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***Making Sense of Dying and Death***

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**Improvisation: Five Capacities for Coping with Death and Dying**  
***The Fennell Four-Phase Approach***

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## Socio-Cultural Factors, Chronic Syndromes and Traumagenic Effects

### Factor: Intolerance of Suffering

#### DYNAMICS

- Social/Clinical Controversy
- Pressure for Non-disclosure
- Negative Reinforcement for “Genuine Reporting”
- Attitude Conveyed of Characterological Inferiority
- Iatrogenic Health Care Experiences

#### EFFECTS

- Avoidance of Intimacy
- “Passing”
- Addiction
- Social Abandonment/Rejection
- Social Contract Violation

### Factor: Intolerance of Ambiguity

#### DYNAMICS

- Contagion / Contamination Powerlessness / Fear Transferred
- Unknown Etiology / Prognosis
- “Just” World or Deserved-Punishment Notion
- Survivor as Burden

#### EFFECTS

- Generalized Guilt
- Grief
- Depression

### Factor: Intolerance of Chronic vs. Acute Syndromes

#### DYNAMICS

- Pressure for “Cure”/ Normalization
- Inadequate Treatment Models
- Competence Frustration Conveyed
- Punishment of Healthy Self Care
- Reward of Unhealthy Self Care

#### EFFECTS

- Normalization Failure
- Identify Confusion
- Increased Salience of Abuse Issues
- Avoidance of Intimacy
- “Passing”
- Social Withdrawal / Suicide

### Factor: Cultural Climate

#### DYNAMICS

- Pre-sentiment of Suspicion Conveyed
- Negative Personality Characteristics Assigned
- Survivor perceived as Damaged/Social Example

#### EFFECTS

- Social Shame
- Diminished Self-worth
- Cultural “Pariah”

### Factor: Media

#### DYNAMICS

- Scapegoating
- Public Ridicule/Support
- Public Judgment
- Public Assignment of Role and Worth

#### EFFECTS

- Loss of Privacy
- Increased Fear/Anxiety
- Increased Isolation
- Increased Grief
- Decreased Sense of Worth

### Factor: Syndrome Enculturation

#### DYNAMICS

- Inadequate Language/ Models/ Metaphors
- Impact of Discourse
- Disease Maturity - Societal Acceptance

#### EFFECTS

- Increased/Decreased Powerlessness
- Increased/Decreased Sense of Efficacy
- Increased/Decreased Sense of General Safety, Trust and Stigmatization

From: Fennell, PA. Phase-Based Interventions. Chapter 22 in Jason, L.A.; Fennell, P.A.; Taylor, R. (editors), *Handbook of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fatiguing Illnesses*. John Wiley and Sons Inc., New York, NY: 2003

# The Fennell Four-Phase Model

The **Fennell Four-Phase Model (FFPM)** is a framework for explaining how people who are experiencing chronic illness or trauma can adapt to the changes in their lives. It outlines four phases that people commonly pass through as they learn to incorporate their altered physical abilities or psychological outlook into their personality and lifestyle.

It was developed by Patricia Fennell, MSW, LCSW-R, in 1992; first published in 1993 in *The CFIDS Chronicle*; subjected to validation research several times in the 1990s and 2000s; and fully presented in Fennell's 2003 book, *Managing Chronic Illness: The Four Phase Approach*.

