

RESILIENCY AFTER BREAST CANCER: OR HOW A GOOD PAIR OF SHOES CAN SAVE YOU



Life is a tangle of
twisting paths.
Some short.
Some long.
There are dead ends.
And there are choices.
And wrong turns,
and detours,
and yield signs,
and instruction booklets,
and star maps,
and happiness,
and loneliness.
And friends.
And sisters.
And love.
And poetry.
Life is a maze.
You are a maze.
Amazed.
And amazing

-Naomi Shihab Nye

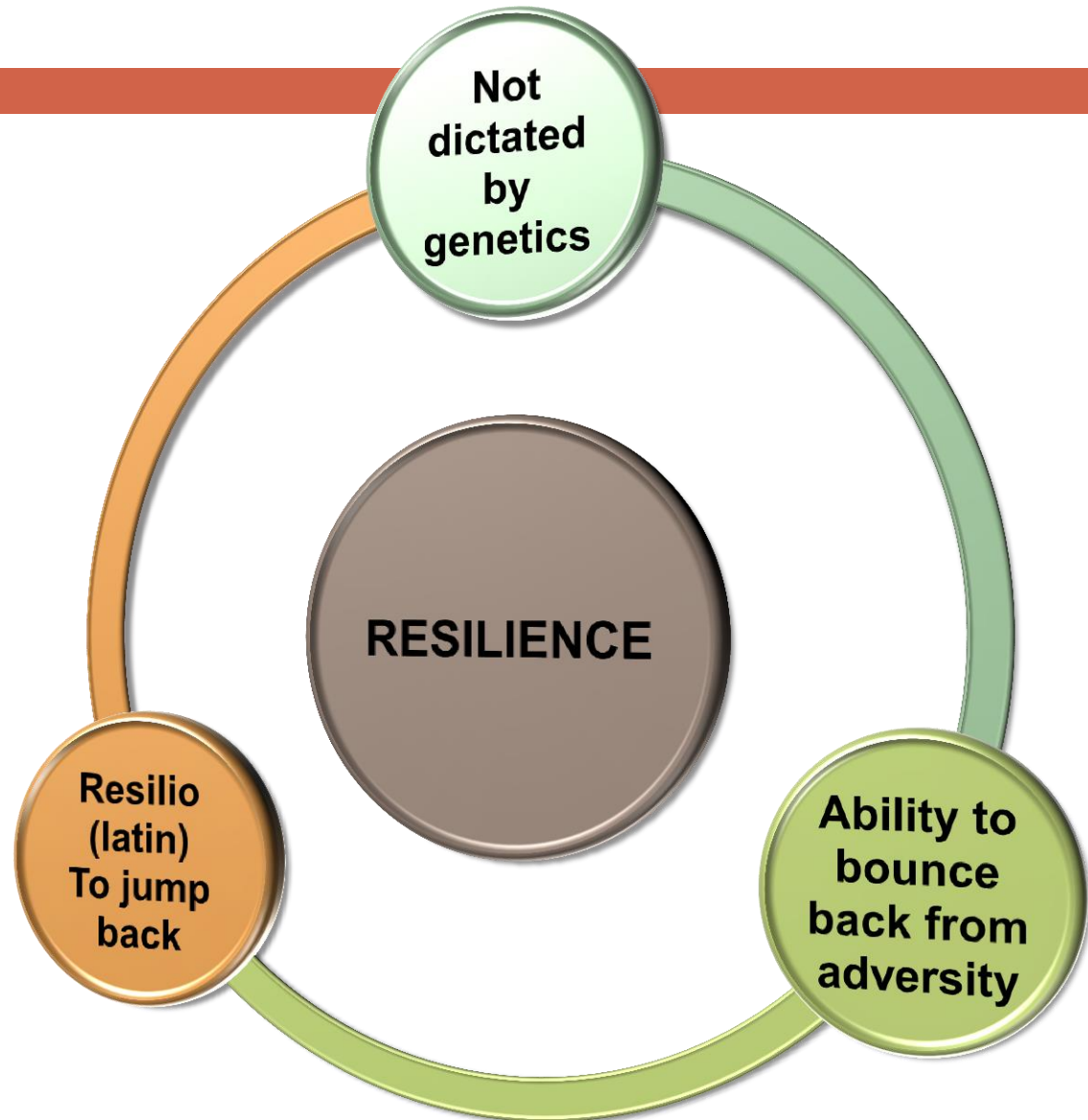


Tonight's Discussion

- Resilience...what is it?
- Positive Authentic Health vs. Positive Thinking
- Cultivating and Maintaining

“We can’t always predict or control what life throws at us, but we can build a range of skills and nurture our resources to help us respond flexibly, effectively deal with challenges, recover more quickly and even learn and grow as a result.”

-Action for
Happiness



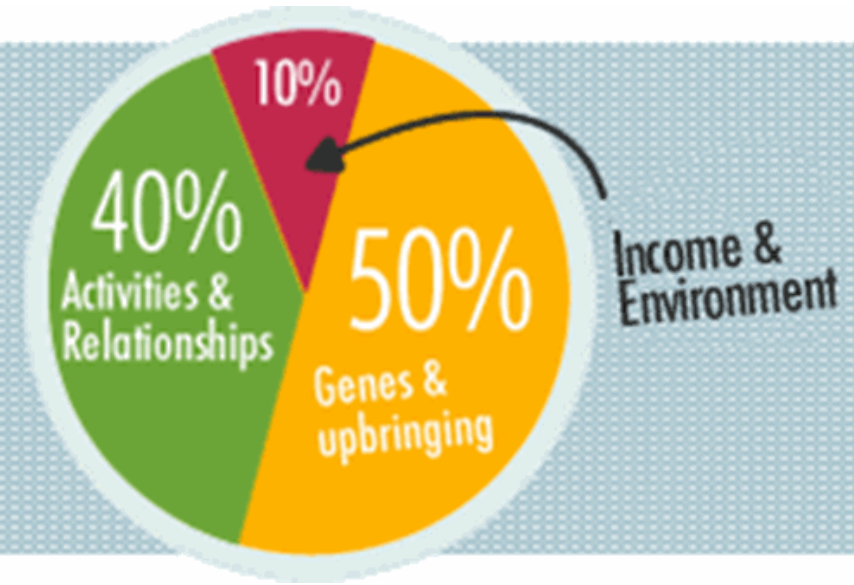
Resilience, Optimism and Cancer

□ Realistic optimists...

- ▣ Acknowledge and recognize the “seismic” disruption
- ▣ Engage with problems
- ▣ Often plan for “worst case scenarios” AND
- ▣ Aspire and hope for positive outcomes
- ▣ Focus on what they can control
- ▣ Use their strengths
- ▣ Develop their support network

The Happiest News:

We have incredible power



<http://www.actionforhappiness.org/why-happiness>

The Critical 40%

- Mindfulness:
 - ▣ Daily 5-10 min practice: prayer, meditation, etc.
- Gratitude:
 - ▣ Daily written account of 3 “good” things
 - ▣ Letter of thanks
- Multi-dimensional living (giving, connecting, trying new things, goal setting, meaning-making, exercising)

“They Tell Me I Have to Stay Positive!”

Authentic Positive Health vs. Positive Thinking

- Emotional sea level(Weil)
- Full Catastrophe Living (Kabat-Zinn)
- Happiness in the Storm (Harpham)
- Positive Health (Seligman)
- Tyranny of Positive Thinking (Holland)

Gratitude

□ 3 Good Things

1.

2.

3.



Gratitude: Letter of Thanks

- Think of someone who has contributed to your well-being whom you've never fully thanked. Write a letter to that person describing the benefits you have received. Be detailed. Describe how the actions made you feel. Take this letter and read it out loud to that person. If possible, do this in person. Take enough time to be together to exchange emotions. Source: Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, 2002

Grief and Growth

Honoring Your Grief

“As it turns out, all of our losses must be
grieved,

visible and invisible, large and
seemingly small.

