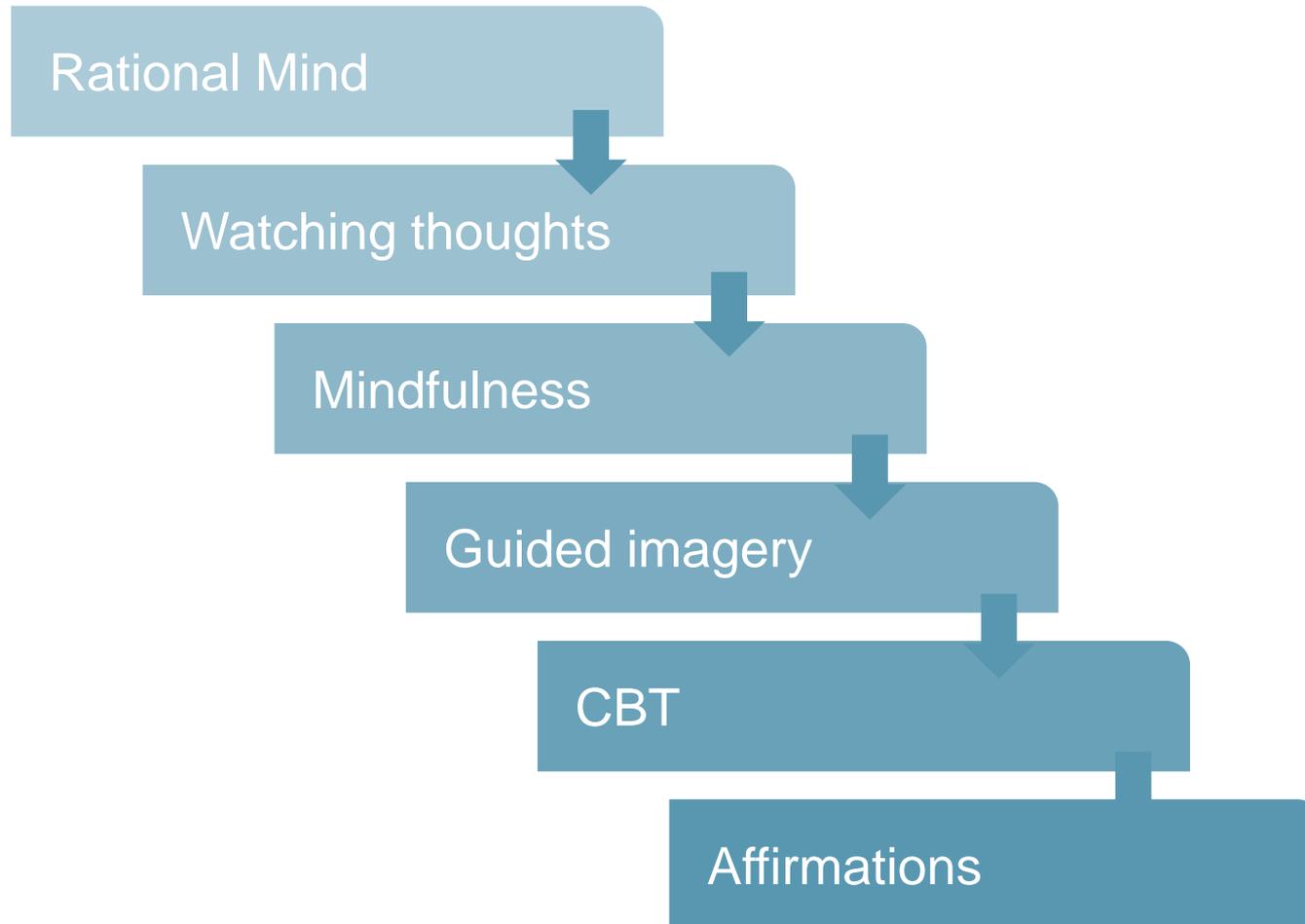
Step 2: Treatment Phase

Addressing Anxiety

Treatment Phase: Coping Skills



Watch Thoughts: Mind-Centered



Awareness & Resilience

Shift from thinking to awareness of present moment

Shift from rapid breathing to deep breathing

Shift from muscle contraction to relaxation

Shift from anger to kindness

Shift from fear to hope

Exercise: Treatment Phase

Mindful Awareness

Exercise: Mindful Awareness

Upon Arising: Notice first thought that comes into your head without judgement. Just whatever thought arises, notice it.

