

# Finding Wellness in a Wacky World

Julie Larson, LCSW



2024 Educational Forum

May 3 - 5, 2024

Hyatt Regency Lake Washington



*FINDING  
WELLNESS  
IN A WACKY  
WORLD*

CANCER. DOES ANYBODY HAVE A MAP?



# *OUR TIME TOGETHER TODAY*

1. Paying attention with purpose
2. Name it to tame it - and other helpful strategies for coping with distress
3. You are not alone – creating your all-star support team
4. The skill of balance



# The Emotional Landscape

Fear

Sadness

Guilt

Anger

Emotional numbness

Uncertainty

Worry

Pressure

*“This just isn’t like me”*

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white and grey striped sweater and dark pants, is sitting on a hospital bed. She is looking out a large window that offers a view of a city with trees and buildings. The room is bright and modern, with a white wall and a light-colored floor. There is a white stool and a chair in the foreground.

# *THE MEDICAL LANDSCAPE*

Differentiating and learning YOUR type of Blood Cancer

Learning your treatment options

Side effects and management

Making treatment decisions

Getting to know the oncology team

Navigating the hospital building

Learning how to navigate the healthcare system

Insurance coverage, submitting claims, making appeals

Employment rights and entitlements



Julie Larson, LCSW [www.julielarsonlcsw.com](http://www.julielarsonlcsw.com)

## *STRESS 101*

---

Stress is your body's way of responding to a demand

---

Our body has a physical, emotional and mental response to stress

---

There are different types of stress

---

Not all stress is “bad”

---

Stress is subjective (personal)

# INCREASING SELF-AWARENESS

How do you notice your stress?