It is the highly personal meaning of
what has been

lost that determines our grief, not the
loss per se.

We facilitate the grief process by
honoring what we have lost, not
minimizing it.”

Honoring Your Story

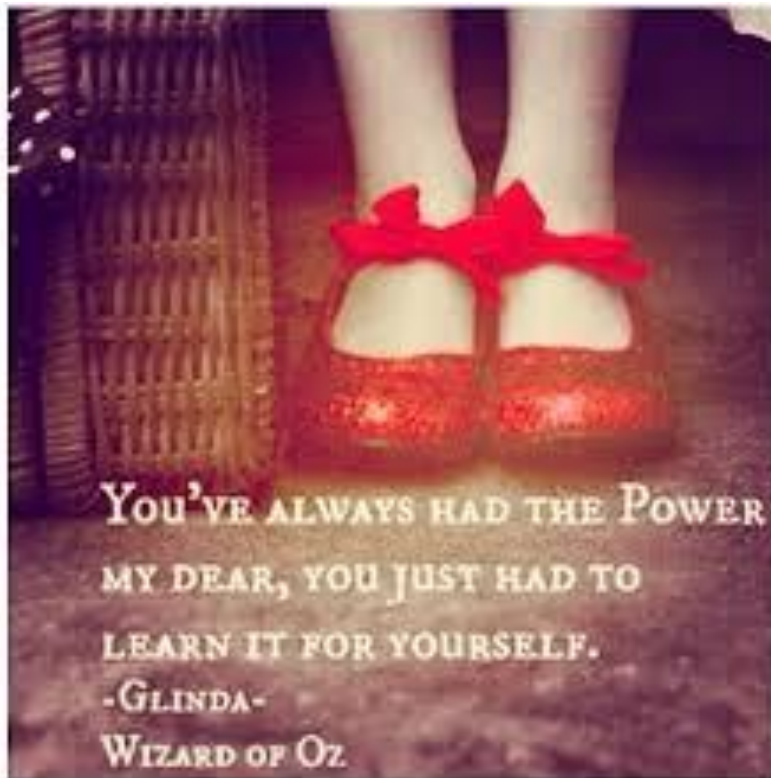
- ▣ Tell and claim your cancer story
- ▣ Clarify your values
- ▣ Nurture flexibility
- ▣ Reconnect with your strengths

Misinterpreting Growth



“The research does not suggest that there is anything inherently good about a painful loss – of course there isn’t. But what the research does show is that when events happen that force us to stop, to step out of our day to day lives and to confront issues we might not usually have to, it is possible for some good to come from the struggle.” (Action for Happiness)

Ruby Slippers...a tale of resilience



“Home is a place we all must find, child. It's not just a place where you eat or sleep. Home is knowing. Knowing your mind, knowing your heart, knowing your courage. If we know ourselves, we're always home, anywhere.”

Resilience *Take-Aways*

- Authentic Positive Health is not the **Same Thing** as Positive Thinking
- Resilience requires personal responsibility and engagement.
- Activating resilience allows for you to identify and embrace that you are ENOUGH!
- We can nurture resilience, growth and joy:
 - ▣ Daily Practice
 - Gratitude “Three Good Things”
 - Mindfulness
- Engaging and practicing gratitude can enhance our outlook, well-being and buffer us during times of stress, grief and change.

The Life-Long Practice

- Resilience, over the long haul, requires:
 - ▣ Acknowledging life's upsets, storms and leaning into them rather than mind-lessly or actively avoiding.
 - ▣ Courageously listening to your body, engaging in healthy relationships, setting goals, and asking for what you need.

- **AND**, did I mention this already???

 - ▣ 3 good things practice
 - ▣ Mindfulness practice
 - ▣ Multi-dimensional living



Questions?

