

STRIDE Workbook

Session 6

In this session, we will:

- ❖ Review your practice since our last session
- ❖ Learn helpful skills to manage your most distressing side effects
- ❖ Learn ways to cope with fears of recurrence and live with uncertainty
- ❖ Review the most helpful skills and make a plan to keep using them
- ❖ Introduce a bonus relaxation exercise: guided visual imagery

Managing Side Effects & Coping with Fears and Uncertainty

Review

- *What tools have you used this week to cope with side effects?*
- *Are there side effects that you feel you have more control over?*
- *What did you notice when practicing the acceptance relaxation exercise?*
- *Have you been having any difficulty taking your medication as prescribed?*

Feel free to write down any related thoughts below:

Side Effect Management:

Let's learn some more helpful strategies so that you are able to continue taking your medication without compromising your quality of life. Which side effects would you like to learn coping strategies for today? Turn to the page for that side effect, listed below:

Body Image, Weight, Hair	78
Memory Difficulties and Concentration	81
Fatigue/Loss of Energy	84
Hot Flashes	91
Mood Swings, Sadness, or Nervousness	93
Joint Pain, Muscle Aches, & Headaches	98
Sexuality and Intimacy	102
Sleep	105

Coping with Fears of Recurrence and Living with Uncertainty

It is normal to have worries about breast cancer coming back, and for this nervousness to be heightened around the time of scans and doctors' visits.

If these uncertainties become overwhelming, making it difficult for you to focus on your day, job, family, or other responsibilities, here are a few strategies to try:

- 1.** Remember that you are following your doctor's recommendations by taking your hormonal therapy.
- 2.** Refer to the session on adaptive thinking to see if you can modify any thoughts that are unhelpful. For example, are you paying more attention to things in your environment or body and interpreting them in a way that is threatening (I sense pain and I think it may be a tumor)?
- 3.** Worry time: Set aside a time of day for your worries for about 10 minutes, but not before bed. If other worry thoughts pop into your mind throughout the day, remind yourself that it is not the time to worry, and you will worry about that thought later in the time that you have set aside for worrying. Agree that you will allow yourself to worry during those 10 minutes, with the understanding that you will move on to something else when the 10 minutes is up.
- 4.** Identify the source of your fear and determine if you can do something about it (controllable). Remember, if it is controllable, you can choose an action-oriented coping strategy, and when it is uncontrollable you can choose an emotion-focused coping strategy.

Example:

- ❖ If your uncertainty comes from not having enough information, or having unclear or conflicting information, this is controllable, and you can choose an action-oriented strategy such as asking questions to your healthcare team.
- ❖ If all your questions are answered and there is still unpredictability or uncertainty that cannot be changed, then this is uncontrollable and you can choose an emotion-oriented coping strategy such as relaxation, mindfulness, acceptance, self-soothing (e.g., massage, exercise, music), or social distraction.

Bonus Relaxation Exercise: Guided Visual Imagery

Although we won't practice this in our session today, we will send you a bonus relaxation exercise, using visual imagery to relax.

Imagining yourself somewhere else is a good distraction technique to use, in moderation, when you are feeling anxious, worried, or nervous, and there is nothing you can do to solve the problem. For example, when waiting for the results of your last scan, it can be an emotion-oriented coping strategy to manage stress and worry.

Try visualizing yourself somewhere else and use the audio recording as a guide.



**Take a moment to congratulate yourself
on completing this program!**

You dedicated meaningful time from your day to learn and practice skills to help you cope with challenges after breast cancer and hormonal therapy. The last step is to form a plan to keep using these coping skills for managing side effects and to continue taking your hormonal therapy every day for the amount of time your doctor prescribed.

- ❖ *How might you ensure that you will continue taking your medication?*
- ❖ *What might you do if you notice yourself slipping?*
- ❖ *How might thinking about your medication differently help you to stay on track?*
- ❖ *What tools will you use to manage side effects so that they don't get in the way of taking your medication?*

Take a few moments to identify a maintenance plan for yourself and write it below:

What is next?

- ❖ Study staff will ask you to **complete study questionnaires** after this session and again in approximately three months.
- ❖ As a reminder, your study therapist will call you for a brief **phone check-in** to see how you are doing in about one month and again in two months.
- ❖ Please **keep using the pill bottle** that was given to you to store your medication. Study staff will get in touch with you when it is time to stop using it and will arrange to get it from you.
- ❖ **Practice your guided visual imagery** bonus exercise!

Exercise 6.1: Session 6 Home Practice

Expand upon your toolkit with strategies you learned in this session. Which skills will you pull from when you are experiencing side effects? We will review your toolkit with you at the phone check-ins.

Diaphragmatic Breathing	Massage
Progressive Muscle Relaxation	Acupuncture
Mini relaxation exercise	Talk to medical care team
Acceptance exercise	Pleasurable activity
Mindfulness practice	Distraction
Cognitive reframing and adaptive thinking	Modify environmental triggers
Physical activity	Seek social support
Focus on sleep habits	Optimize nutritional intake
Activity pacing	Modify an enjoyable activity

We sincerely appreciate your participation in this study and hope you have found it helpful as you navigate this time in your life!

Notes

Use this "Notes" section in whatever way fits your needs. You may use it to jot down thoughts about the session or the practice exercise.

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