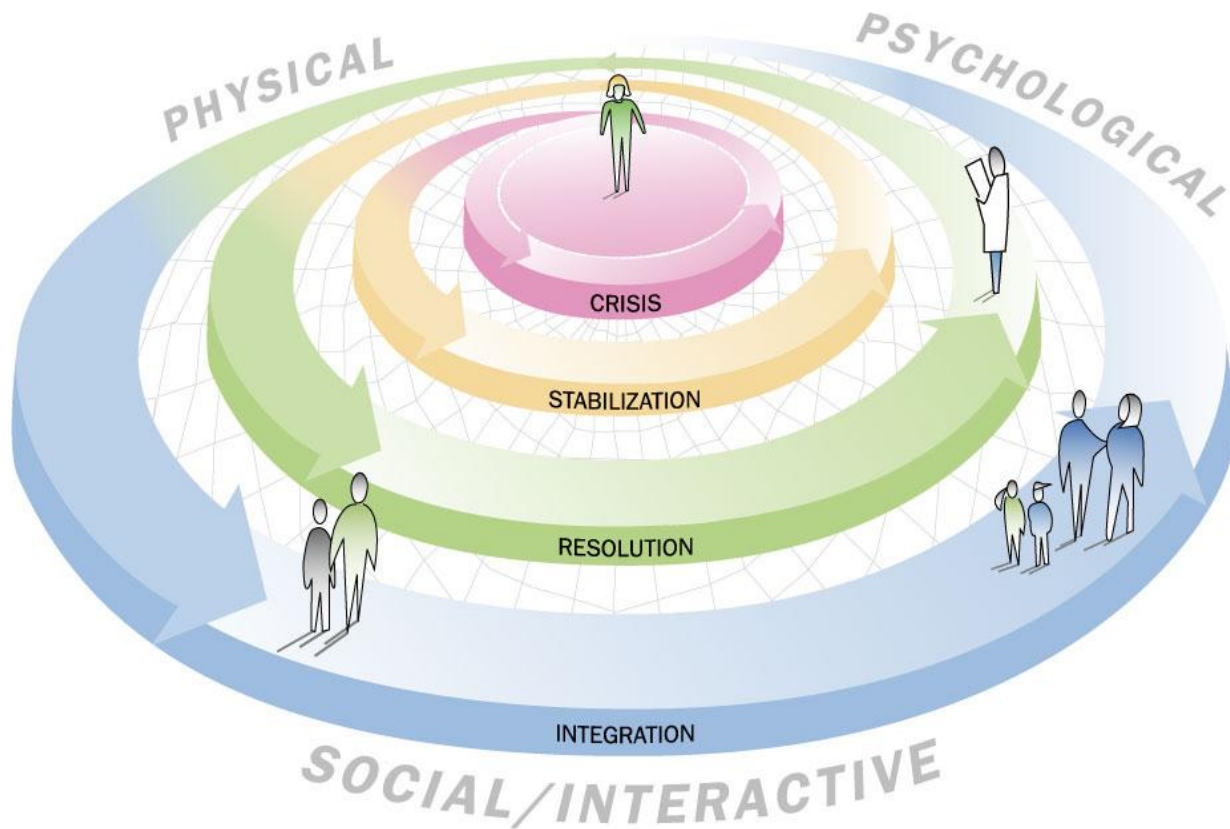
The Fennell Four Phases are: **Crisis**, **Stabilization**, **Resolution**, and **Integration**. Within each phase, FFPM addresses three domains: the physical/behavioral, the psychological, and the social/interactive.

- In **Phase 1 Crisis**, the individual moves from onset of the condition to an emergency period when he or she knows that something is seriously wrong. Onset may be specifically detectable, such as a serious and disabling automobile accident, or may happen gradually, as in the case of multiple sclerosis, where a period of symptoms precedes diagnosis. The task of the individual, caregivers, and clinicians during this phase is to cope with and contain urgency and trauma.
- In **Phase 2 Stabilization**, the individual discovers that he or she fails, sometimes repeatedly, to return to normal, regardless of interventions or behavior. The task in this phase is to initiate stabilization and life restructuring.
- In **Phase 3 Resolution**, the individual recognizes deeply that his or her old life will never return. Early in this phase, many experience significant grief and loss. The task of this phase is to begin establishing an authentic new self and start developing a supportive, meaningful philosophy.
- In **Phase 4 Integration**, the individual defines a new self in which illness may be an important factor, but it is not the only or even the primary one in his or her life. Integration of the illness into a meaningful life is the goal the individual seeks.

The experience of chronic illness or trauma does not remain the same over time. The physical, emotional, and social needs of an individual in the early stages of the chronic experience can be considerably different from the needs of an individual who has been ill for several years.

Additionally, unlike other phase- or stage-based models, such as the Kübler-Ross theory of death and dying, FFPM does not assume that individuals move through the FFPM phases in a linear fashion. Rather, physical or emotional setbacks can precipitate a temporary move back to a previous phase.