Noon: When stopped for lunch, notice what thoughts are in your head. What is the content of current flow of thoughts? Are they stressful? Are they calming? Gently interrupt flow, take a breath, notice what is happening in present moment.

At Bedtime: before going to sleep, visualize mind as open blue sky, with thoughts as clouds passing through open expanse. Identify with open blueness, awareness behind thoughts, not as thoughts themselves.

Step 3: Transition Phase

Addressing Sadness, Sorrow and Depression

Transition Phase: Coping Skills



Express Emotions

Accept all feelings and emotions without judgement

Recognize and mourn losses *

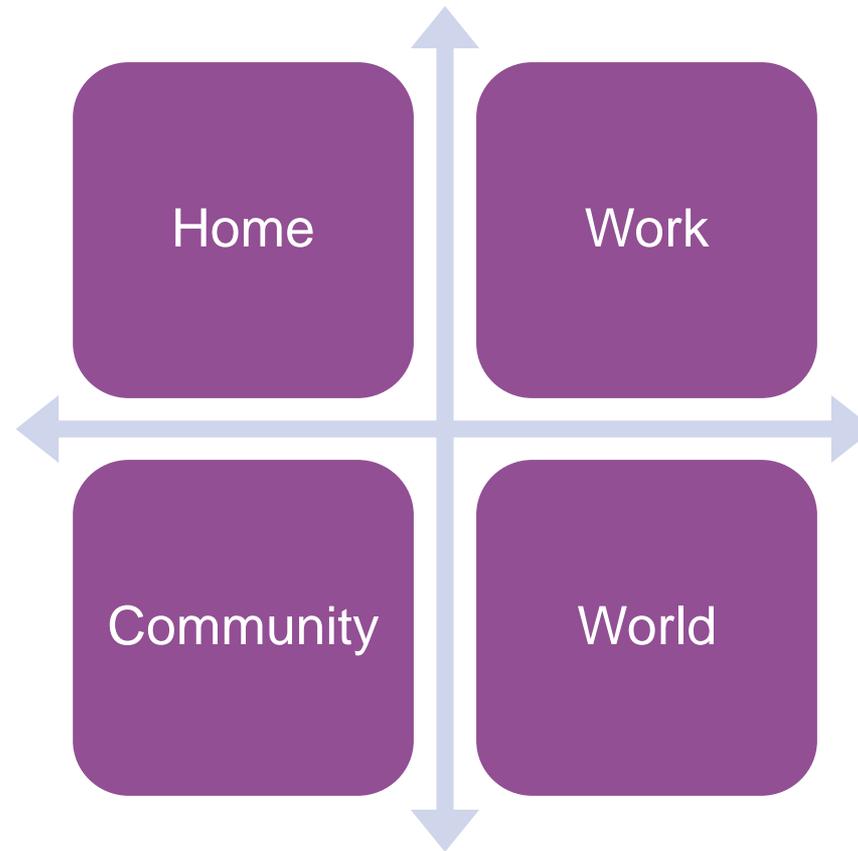
Use journaling to express deeper thoughts

Use music to match and release emotions

Use art for non-verbal expression

*Note: Check with your doctor about clinical depression if your sadness sits heavily all day...day after day. Grief moves in and out like weather; clinical depression sticks around and doesn't move.

Practice Gratitude



Exercise: Transition Phase

Journaling

Exercise: Journaling

- 1) Select piece of music that matches your mood. While listening to music, free write whatever feelings are present. Heavy emotions such as grief move like weather. Let storms and words move on through; feelings will not last forever.*
- 2) Before going to bed each night, write down four things grateful for that day. Areas for gratitude: home, work, community, world.

*Note: Check with your doctor about clinical depression if your sadness sits heavily all day...day after day. Grief moves in and out like weather; clinical depression sticks around and doesn't move.

