

Roadmap to Resiliency and Wellness: Perspectives and strategies for managing distress



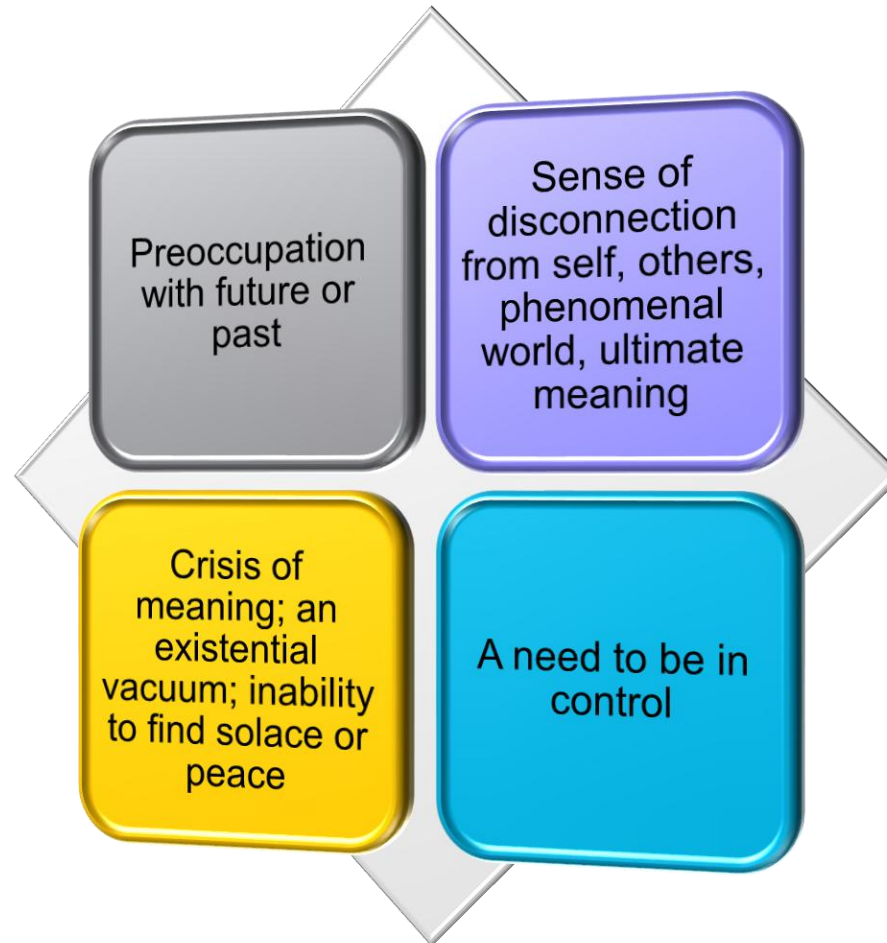
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Patient and Family Support Program
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cedars-sinai.org

Objectives

1. Recognize manifestations of existential distress
2. Identify the relationship between a sense of meaning and purpose and health and well-being
3. Describe empirically-based interventions that can help foster a sense of resilience and fulfillment

Suffering/Anguish



- **What does it mean to be healthy?**
- **What does it mean to be resilient?**
- **What does it mean to be fulfilled?**



Life May be Your Best Medicine

- What does it mean to be healthy?
- What does it mean to be resilient?
- What does it mean to be fulfilled?



Meaning & Purpose

Guinness (March 11, 2016): Holocaust survivor, 112, named world's oldest man



“I don’t know the secret for long life. I believe that everything is determined from above and we shall never know the reasons why. There have been smarter, stronger and better-looking men than me who are no longer alive. All that is left for us to do is to keep on working as hard as we can and rebuild what is lost.”