## THOUGHTS

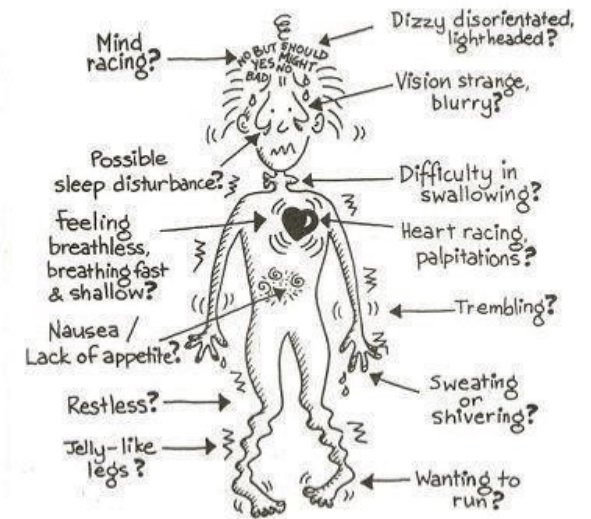


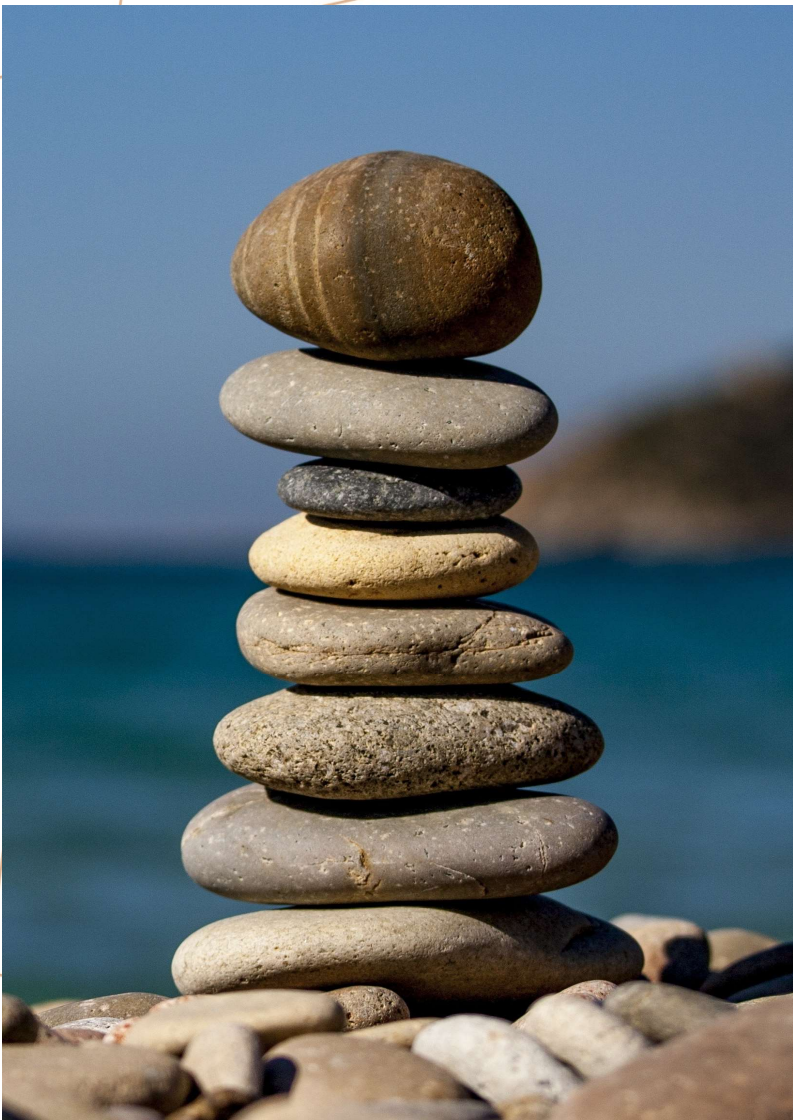
## FEELINGS



## BODY

DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?





# *PAYING ATTENTION WITH PURPOSE*

---

Develop a habit of checking in with yourself.

---

Can I name the feeling I am having?

---

Where am I feeling this stress in my body?

---

What am I doing that is helpful?

---

What am I doing that is not working well for me?



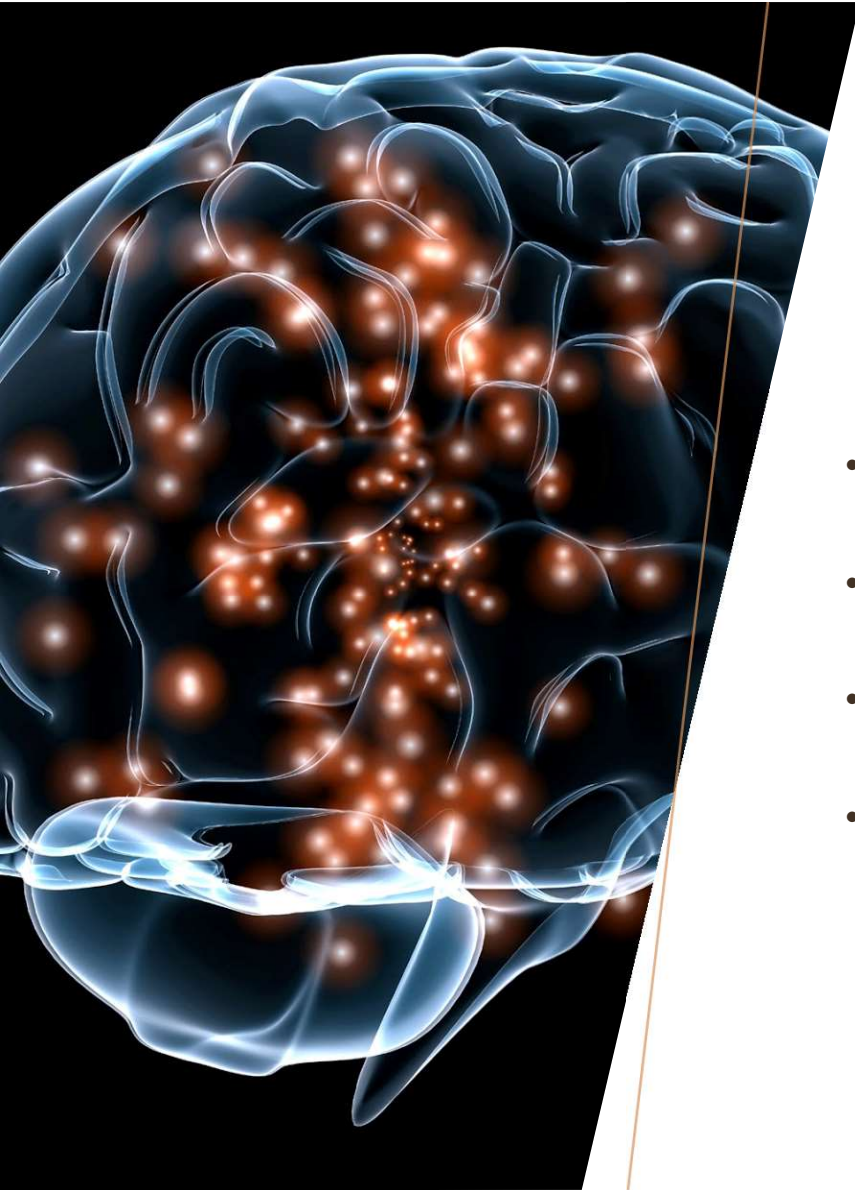
# How may I be helpful?

