Engaging the 5 Capacities of Improvisation

Coping With Trauma and Loss

Agenda

- Cancer as an Acute and Chronic Illness
- Improvisation Capacities Cluster
- Improvisation Application
- Cancer and the Four Phases
- Phase III: Creating Meaning from Suffering

Paradigm Shift in Medicine

- 20th century: focus on acute illness; 21st century: focus on chronic illness
- Chronic vs. acute care
- Necessity of chronic care models
- Chronic comprehensive case management vs. clinical treatment

Chronic vs. Acute Illness

- Chronic illness can be difficult to define, measure and treat
- Medicine has not adapted to a CI model of care- Pts. often fare poorly in acute care
- Patient needs vary over the duration and phase of the illness
- Patients suffer from social stigma, economic losses, and lack of knowledge and understanding about their conditions
- Everyone becomes frustrated with the unpredictability and chronicity of symptoms
Increased Prevalence of Chronic Illness Worldwide

• Advances in public health
• Advances in medical care
• Aging population

4 Groups of Chronically Ill

• Acute illness survivors with managed symptoms (cancer, cardiovascular disease)
• Traditional chronic (MS, FM, CFS, asthma, lupus)
• “Persistent acute” (HIV/AIDS, stroke)
• Natural consequences of aging in an aging population

Terri Dome, a successful international business executive for a major movie studio in California, had it all, until her heart was ravaged by the effects of treatments she had received years before for a childhood cancer...

We used the latest advancement in treatment and technology... and our doctors’ vast knowledge and experience. In February 2009, Terri had a heart transplant...

Terri is now making the most of her new life, reaching out to counsel other women with heart disease...
Innovation & Creation

• Improvisation  Creation  Innovation
• Change is:
  – Inevitable
  – Good
  – Bad
• Improvisation, creation & innovation help us respond to change.

Creation

• A powerful stance against helplessness.
• Requires active reflection and creative action.
• Must be authentic.

Authenticity

• In the process of creation, it's absolutely necessary to maintain insight about your limitations and your abilities.
• This is often painful.
• It's necessary to consistently strive for authenticity, and thus freedom, in the creative process.
• “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.”
  – Thomas Jefferson

The 5 Capacities

• Allow people with acute and chronic illnesses to establish acceptance and meaning in their changed circumstances.
• Your discipline, personality or circumstances may mean other capacities are required.
• Discover and define them.
1. Tolerate Ambiguity

- Ambiguity is unavoidable.
- Learn how to survive the “not knowing.”
- Take the time to be uncomfortable to get to where you need to be.
- Learn how to do the “emotional heavy lifting.” This leads to wisdom.
- Wisdom: Appreciating the value of the unknown. The realization that something good can come of this.

2. Become Curious

- Change is an opportunity.
- Curiosity leads to innovation and change.
- Our culture squelches children’s curiosity, wonder and risk-taking.
- Culture’s toleration of curiosity is influenced by gender, race and social class.
- It has positive (childlike wonder), negative (nosy, “killed the cat”) and ambiguous (questioning authority) connotations.

3. Take Risks

- Take the risk of getting started (every day).
- Conscious v. unconscious (impulsive) risk taking.
- Calculated risk taking:
  - Informed by knowledge of limits and abilities.
  - Isn’t impulsive.
  - Minimizes shame, embarrassment, fear of failure.
  - Has an “exit strategy” if things don’t go as planned.

4. Take Action

- Improvisation requires that you make a choice.
  - Statement/choice  action - reaction react to the reaction
- Choosing in the moment: do you pick up the paintbrush? What color will you use?
- Did you get the light bulb? Do you need to?
5. Innovate

• You've been curious, taken risks, made choices, taken action, innovated.
• The result – an idea, a paragraph, a picture, a tune – whether small or large, is a victory.
• Ask for outside help. Get training, instruction or assistance.
• Accommodate your limits and abilities.

“You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.”

-- Rahm Emmanuel

Application

Using the 5 Capacities to Respond to Change

Respond To Your Crisis

• Define your crisis.
• How can the 5 capacities of improvisation be applied to the crisis/trauma of illness?
• Which of the capacities are your strengths?
• Which are your weaknesses?
Apply The 5 Capacities

- What is your creative medium?
  - Music
  - Visual art
  - Writing
  - Drama
  - Etc.
- What kind of help do you need?

Persistence & Fortitude

- Willingness to fail, developing self-reliance.
- Importance of community:
  - When you don't feel you can persevere, you can borrow from strength of others.
  - Faith
- Allow yourself extra time or help to do the more difficult things.
- “Fall down 7 times, get up 8.”