Mr. Israel Kristal

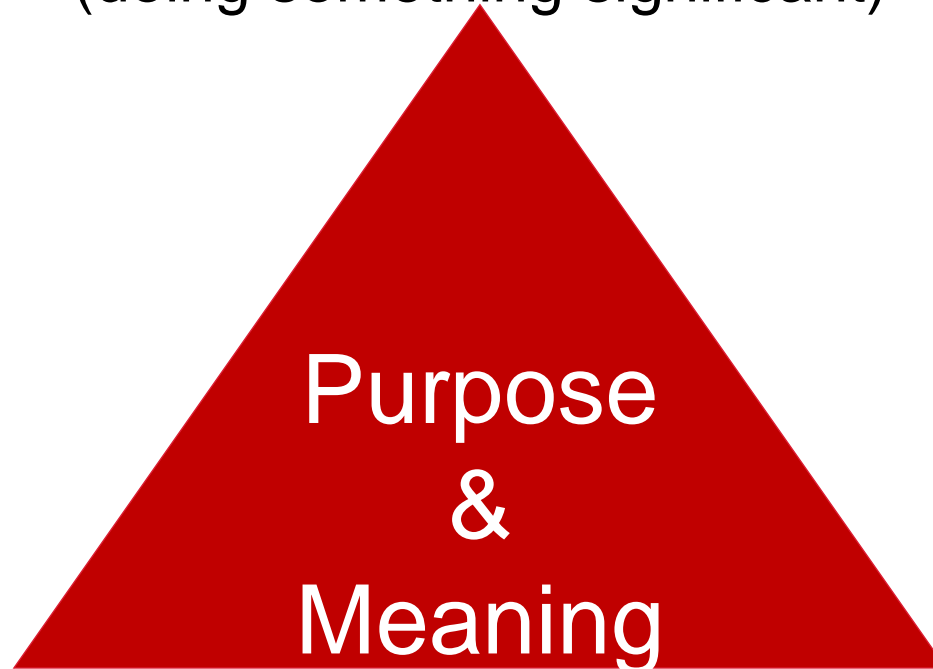
Viktor E. Frankl

- 1905 – 1997
- Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust Survivor
- Between 1942 and 1945 Frankl imprisoned in 4 different camps, including Auschwitz
- His mother, father, brother, and pregnant wife were imprisoned and all but Frankl perished



Frankl's Sources for Finding Meaning and Purpose

Work
(doing something significant)

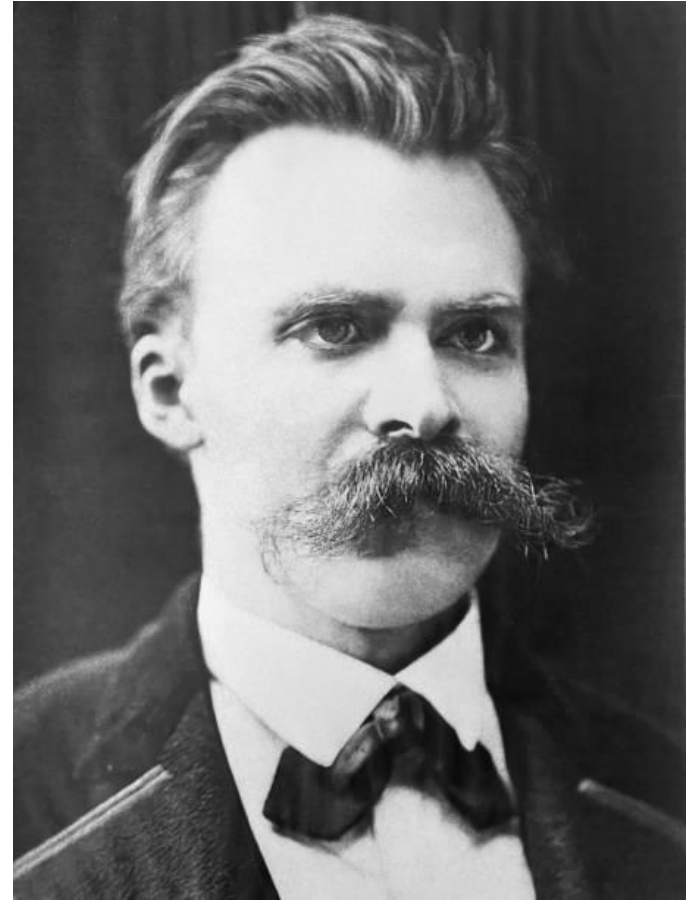


Courage
(during difficult times)

