



For Better or Worse: Changing Relationships after Transplant

Celebrating a Second Chance at Life Survivorship Symposium

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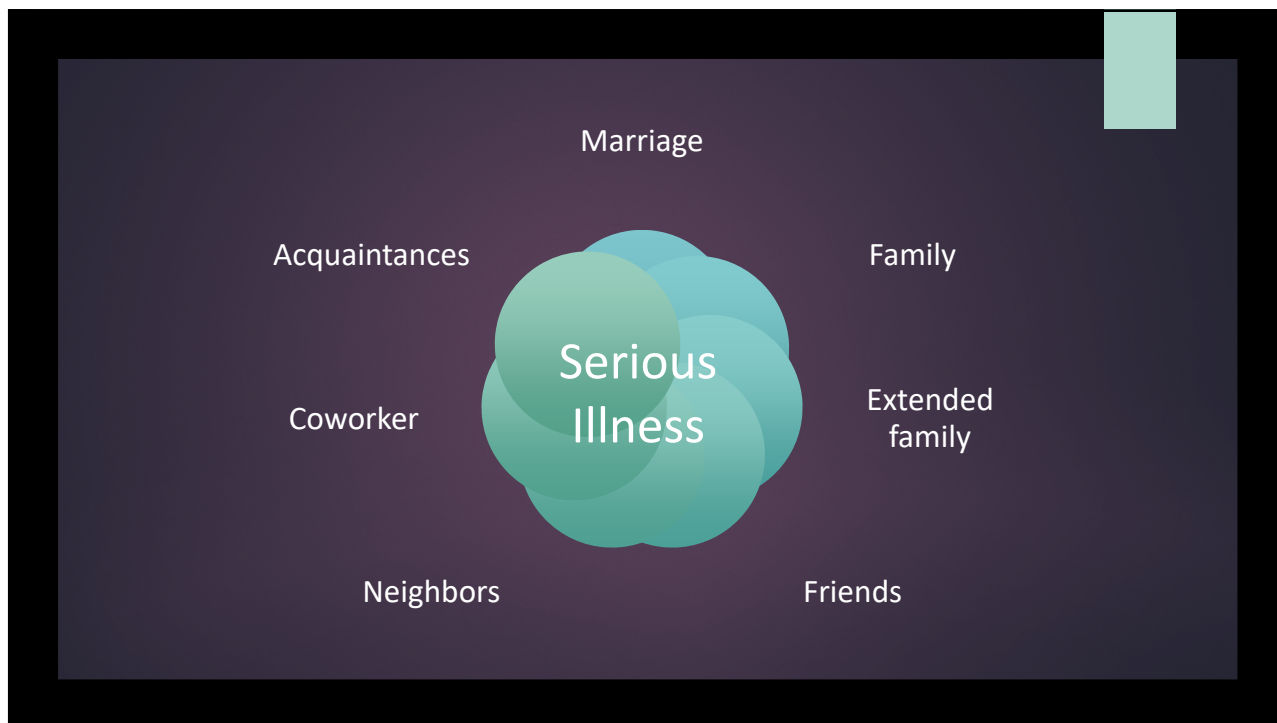
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**Topic Overview:
Transplants and
Relationships**

- ▶ Pre-transplant period is stressful, and can have an impact on patient/caregiver dyads.
- ▶ The transplant process can have lingering effects on relationships: marriages, friends, family, etc.
- ▶ This presentation is meant to review different types of relationships, how they may be affected, and how to resolve, overcome, or alleviate common problems

