



HIDDEN EFFECTS OF SURVIVORSHIP



Workshop to explore psychosocial challenges

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Outline of Session



- Introductory comments
 - (about 10 minutes)
- Small group discussions to consider issues/questions
 - (about 20 minutes)
- Feedback from groups/discussion
 - (about 20 minutes)



Where I stand



Registered Social Worker
One of team of 15 general health social workers at HVDHB
Part of social work team for six years
Oncology role for 2½ years
Inpatient and outpatient/community focus

Pakeha with Scottish roots
Wellingtonian who now chooses to live in Hutt Valley

Voluntary role at HVDHB as member of ecumenical chaplaincy team



Perception Versus Reality



- Challenge of difference
 - personal journey
 - hiddenness
 - research outcomes
 - applicable to cancer survivorship
- Elephant in the room
- On stage/off stage



Survivor versus Thriver



- Is survivor a helpful concept/label?
- Potential to remain in 'negative' space.
Glass half full or glass half empty
- Thriver embraces positive, new opportunities



Themes from conversations



- Hidden costs:
 - reduced income/career interruption/
inability to work
relationship with WINZ
 - food choices (organic/natural/special diet choices)
 - toiletries (natural/paraben free)
 - complementary or mainstream therapies to maintain
wellbeing, often not funded



Themes (cont)



- Appointment anxiety
- Hypervigilance
- Survivor guilt
 - those who did not make it through treatment
 - friendships made, grief at their loss with associated guilt
- Realism



Themes (cont)



- Fatigue
 - energy levels
 - question fatigue from well meaning good intentioned friends/family/colleagues
- Relationship challenges
 - body image
 - change in priorities
- 'I just want to be told that it will never come back'



Challenges



Discuss in groups any/all of following

- 1 What do you identify as the 3 most significant psycho-social challenges faced by cancer survivors
- 2 How useful is the concept of thriver as an alternative or parallel narrative
- 3 What if anything would you do differently in working with a cancer survivor and their whanau



Observations



- No magic solution
- Each journey unique but common threads
- Underlying themes of strength, resilience, finding a new 'normal'
- Celebrate the now in context of what has gone before and awareness of what may still be to come
- Life is a gift to be unpacked, treasured, not left on the shelf