Love
(caring for another person)

**He who has a why to
live for can bear
almost any how.**

— Friedrich Nietzsche



Why Does Purpose in Life Matter?

- Ten studies with a total of 136,265 participants
- Significant association with a higher purpose in life and:
 1. Reduced all-cause mortality (relative risk 0.83)
 2. Reduced cardiovascular events (relative risk 0.83)

Fulfillment



What does life expect from me?

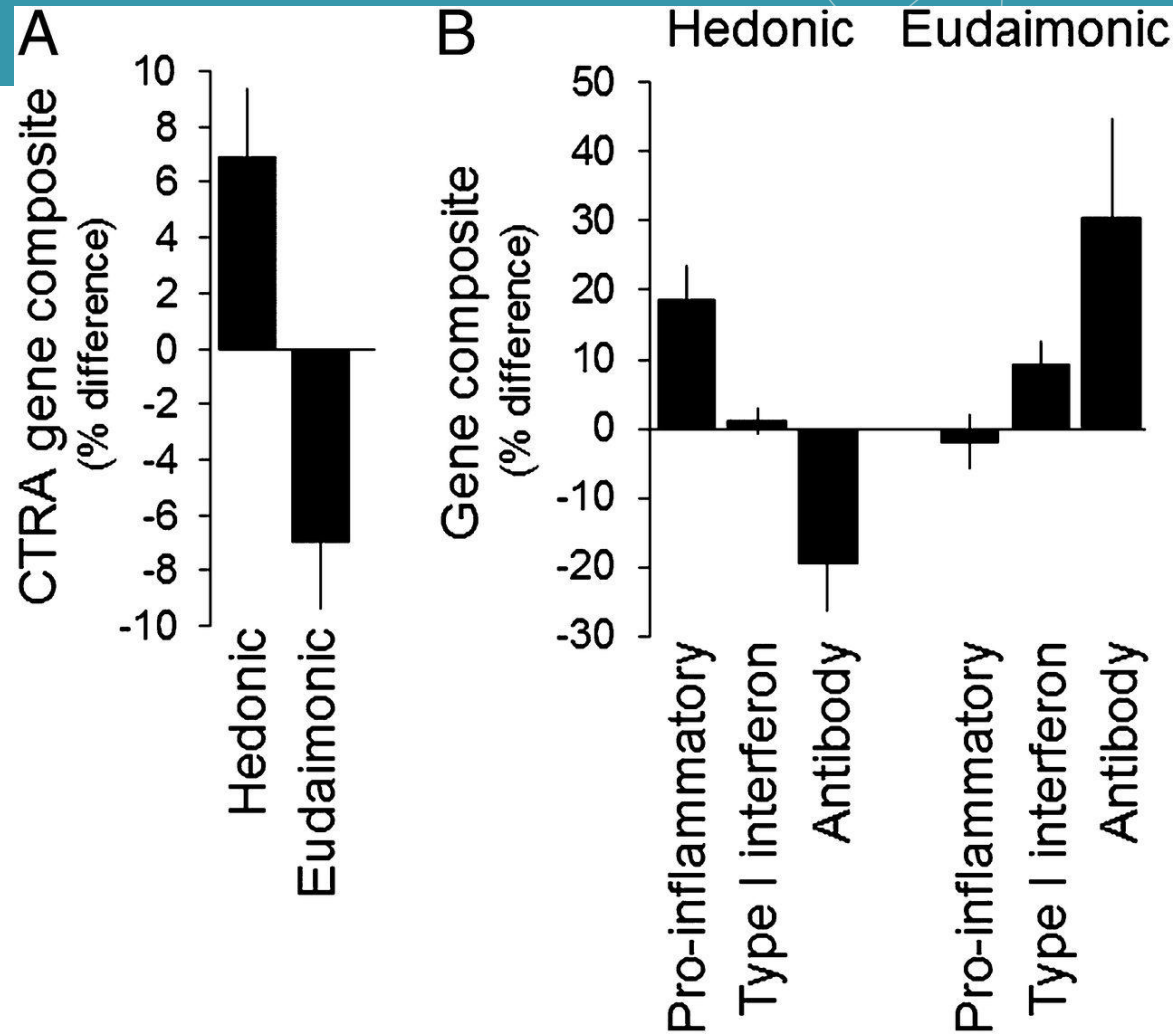


(Rather than what do I expect from life?)

Hedonic vs. Eudaimonic



Expression of the CTRA gene (Gene Involved with ADVERSITY): Both groups selected for HIGH Levels of WELL-BEING