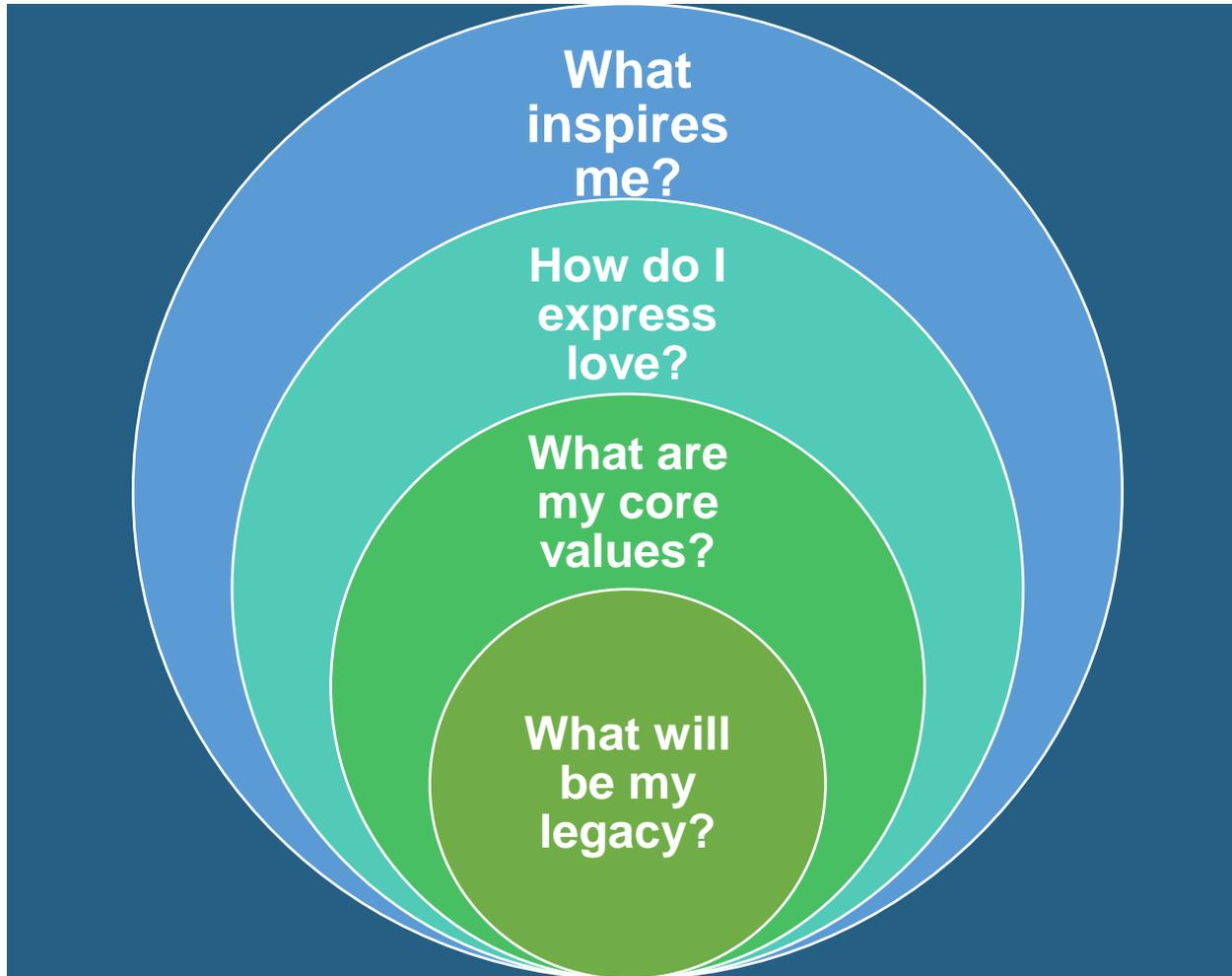
Step 4: Managing Phase

Addressing Isolation, Loneliness, Uncertainty

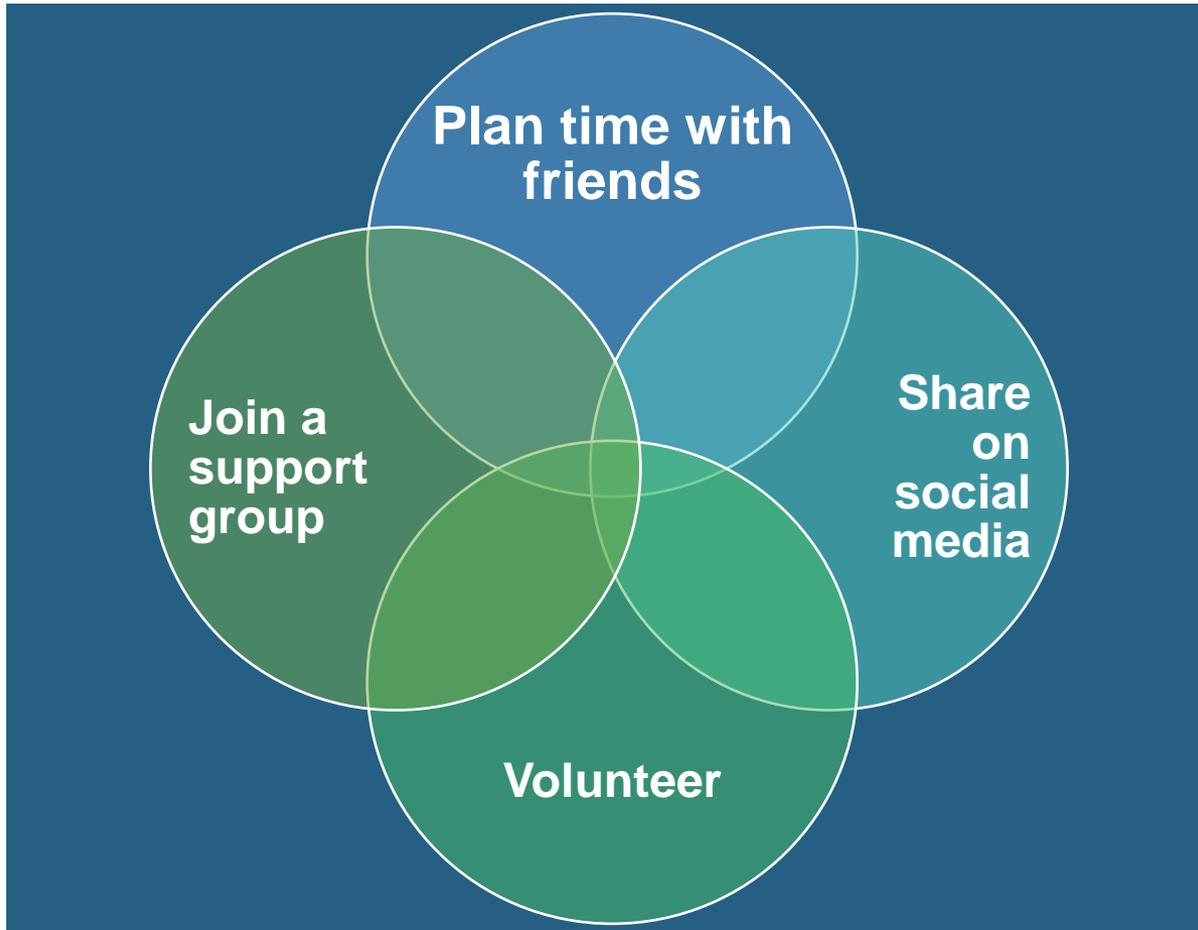
Managing Phase: Coping Skills



Discover Meaning



Meaningful Connection

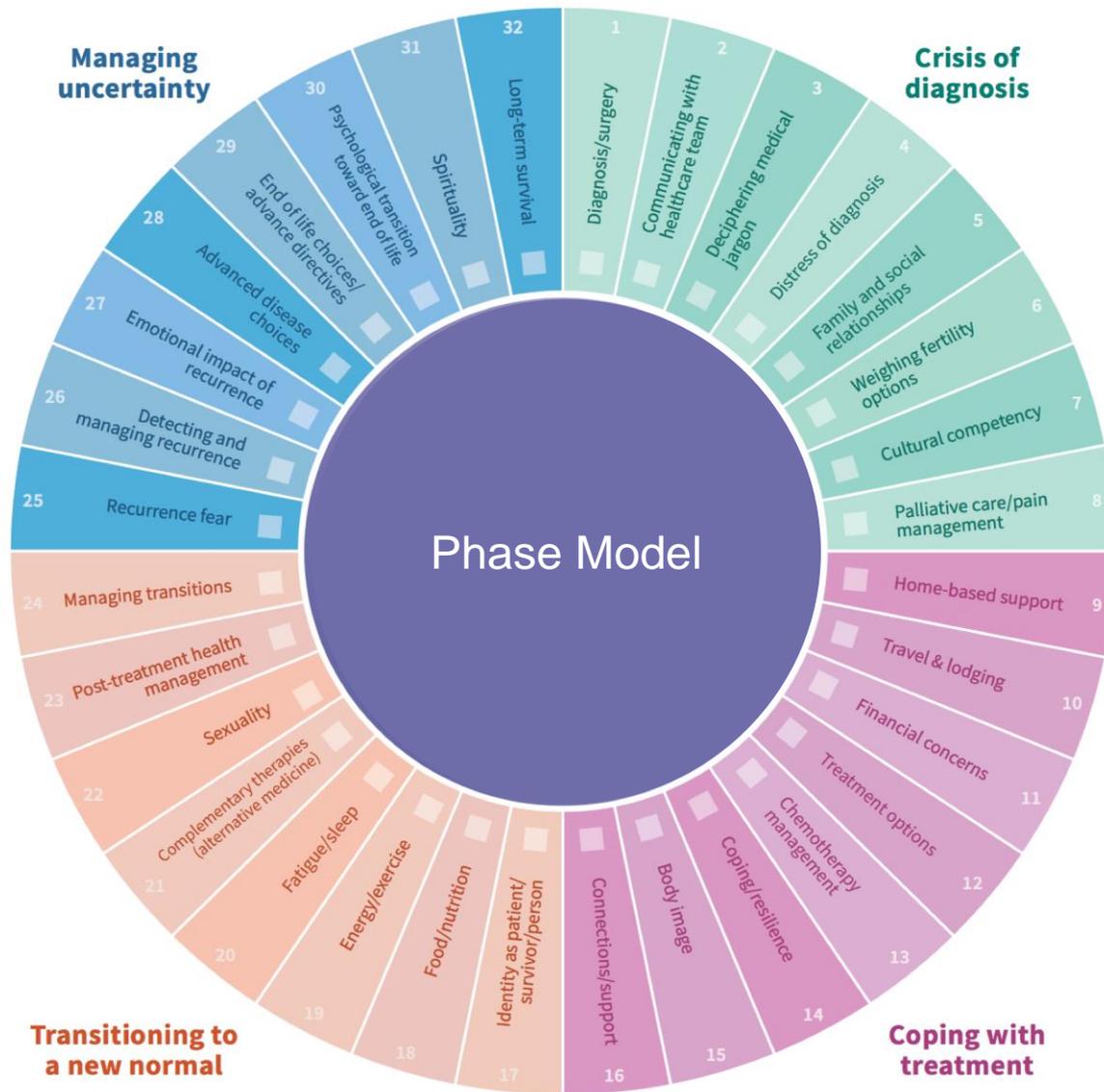


Exercise: Managing Phase

Legacy Timeline

Exercise: Legacy Timeline

- Take long piece of paper, or tape several sheets together, and draw long horizontal line across sheets.
- Draw vertical line at each decade. Draw triangle at times along line when a significant event occurred in life - difficult time or time of accomplishment.
- Once important events are marked, draw large circle above each triangle and write in lessons learned and strengths gained from event.
- Create list of strengths and values to develop as key aspects of life and legacy...the way you want to be remembered.