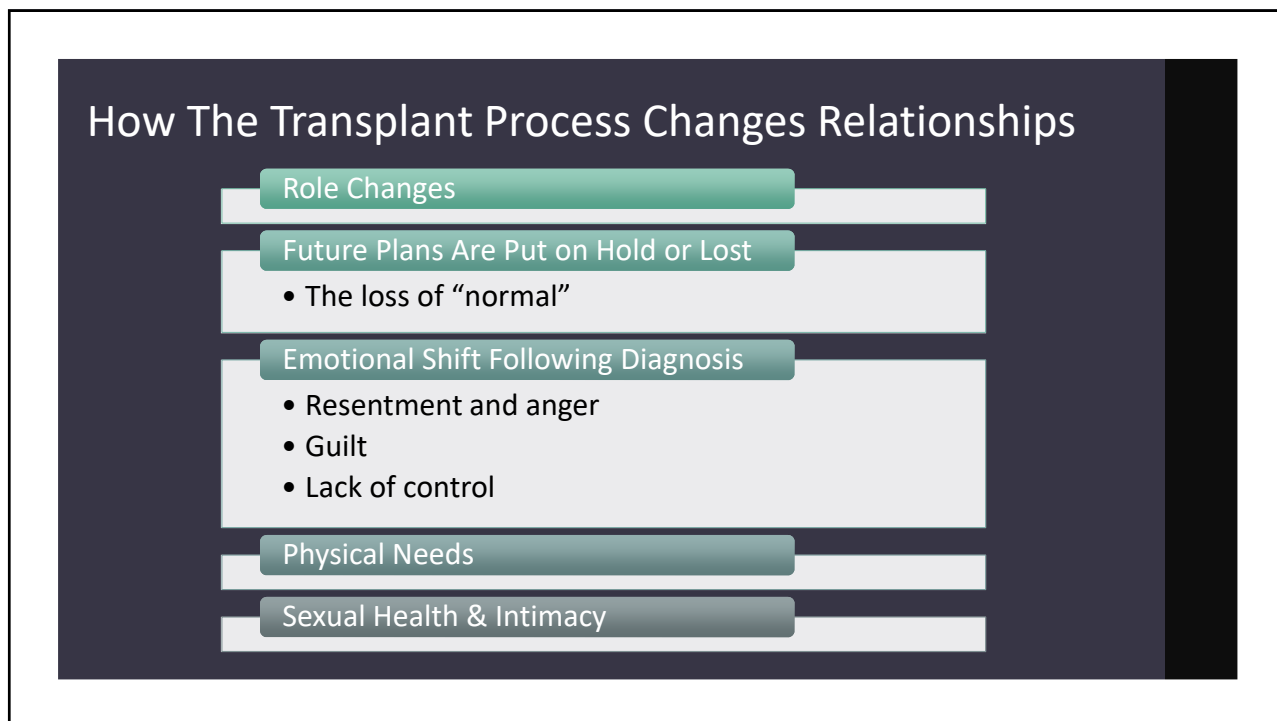
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Intimacy & Sexuality

- ▶ Treatment & workup for transplant can cause a variety of side effects
 - ▶ Physical appearance , physical functioning
- ▶ Changes can have a negative impact on body image.
- ▶ Low libido, loss of intimacy, loss of connection

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Foundational Communication Tips

- ▶ Practice active listening
- ▶ The more specific, the better
- ▶ Avoid assuming
- ▶ When in doubt, use “I” statements
- ▶ Recognize that you have control over your reactions
- ▶ Take turns talking; no steamrolling
- ▶ Try to speak with a neutral 3rd party

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Reconnecting with your partner

Communications strategies

- Find deeper topics to engage with
- Express appreciation
- Consider love language
- Schedule time for important conversations

Journaling as a multi-tool; venting, an outlet, a record, a practice

The “6-second kiss”

Infuse mindfulness into conversations that could become disagreements

Be Intentional

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Reframing a Return to “Normal”

- ▶ The word “normal” changes after transplant
- ▶ Think about your relationship, and consider new and different ways to make improvements
 - ▶ to be more open and honest with one another
 - ▶ to be there for one another in new ways
 - ▶ to be creative in how the two of you connect and create intimacy

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Transplant's effect on the family system

Extended family, children, etc.

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Transplant & the Family System

- ▶ Roles
- ▶ Responsibilities
- ▶ Expectations
- ▶ Emotional Needs
- ▶ Physical Needs
- ▶ Financial Stress
- ▶ Losses & Grief

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Common family changes

- Adoption of the sick role
- Loss of independence
 - Perceived loss of respect
 - Significant shift in parental role
- Communication struggles
- Feeling stuck; “eternal cancer patient”

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Children

- So much depends on age and maturity level
- Honesty is the best policy
- An opportunity to shape how you communicate emotional experiences
- Important to watch for behavioral changes

