

# Cancer Survivorship & The Fear of Recurrence

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# DISCLOSURES

No disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.

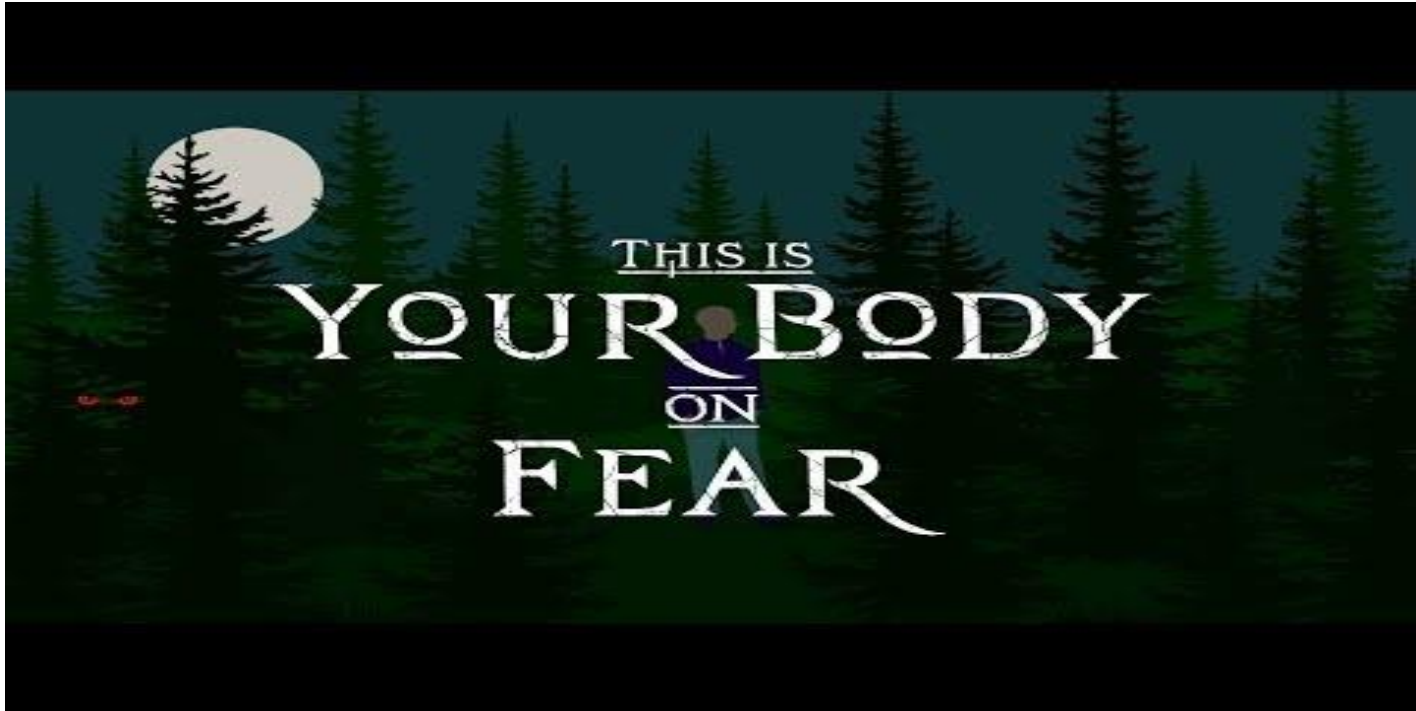
The information contained in this presentation is for educational purposes only. This is not meant to diagnose or treat any condition. As always, prior to starting any new treatment, consider reaching out to your medical provider or mental health practitioner.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- 1) Have a better understanding of the neuropsychological affects of fear
- 2) Define FCR: the *fear of cancer recurrence*
- 3) Learn tools that help to cope with FCR

# FEAR...WHAT IS IT?



# FEAR IS NORMAL



- Remember:  
cancer is scary
- Normalize and  
validate the fear that  
your patients  
experience(d)
- How do we know if  
the fear is normal?

# FCR DEFINED



Fear of cancer recurrence or FCR has been defined as “*fear, worry or concern relating to the possibility that cancer will come back or progress.*” This is a “normative reaction affecting most cancer survivors to some degree.”

(1)

# ACKNOWLEDGE, NAME AND MEASURE



- 1) Acknowledge the fear
- 2) Name it (Have fun, play on words, be sarcastic here. Some examples might include: double trouble, big bertha, nervous nelly or my panic pal)
- 3) Take measurements or data (Where is my internal battery level today on a scale of 1-100%?)
- 4) Depending on how high the fear is, we can route interventions

# LOW OR MODERATE FCR LEVELS



- 1) Consider joining a support group
- 2) Ask medical team about what level of monitoring is to be expected in survivorship & treatment
- 3) Lean into natural supports such as friends, family, hobbies, exercise, art, music, yoga, spiritual connection
- 4) Consider mindfulness meditation. Try a free relaxation app. Some examples could be insight timer, calm or healthy minds on your app store <sup>(2)</sup>



# HIGH OR SEVERE FCR LEVELS



- 1) Consider a referral to a mental health professional. In NM, we have LCSW, LMHC, LPCC and PhD or PsyD.
- 2) Consider a cognitive-behavioral approach for treatment
  - Examples include:
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
  - Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
  - Cognitive Reframing
  - Practice Recognizing Triggers
- 3) Consider psychotropic medication assistance with Primary Care Physician or Psychiatrist

# COPING TOOLS FOR FEAR OF CANCER RECURRENCE



- Normalize and Validate your fears
- When the fear becomes overwhelming, give it a name
- Consider joining a support group
- Find a therapist
- Consider Mindfulness meditation or CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)
- Lean into your natural support systems or build them up
- Ask yourself “If I didn’t have to worry about cancer what would I be doing to make every day count?”

# REFERENCES

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