The Psychology and Narratives of Cancer Survivors

A 6-Hour Home Study Program for Health Professionals

In this program, learn how cancer survivors and people with other life-threatening disorders, caregivers, families and friends can find meaning, develop resilience and help create the conditions for posttraumatic growth.

This program includes the narratives that influence cancer survivors, as well as the stories clients construct to understand and cope with their chronic conditions. These perspectives are critical for understanding the whole client and facilitating the healing process for clients and health professionals alike.

Participants completing this program should be able to describe:
1. Key psychological experiences and behavioral consequences of being a cancer survivor.
2. The expectations of cancer survivors and health professionals from direct-to-consumer advertising and other cultural influences.
3. Approaches for distinguishing between bereavement and depression and research-based findings on facilitating the normal grieving process and overcoming depression.
4. Pathways to dealing with anxiety and managing uncertainty associated with illness recurrence.

- The Psychology of Being a Survivor: the confusing and contradictory meanings of ‘survival,’ from superiority to guilt, from personality to luck – with the recent addition of growth.
- Seasons of Survival: how expectations contribute to stress during testing, diagnosis and treatment and how survivors think about the presence of cancer to reduce the anxiety of being in remission.
- Quality of Life: beyond mere survival, how to help people manage the stress and anxiety that is common after chemotherapy, cardiac surgery, and other major medical procedures; effective times and ways to intervene in order to help people overcome their sense of loss.
- The Role of Social Support: different types of social support, lay and professional, and the value of group membership in accepting and even embracing new identities; social media and social support.

Transforming Death Anxiety into Growth: overcoming psychological barriers to achieve positive psychological changes experienced as resilience, and becoming more skillful at living.

- An Instructional Design for Survivorship: skill development strategies to achieve personal readiness for adverse events by maintaining physical resilience, social support, and a mindset for continuing recovery and growth.
- Future of Cancer Survivorship: lifelong main-tenance therapies, mobile apps for mental health, and the potential for virtual reality in adjusting to life after cancer.

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About the Instructor

Thomas B. Nickel, Ph.D., has been Executive Director of Continuing Education at Alliant International University and is an expert in Instructional Technology as applied to online learning and certified training sites for behavioral health professionals.

Dr. Nickel has presented continuing education programs for many years that focus on end-of-life issues. Audiences commend his programs for the use of narrative perspectives, research discoveries, and concrete suggestions for facilitating the healing journey. In sum, this program is not only designed for health professionals who may live or work with clients that have life-threatening conditions but for people who want to live life more fully.

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