Psychological Reactions to Heart Disease
The Patient and Their Family

Lifespan Cardiovascular Institute
Rhode Island Hospital • The Miriam Hospital
Newport Hospital
Delivering health with care®

Center for Cardiac Fitness
Cardiac Rehab Program
The Miriam Hospital
Areas Impacted

- **Affect**
  - Emotional reactions

- **Role changes**
  - Behavioral reactions

- **Goals**
  - Commitment shifts

- **Expectations**
  - Partner intimacy
Ingredients for Success

- Acceptance
- Flexibility
- Patience
Emotions

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Depression
Managing Emotions

- Normalize
- Gather the facts
- Acceptance of current health
- Productive expression of emotion
- Seek help
Impact of Heart Disease on Others

• Heart disease impacts more than just the patient
• Individuals want to support each other
• What may be supportive to one is not to another
• Effective communication can help meet each other’s needs and be supportive
Changing Roles

- Home
- Work
- Relationships
Coping With Changes

- Flexibility
- Focus on what you can do
- Pace yourself
- Communication
Expectations

➢ REALISTIC

➢ Of self

➢ Of others

➢ Patience!
Behavioral Strategies

• Taking a break
  • Pleasurable distraction

• Being informed
  • Seeking as much info as possible

• Talking it out
  • With outside support

• Planning
  • For any and all “what-ifs”
Role of Family and Commitment Changes

• Taking on more household responsibilities
• Change in work effort/commitments
• Attending to healthcare needs
  – Appointments
  – Treatment regimens
• Need to have more time “available”
Needing Support

- Caregiver distress > patient distress
- Information on caring and managing CVD
- Isolation
  - Caregiving duties
  - Perceived need or fear of being away
- Reduced hobbies or activities
- Don’t want to ask for help
Ways to Help Family Members

• Make them partners in your health care
• Learn warning signs of cardiac events
• Take a CPR course
• Promote new health habits (e.g., quitting smoking, exercise)
Ways to Help Family Members

- Open discussions
- Acknowledgement
- Expand support network (e.g., support groups)
- Encourage self-care
- Seek out professional help
Types of Communication

• **Passive**: withholding your opinions, feelings, and wants.
  – This style can make you feel as though you have no control over a situation.

• **Aggressive**: honestly stating your opinions, feelings, and wants, but at the expense of others.
  – This style offends others, and their negative reaction to you can lead to stress.

• **Assertive**: stating your opinions, feelings, and wants openly, but in a respectful, considerate, tactful way.
  – This style may help reduce stress in specific situations
Communicate Effectively

- “I” Messages have a different impact on the listener
- Less defensiveness by listener
- Communicates your feelings and needs without placing blame on others
- Facilitates problem solving
Enhanced Relationship

- Increased closeness
- Increased solidarity
  - Both engaged in lifestyle changes
- Appreciation for each other
- Appreciation for life

TMH Cardiac Rehabilitation Education Program