## What am I doing that helps?

Getting organized and prioritize	Take a break to refill water bottle
Get outside	Connect with a friend
Top of the Hour Break. Change my surroundings - Pause and breathe	Write, pamper yourself, music, cook, art...

## What am I doing that is not helpful?

Fortune Telling	Assumptions
Making comparisons	Scrolling social media
Trips to the fridge	Raising your voice



## *OUR BRAINS RESIST UNCERTAINTY*

- We crave information about what is to come for survival.
- Worry helps us plan and prepare.
- Fear interprets ambiguity as a threat.
- Uncertainty, worry & fear diminish our ability to focus on anything but creating certainty



## *REDIRECT YOUR THINKING*

**"What If?" to... "What Is."**

Take inventory of your present. What you know for sure.

**"What If?" to.... "What Else."**

Are there other possible truths?

**"What If?" to... "Then What."**

Create a concrete plan for your worst- case scenarios.

**"What If?" to... "What's Left."**

Turn the lights on in the rest of the room. What is available to you now?

# *NAME IT TO CLAIM IT*

- Fear and worry many not completely go away.
- Take the hit of a feeling, greet the “visitor”
- Naming a feeling gives you a little distance from the feeling so you can respond (not react)
- Building tolerance for uncomfortable feelings gives us flexibility with our attention.
- Be realistic about your expectations for the day ahead
- Bookmark your distress and observe changes over time.



A row of five white wooden figures leaning against a single blue wooden figure. The figures are simple, rounded shapes representing people. The blue figure is on the right, and the white figures are on the left, leaning towards it.

## *SEPARATE FROM THE THOUGHT*

Most of the time we live in a state of automatically believing what we think to be true.

When you recognize a distressing thought can you pull away from it a bit to see it differently?

- Say the thought out loud.
- Start with “I am having the thought...”
- Add “I notice I am having the thought...”



# *IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT*

Feelings are data. Look deeper. →  
What do you need?

Anxiety may sign post questions. →  
Where can you get information?

Your body brings you home →  
Use it find calm and presence.