## The Fennell Four-Phase Model



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## The Fennell Four-Phase Treatment for Chronic Illness

By Patricia A. Fennell, MSW, LCSW-R

### The Challenge of Chronic Illness

Managing chronic illness is one of the greatest challenges facing our health care system today. There were 129 million people with chronic conditions in 2005; this number is expected to grow 32 percent to 171 million in 2030, according to Partnership for Solutions, a research cooperative led by Johns Hopkins University.<sup>1</sup> The costs of chronic illness to the U.S. are huge, accounting for at least 78 percent of all health care spending, or well over a trillion dollars per year.<sup>2</sup>

Patients with chronic conditions often fare poorly in the current primary care delivery environment, which is structured for acute, episodic care. Care is often delivered with little coordination across multiple settings, providers and treatments.<sup>3</sup> Several variations of managed care have emerged in the past decade in an effort to improve care, reduce unnecessary service utilization and control spiraling costs. But the fragmented nature of services in the managed care market has not achieved the initial promise of truly coordinated care. Furthermore, managed care programs seldom address the complexity inherent in chronic conditions that may result in more frequent, rather than fewer, doctors' visits and hospitalizations. Chronic illnesses tend to affect several different body systems at the same time. In addition, the impact of the illness on the patient's physical, emotional and social condition persists over time and significantly affects patient reporting, compliance and coping with the illness. The physical, psychological and social needs of a patient in the early phases of the chronic illness experience can be considerably different from the needs of the patient who has been ill for several years.

### The Fennell Four-Phase Treatment (FFPT)<sup>TM</sup> Model

The Fennell Four-Phase Treatment (FFPT) is a flexible clinical approach, empirical paradigm, and assessment tool designed to enhance current managed care approaches by helping the health care team determine what may be expected over time and the best ways to intervene to improve the patient's quality of life at any given point. Research supports the concept that individuals coping with chronic illness progress through four distinct phases as they learn to deal with their illness.<sup>4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</sup> The FFPT provides a framework for understanding this critical process. Patients may respond differently to various treatment modalities depending upon which Phase of Illness they are in. Research has suggested that matching best medical practice to phase of illness can help both physicians and allied health professionals treat patients more effectively, increase compliancy and save time and resources.<sup>10, 11, 12, 13</sup>

Within each Phase, the FFPT addresses three domains: the physical/behavioral, the psychological, and the social/interactive. In **Phase 1, Crisis**, the individual moves from onset of illness, which may be specifically detectable or may happen gradually, to an emergency period when the patient knows that something is seriously wrong. The task of the individual, caregivers, and clinicians during this Phase is to cope with and contain urgency and trauma.

In **Phase 2, Stabilization**, the individual discovers that he or she fails, sometimes repeatedly, to return to normal regardless of interventions or behavior. The task in this Phase is to initiate stabilization and life restructuring.

In **Phase 3, Resolution**, the individual recognizes deeply that his or her old life will never return. Early in this Phase, many experience significant grief and loss. The task of this

The Fennell Four-Phase Treatment for Chronic Illness Phase is to begin establishing an authentic new self and start developing a supportive, meaningful philosophy.

In **Phase 4, Integration**, the individual defines a new self in which illness may be an important factor, but it is not the only or even the primary one in his or her life. Integration of the illness into a meaningful life is the goal the individual seeks. For a graphic example of matching medical intervention to phase of illness for a specific chronic illness, see the chart on the following page.<sup>14</sup>

Another promising approach is the Chronic Care Model (CCM), which provides a holistic framework and methodology for transforming a health care system so that patients receives coordinated care from a trained interdisciplinary health care team and planned follow up.<sup>15</sup> What the CCM does not appear to consider in its approach to team-based treatment is the need to match medical interventions with the patient's Phase of Illness. This is important given the ebbs and flows of symptoms, and the cycles of relapse and remission that characterize many chronic conditions.

## Case Management

As described previously, case management can be extremely complex in chronic illnesses because of the large number of medical professionals and treatments that can be involved. The FFPT can be used successfully as a chronic illness case management tool. The goals in case management run parallel to the clinical goals.

In **Phase 1**, the case management goal is to establish a case management focus. This includes restructuring the activities of daily living, engaging in family case management, assisting patients in navigating the health care system, intervening in the workplace if necessary, and acting as the patients' advocate.