Barbara L. Fredrickson et al. PNAS 2013;110:13684-13689

Hedonic vs. Eudaimonic

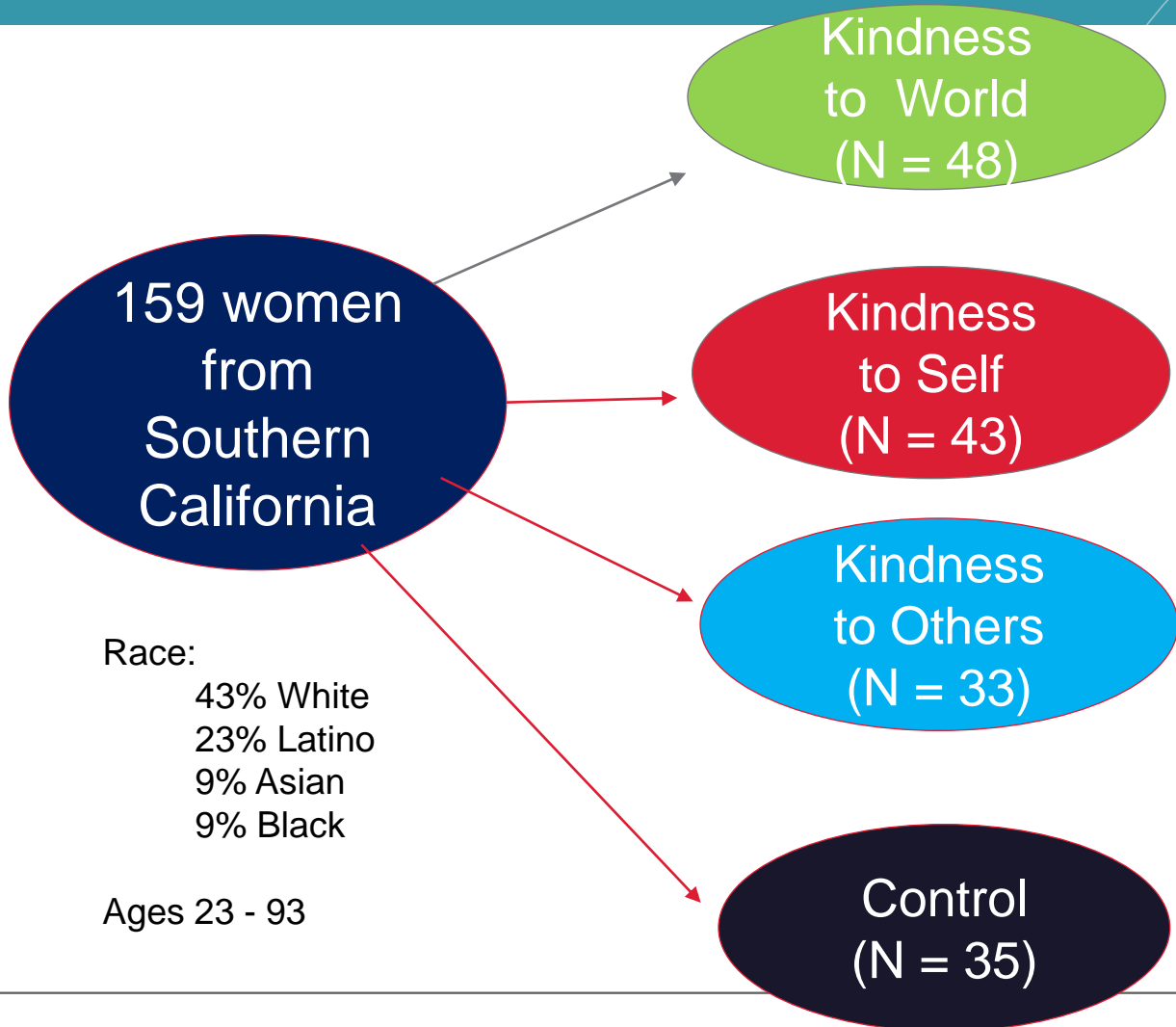


What do I expect from life?



What does life expect from me?

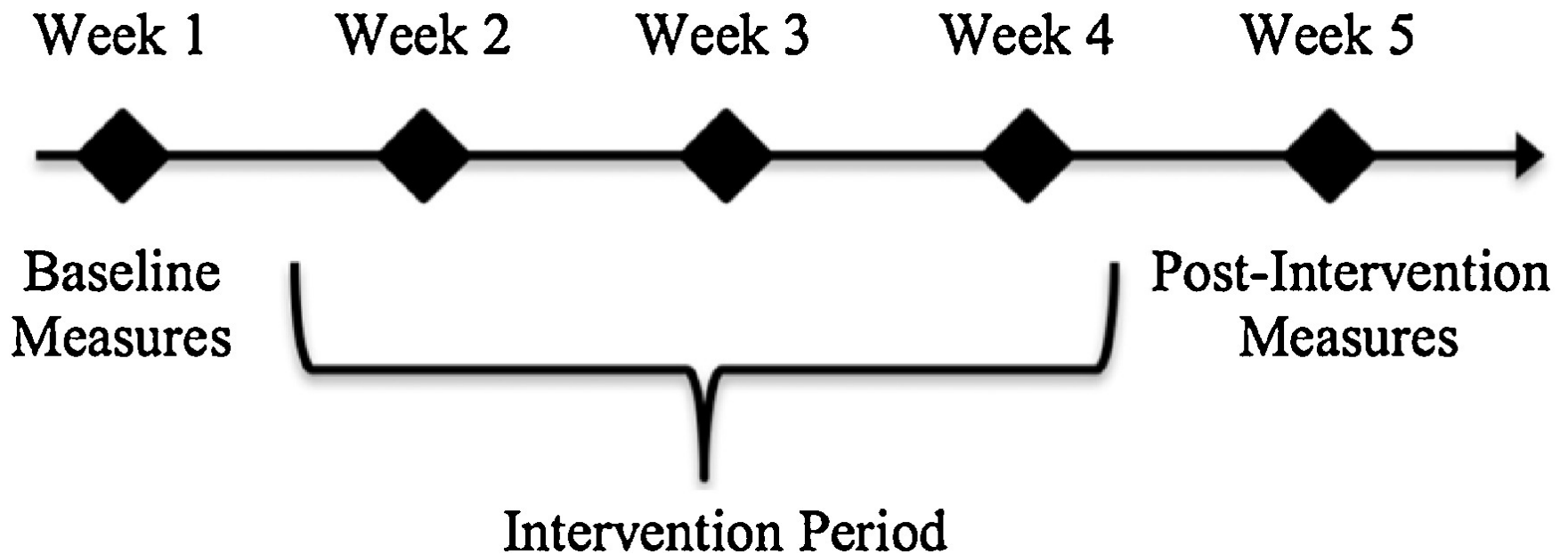
Kindness in the Blood Study



Race:
43% White
23% Latino
9% Asian
9% Black

Ages 23 - 93

Kindness in the Blood Study



Kindness Randomization

Kindness to others

- *Tomorrow, you are to perform three nice things for others*
- “Made my significant other their favorite meal”

