

## Resilience strategies & how to seek help for psychosocial needs

### Fatma Dedeoglu

Dr. Dedeoglu started by giving the definition of resilience and then describing its meaning more specifically in terms of the patient and their family. She mentioned that behaviours, thoughts and actions can actually be learned and developed. For example, the ability to make realistic plans, capable of taking the necessary steps to follow through, confidence in one's strength and abilities, communication and problem-solving skills, the ability to manage strong impulses and feelings, as well as staying calm and in control when faced with a challenge.

We all have the ability to endure both physical and emotional difficulties. We can achieve this by finding a solution to the problem and adapting ourselves according to the circumstances (i.e. adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats). During the time we are working on developing resilience, we can have considerable emotional distress (i.e. worry, fear).

Dr. Dedeoglu showed that people can have two attitudes towards illness. They are either optimistic or pessimistic. Resilience can be improved with outdoor activities, stress management, meditation, laughter, healthy diet, good sleep, hobbies, relationships and volunteering. These all help to divert attention to the more positive aspects of life. Cultural differences can also play a role.

A lifestyle and wellness workshop for managing autoimmune diseases by Dr. Jonathan Hausmann was highlighted. This is the link to his blog: <https://autoinflammatorydiseases.org/>

The next topic she addressed was mindfulness and referred to the work by Ezra Cohen, MD. There are several techniques that can be used based on age and other factors. If practiced regularly, it can have a dramatic impact on the way we cope with anxiety, worries or pain. It is good to be disciplined but without being too critical or controlling. Mindfulness helps us to enjoy changes, be appreciative, and it can have a positive impact on one's philosophy.

The next topic she addressed was Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), by Carolyn Snell, PhD. It aims to improve mental health by being able to manage our thoughts, behaviours, and some of the physical responses to stress. CBT can be tailored to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, mood swings, coping with chronic pain and dealing with specific medical conditions.

The components of CBT are psychoeducation, learning how to relax (deep breathing technique), biofeedback (to show relaxation is effective), cognitive part (analyse your thoughts), as well as the behavioural part (acceptance process for situations we avoid). The powerful combination of CBT is to be able to relax the body, be able to think realistically about what's going on and not to let stress dictate our behaviours. There are many tools to help, for example: guided meditation and reiki, art therapy (music, painting, pottery), physical therapy or aerobic activity, yoga/pilates, acupuncture, massage therapy, relaxation techniques/biofeedback. Several useful tips were mentioned: make connections, accept that change is part of life, keep things in perspective, maintain a hopeful outlook, take care of yourself, accept your limitations and let go, remember "three good things", seek out support groups, meditate, sleep well, reconcile, connect with positive people. Each person has to identify what works for them and develop their own personal resilience strategy.

Dr. Dedeoglu mentioned some themes in children with chronic illness. They tend to have feelings of vulnerability and isolation, difficulty in sustaining friendship and managing the burden of illness. Positive factors as to taking charge and overcoming limitations, minimization and distraction, disclosure or concealment, social and peer support, preventative interventions and programs.