In **Phase 2**, the case management goals are patient data collection and activity restructuring. With the help of the case

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manager, patients assess and restructure their activity levels and develop new parameters and norms. The case management continues to help with family case management, negotiation of the health care system, intervention with the employer, and patient advocacy.

In **Phase 3**, the case management goal is helping patients develop self-management skills. Patients learn to monitor their activities, coordinate their medical care, become their own health care advocates, and in general assume advocacy for themselves in the world at large. In **Phase 4**, the case management goal is to deepen patients' self-management skills.

A holistic approach such as this captures essential elements of experience that can determine whether interventions will be successful. It particularly points to the necessity of solving problems -- familial, social, economic, and philosophical, among others -- that are rarely part of the conventional medical treatment model. Because teamwork is essential, among a broad assortment of professionals, all committed to involving the patient whenever possible in the process, a case management approach seems best suited accomplish this in a successful, ethical manner.

## Summary

The Fennell Four-Phase Treatment (FFPT)<sup>™</sup> channels the efforts of the health care team to match best medical practices to the patient's phase of illness. By identifying different functional capacities and symptoms at different phases, the FFPT<sup>™</sup> helps the physician, nurse case manager, and other members of the health care team select the most appropriate and effective interventions and avoid choosing treatments that, although useful at another time, may be counterproductive at the patient's current Phase of Illness. By intervening with treatments suited to the patient's particular Phase -- a time when they are more likely to be compliant -- health care providers can help patients break out of a pattern

MATCHING BEST PRACTICES WITH PHASES OF ILLNESS				
	Phase 1 Crisis	Phase 2 Stabilization	Phase 3 Resolution	Phase 4 Integration
<b>Definition</b>	Individual moves from illness onset (sudden or gradual) to emergency period when the patient knows something is seriously wrong	Patient begins to understand symptom complex and develops new norms and behaviors	Patient recognizes that old life will not return and wrestles with existential questions	Patient defines a new self in which illness may be an important factor, but is not primary in his/her life
<b>Task</b>	Contain the crisis; manage urgency and possible trauma	Facilitate stabilization of symptoms through medical treatment and life restructuring	Continue ongoing management of medical plan and help patient develop meaning in suffering	Assist patient in integrating the illness into a meaningful life
<b>Medical Assessment &amp; Intervention</b>	Complete a comprehensive medical history; conduct physical exam; do lab tests as indicated; confirm diagnosis; develop a working list of problems and treatment plan	Schedule frequent patient visits to systematically address major symptoms (sleep, mood/cognitive, pain, fatigue, etc.); review lab tests and do routine ongoing screening; manage all comorbid and secondary conditions; monitor medications and simplify when possible; coordinate rehabilitation efforts (physical therapy, occupational therapy)	Monitor and manage symptoms, modifying treatment plan as needed; simplify and/or reduce medications as appropriate; continue routine health screenings; continue regimen to improve physical fitness within the confines of chronic illness limitations	Continue monitoring of patient functioning; continue focus on guarding against deconditioning utilizing physical conditioning regimen; emphasize lowest effective doses or nondrug interventions; help patient balance trying new treatments with “just living”
<b>Phase Assessment &amp; Intervention</b>	Conduct psychosocial interview and other relevant evaluations (may include neurological/ psychological tests, sleep studies, etc.); establish multidisciplinary team; build relationship with patients; analyze activity threshold and restructure activity levels as needed	Initiate values clarification and development of new norms; review and modify activity levels; assist patient in coping with challenges like grief and “illness etiquette”; patient/family case management; workplace intervention and/or modification, or exploration of disability options	Facilitate patient’s exploration of existential questions and developing meaning; encourage patient to become own care coordinator and advocate; consider job modifications or workplace separation	Continue meaning development and integration of pre- and post-crisis self; review workplace modifications and/or alternative vocations and activities; maintain dialogue among members of multidisciplinary treatment team

The Fennell Four-Phase Treatment for Chronic Illness of repeated crises that usually require more extensive resources in response. The goal of this approach is not pursuing the ever-elusive cure, but integration of the illness

Patricia Fennell, MSW, LCSW-R into the patient's life. For patients and their families, the FFPT™ helps them to organize a narrative of their experience, essential for patient education and self-management.

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