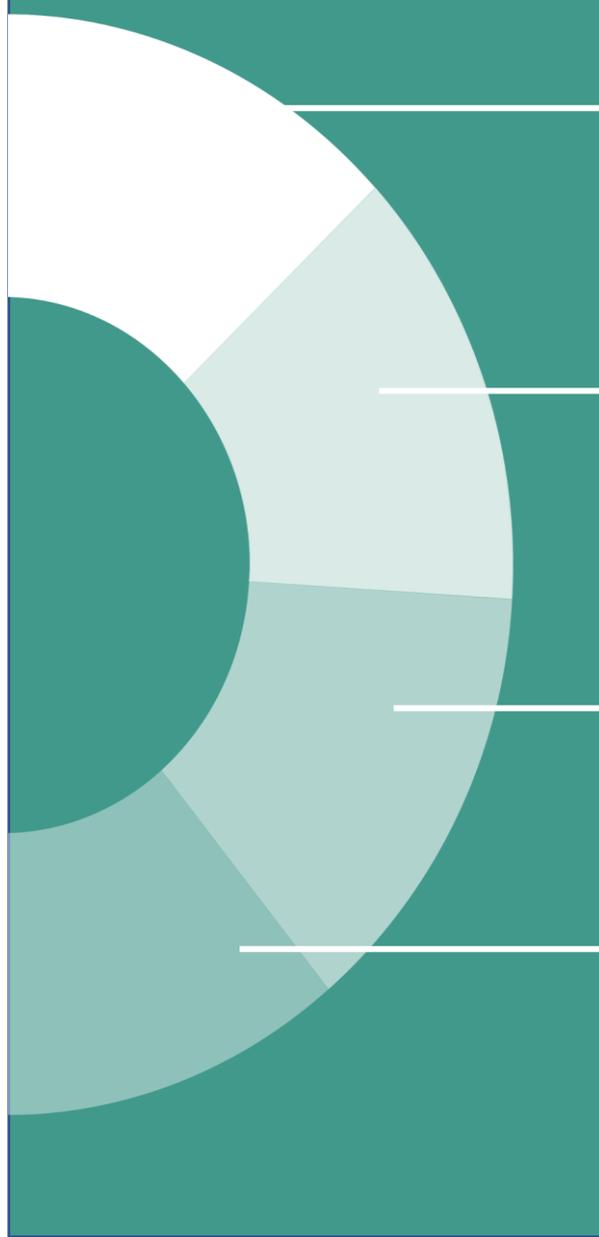
Accessing Online Psychosocial Support





STEPS THROUGH OC

SUPPORT FOR LIFE
WITH OVARIAN CANCER



OC Coordinates

assessment of concerns at initial self-registration

OC Counseling

assignment of a support professional for 10 sessions over 6 months

OC Education and resources provided as needed each session

OC ongoing support includes “Graduate Group”

Role in Gyn Cancer Ecosystem

We **augment** (not replace) health system and peer/group support

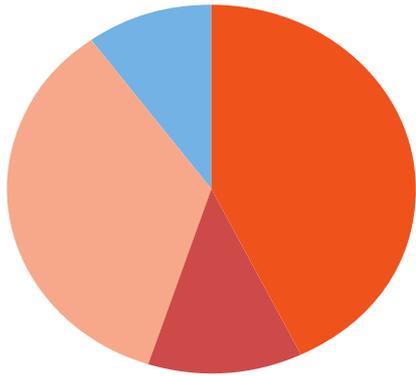
Quality of life improves—for patients **and** caregivers

Ambition: Professional support counseling becomes **model and standard of care** in survivorship plans