In moments of upset ask yourself → "  
How may I be helpful"

# *YOU ARE NOT ALONE*

Health Care Professionals

Survivor (Caregiver) Peers = *others who "get it"*

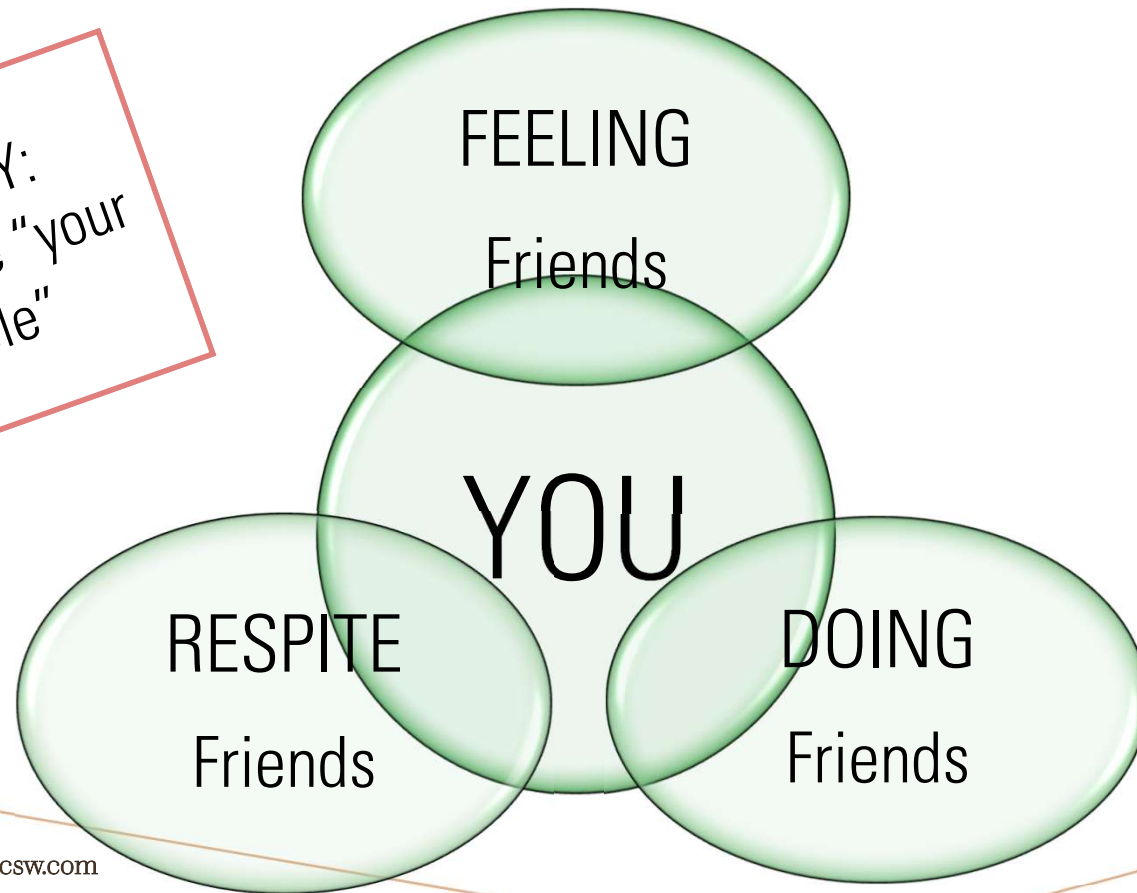
Friends & Family



# Know Your Audience:

## The Feelers, Doers and Distracters

ACTIVITY:  
Categorize "your  
people"