Cancer and the Fennell Four Phase Model

Philosophy of the Phase Method

- A Systemic Approach
- False Dichotomies
- The Phenomenon of Chronicity
- Traumatization and Chronicity
- The Integration Assumption
- Palliation
- Clinician as Active Equal Participant
Socio-Cultural/Quality of Life Factors

- Cultural Intolerance of Suffering
- Cultural Intolerance of Ambiguity
- Cultural Intolerance of Chronic vs. Acute Syndromes
- Pre-existing Cultural Climate Toward Chronic Syndromes
- Media
- Initial Syndrome Illegitimacy and Subsequent Enculturation

Trauma Types

- Disease/Syndrome Trauma
- Iatrogenic Trauma
- Cultural Trauma
- Vicarious Trauma
- Pre-Morbid / Co-Morbid Trauma

Traditional Disability vs. Chronic Conditions

- Chronic conditions on a continuum
- Static vs. dynamic disability/illness
  - Fixed disability
  - Relapse and remission
  - Waxing and waning
- Legal definitions of disability/chronic illness
- Social or colloquial definitions
  - Disability
  - Illness
  - Disease/condition/syndrome

The Four Phases of Chronic Change

The Smith Family’s Story: Survivors of Cancer
Phase I – Trauma / Crisis

- **Physical/Behavioral Domain**
  - Coping stage
  - Onset stage
  - Acute / emergency stage

- **Psychological Domain**
  - Loss of psychological control / ego loss
  - Intrusive shame, self-hatred, despair
  - Shock, disorientation, dissociation
  - Fear of others, isolation, mood swings

- **Social/Interactive Domain**
  - Others experience shock, disbelief, revulsion
  - Vicarious traumatization
  - Family / organizational maturation
  - Suspcion / support continuum

Phase II – Stabilization / Normalization Failure

- **Physical/Behavioral Domain**
  - Plateau
  - Stabilization

- **Psychological Domain**
  - Increased caution/secondary wounding
  - Social withdrawals, social searching
  - Service confusion / searching
  - Boundary confusion

- **Social/Interactive Domain**
  - Interactive conflict / cooperation
  - Vicarious secondary wounding
  - Vicarious traumatic manifestation
  - Normalization failure

Phase III – Resolution

- **Physical/Behavioral Domain**
  - Emergency stage diminishment / improvement
  - Continued plateau / stabilization
  - Relapse

- **Psychological Domain**
  - Grief reaction / compassion response
  - Identification of pre-crisis – “self”
  - Role/identity experimentation
  - Returning locus of control
  - Awareness of societal effects
  - Spiritual development

- **Social/Interactive Domain**
  - Breaking silence / engulfment in stigma
  - Confrontation
  - Role experimentation – social, vocational
  - Integration / separation / loss of supporters
### Phase IV – Integration

- **Physical/Behavioral Domain**
  - Recovery stage
  - Continued plateau / improvement / relapse

- **Psychological Domain**
  - Role / identity integration
  - New personal best
  - Continued spiritual / emotional development

- **Social/Interactive Domain**
  - New / reintegrated supporters
  - Alternative vocation / activities

### Phase 3 Resolution:

**Creating Meaning From Suffering**

- Goal: to develop meaning about suffering.
- Recognize deeply that your old life will not return.
- Begin to find meaning in your experience, establish an authentic new self and develop a supportive, meaningful philosophy.
- Artistic expression and community offer pathways toward establishing meaning in the chronic illness experience.

### Transformation Steps

- By coming to terms with your own feelings, you can develop meaningful responses to your illness experience.
  - Allowance of suffering
  - Meet suffering with compassion
  - Meet suffering with respect
  - Integrate suffering
Phase 3 Transformation Step: Meeting The Suffering With Respect

- Regarded with appreciation
- Heroic captivity
- Antithetical interpretation
- Engaging the creative process
- Standing with self

Identifying Your Project

- What is your discipline of choice?
- Technology to support your effort
- Resources

  Participate in supportive community:
  - Join our Creativity Group
  - Learn more at: AlbanyHealthManagement.com

“Good”

Participate in the Research

Go to: www.AlbanyHealthManagement.com
The Chronic Illness Workbook
Using her extensive experience with chronic illness patients, Patricia Fennell has created an original, comprehensive, research-validated approach that brings clarity and order to what feels like an unmanageable and isolating experience.

For more information or to order, visit: www.AlbanyHealthManagement.com or contact: communications@AlbanyHealthManagement.com

Available for $24.95 from Albany Health Management Publishing

For More Information:
For further information on the following please contact AHMA at---
communications@albanyhealthmanagement.com
www.albanyhealthmanagement.com
• certification in the FFPT™ approach
• instrumentation/ CHAI, Pcat, Fennell Phase Inventory™
• research projects
• books and related articles
• clinical services
• consulting
• education and training

Working the Third Phase Tasks:
Time In The Tunnel
• Maintain insight and reframe issue
• Deep grief for lost self
• Existential dilemma
• Dark night of the soul
• Defining the pre-crisis self
• Analysis of actual losses - external
• Internal changes
• Faith
• Committing to time in the tunnel

Working the Third Phase Tasks:
Phoenix From The Ashes
• Importance of countertransference
• Baseline authenticity
• Antithetical experimentation
• Creative process
• Supportive materials
• Clinician as storyteller
• The noble-disabled danger
Working the Third Phase Tasks: Meaning Development

- New vision of societal attitudes
- Exploring different traditions
- Meaning development
- Faith and humor

Persistence & Fortitude

- Willingness to fail, developing self-reliance.
- Importance of community:
  - When you don’t feel you can persevere, you can borrow from strength of others.
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- Allow yourself extra time or help to do the more difficult things.
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