Participant Experience and Program Impact



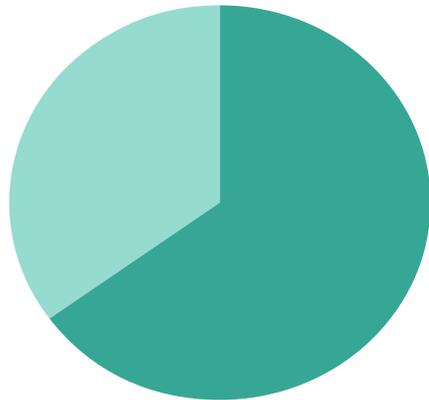
Participation



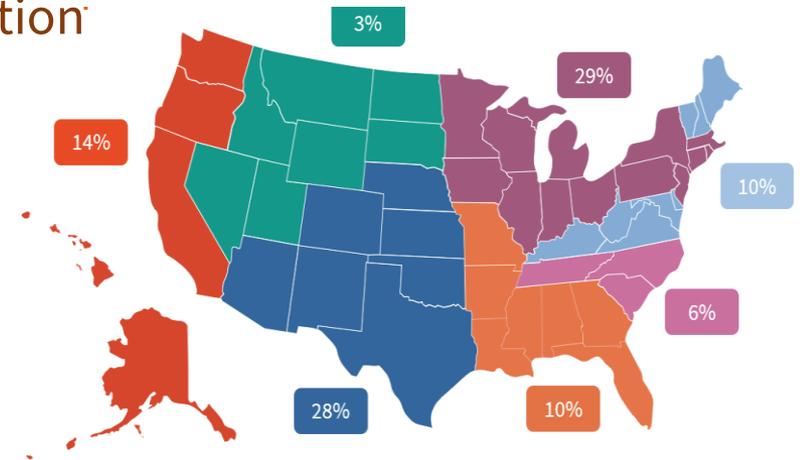
87% patients/survivors

- 44% in recurrence
- 17% newly diagnosed/frontline treatment
- 39% in remission/transition

13% caregivers



66% ages 50-69



Regions Grouped Per NCI Geographic Management of Health Disparities Program

Goals Addressed

Ease symptoms
and side effects

Boost confidence
in treatment
decisions

Strengthen female
self-advocacy

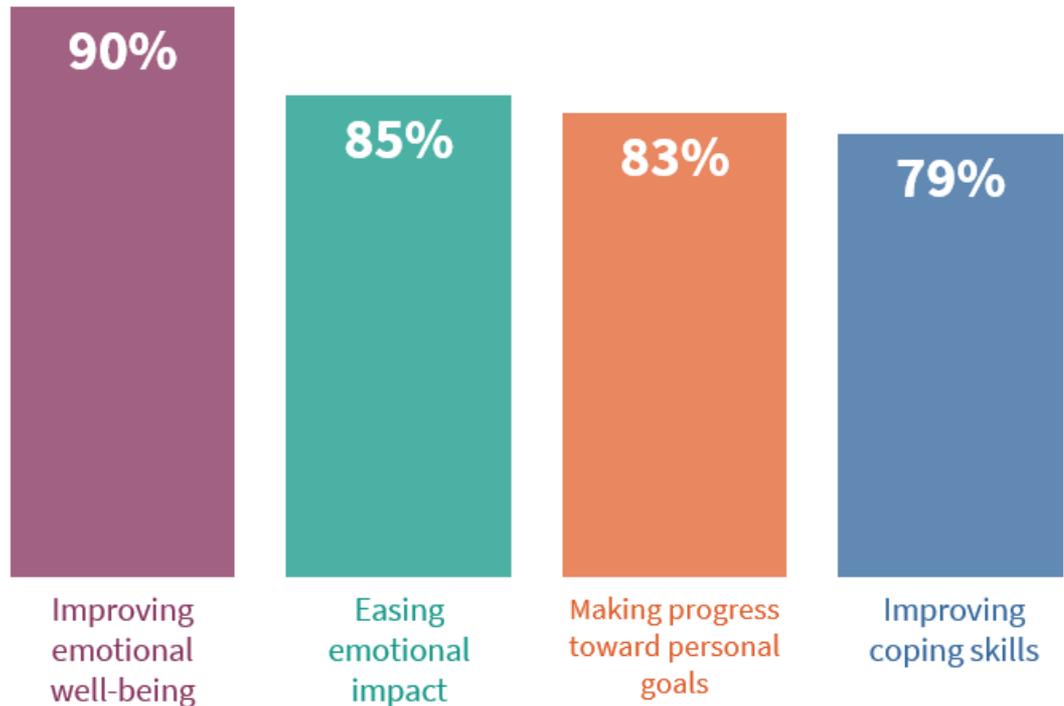
Reduce stress

Enhance coping and resilience

Participant Satisfaction

Steps Through OC is rated very/extremely helpful for:

90% of participants report they are “extremely satisfied” with their overall experience



Outcomes Evaluation

Improvements in:

Coping
Stress
Emotional Well-Being
Quality of Life

- Denial reduced
- Self-Blame decreased
- *Overall* Perceived Stress lessened
- Acceptance increased
- Use of Instrumental Support increased
- Positive Re-framing increased
- *Overall* Emotional, Social and Functional well-being improved
- *Overall* Quality of Life improved

Questions & Answers



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**STEPS
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**SUPPORT FOR LIFE
WITH OVARIAN CANCER**



Foundation for Women's Cancer

www.foundationforwomenscancer.org