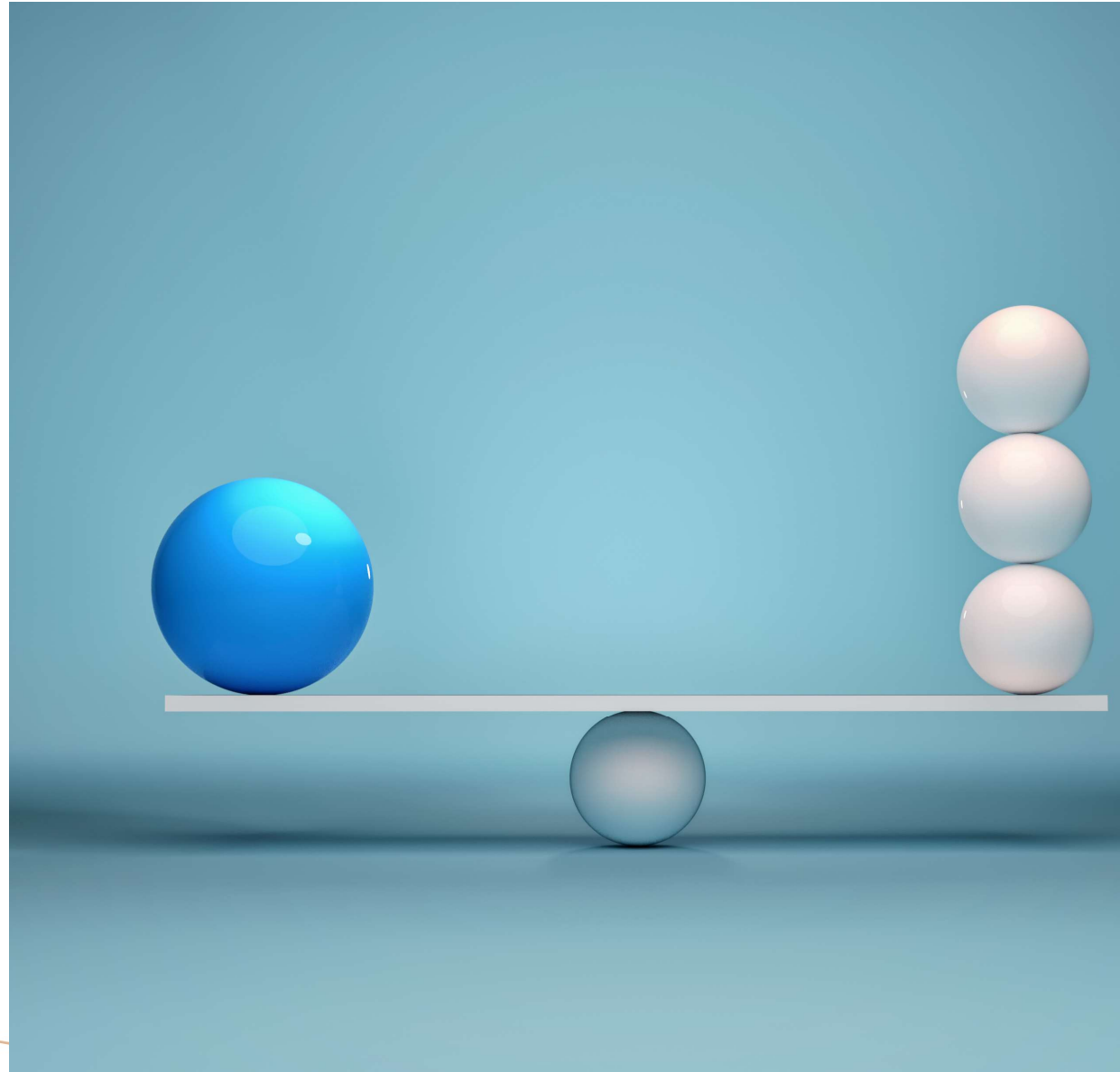
# *BALANCING THOUGHTS*

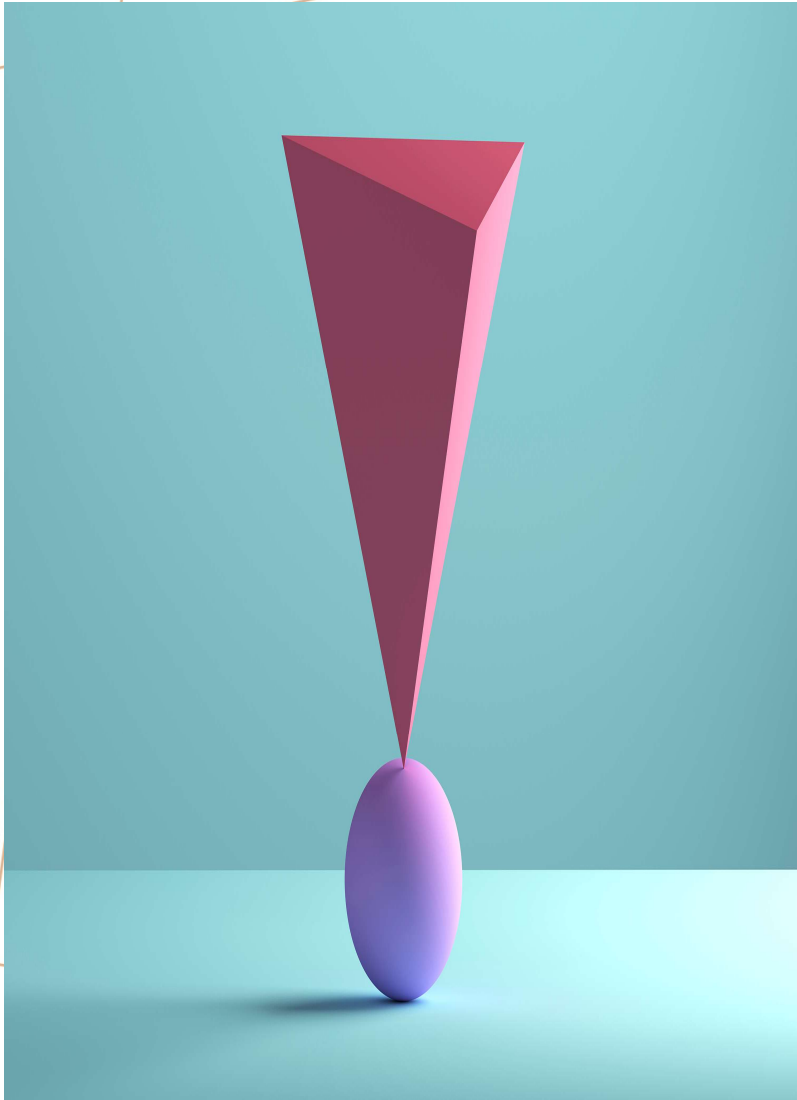
Negative thoughts can feel critical, foreboding or judgmental.

Balance your thinking.

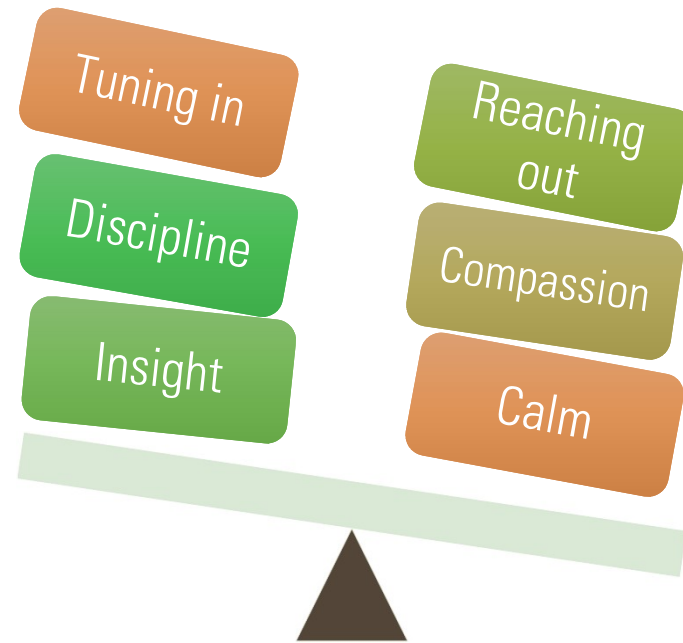
Make room for opposite thoughts in your mind.

- For every negative/upsetting thought can you list FIVE value or uplifting thoughts?





# *SELF CARE = BALANCE*



# *PERSPECTIVE & BALANCE*

- Focus on where you DO have control.
- **Zoom IN:**
  - This day
  - This task
  - Until next follow up appointment
- **Zoom OUT:**
  - Your values
  - Your intentions
- **You are more than a cancer diagnosis**
  - Balance with parts of yourself outside of your diagnosis