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Friendships

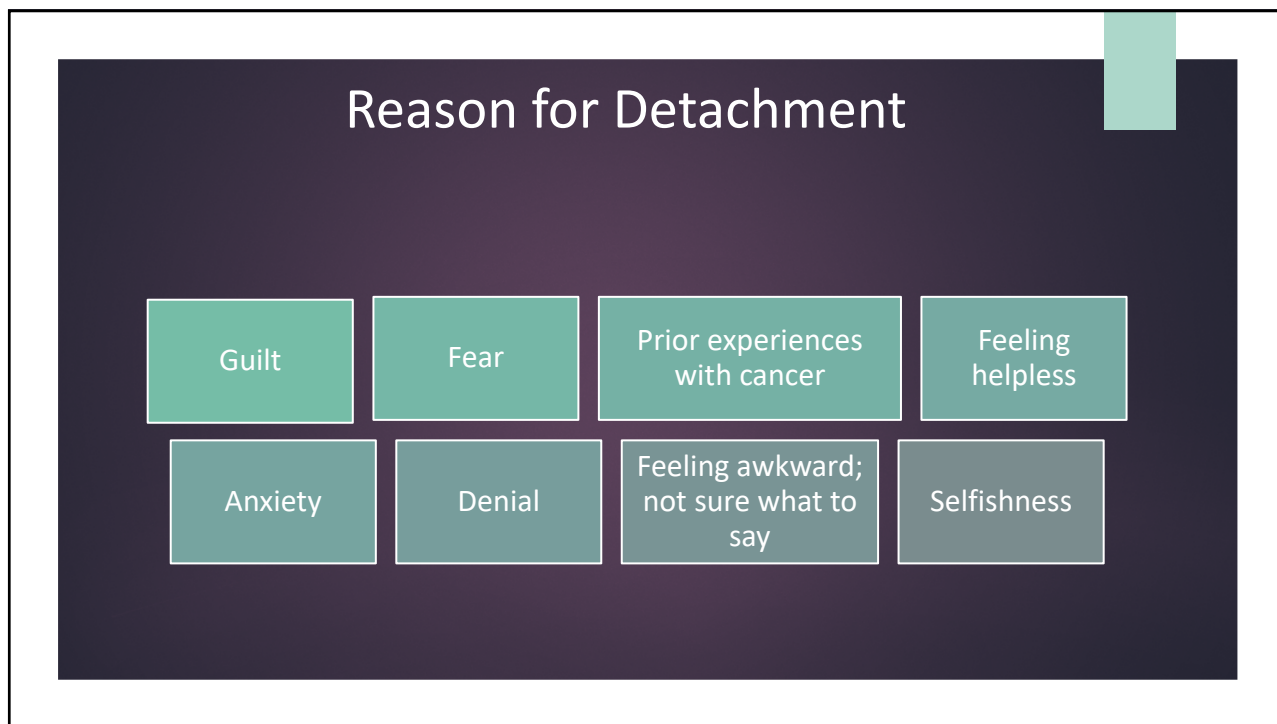
How outside support changes over time

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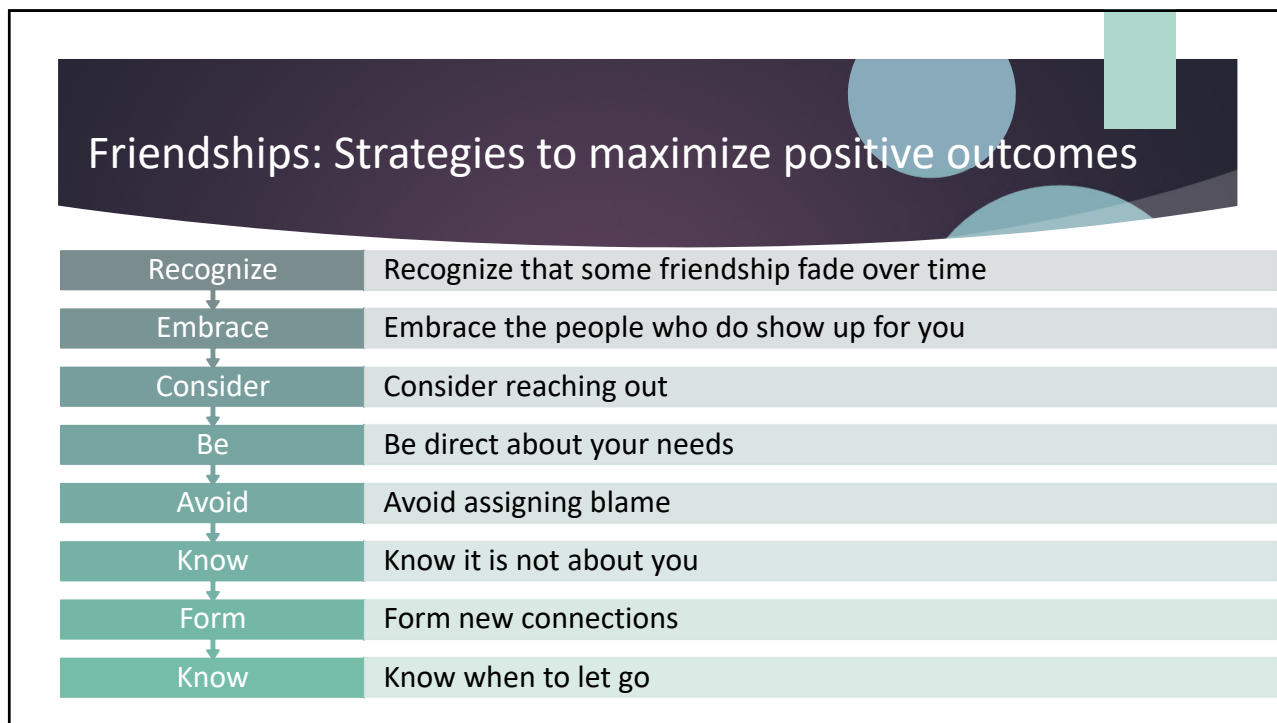
Friendship & Transplant

- ▶ Much like the family system, a serious diagnosis can result in friends rallying around you
 - ▶ Extending offers for support
 - ▶ Available for emotional and practical needs
- ▶ May be difficult to explain that transplant doesn't end at Day 0
- ▶ Often a stark contrast of support from diagnosis to recovery period

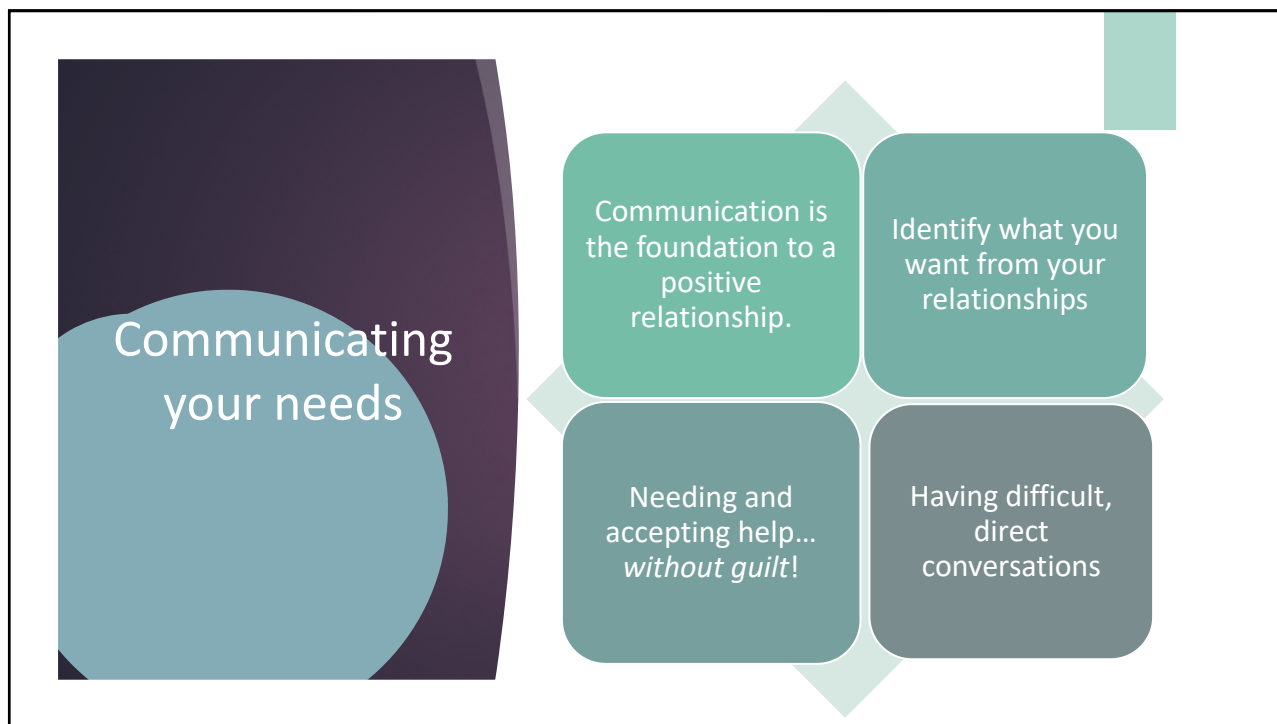
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Returning to “Normal”

Going back to life, and discovering that things are not the same

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Discovering the “New” You

What was your role before transplant? What is it now? Is there a large discrepancy between how you saw yourself before, and how you view yourself now?

Consider this as an opportunity to “reset.” Think about your values, your goals, and who you want to be. So much has changed, and you have survived at every turn. Look at this as another, positive, turning point.

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“This is all just too hard”

RECOGNIZING WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

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Common signs that you may need to speak to a professional

- Depressed mood
- Severe social withdrawal
- Extended crying spells
- Irritability
- Loss of interest in life, living, previously enjoyed activities
- Family very, very concerned.

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Who or what can help?

- Speak to someone on your transplant team
- Find a therapist/counselor/psychologist in your area
- Speak to other survivors about what has helped them
- Self-help books
- Support groups
- Being more open about your experience; don't hide the hurt.

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Mental Health Directory

▶ **BMT InfoNet is creating an online Mental Health Directory**

- ▶ List of local therapy providers who have experience with HCT or CAR T cell patients
- ▶ Expected to launch online in early summer

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Final Thoughts

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Questions?

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