Kindness to world

- *Tomorrow, you are to perform three nice things to improve the world*
- “Donated money to Plant Discovery Day”

Kindness to self

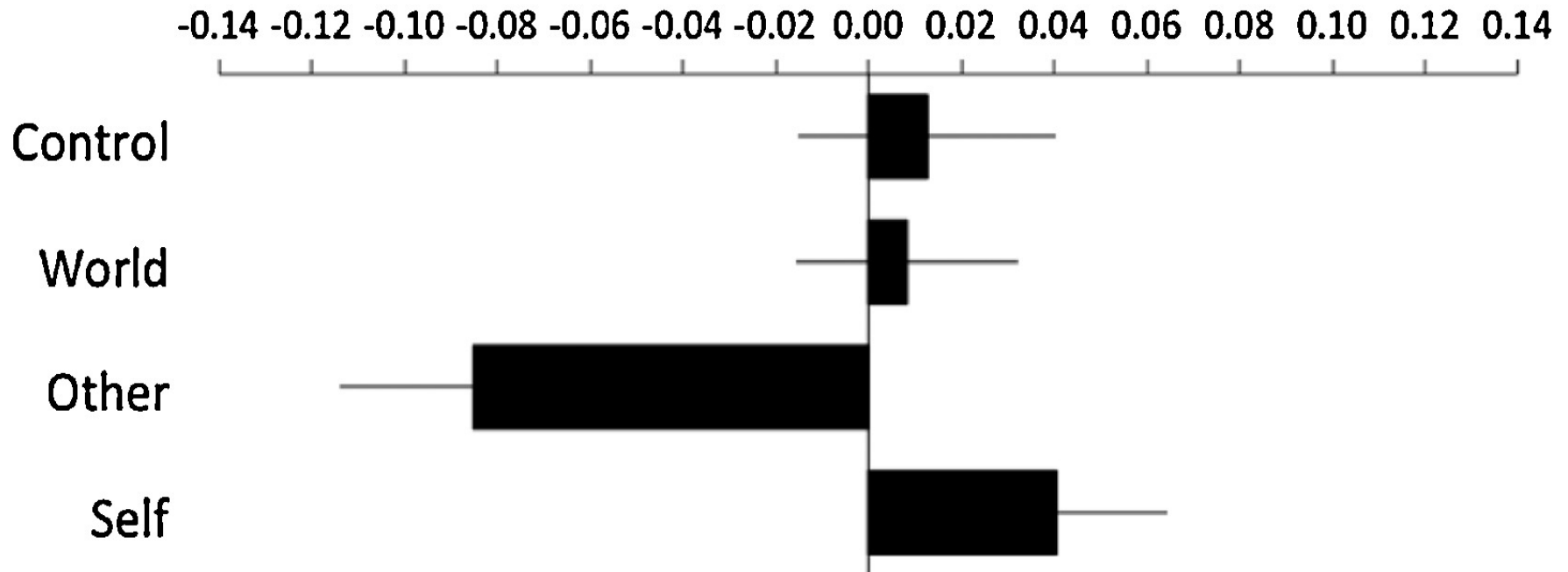
- *Tomorrow, you are to perform three acts of kindness for yourself*
- “Went to the beach”

Control

- *Tomorrow, as you go about your day, please keep track of your activities*

Kindness in the Blood Study

Change in CTRA gene expression: Week 5 – Week 1

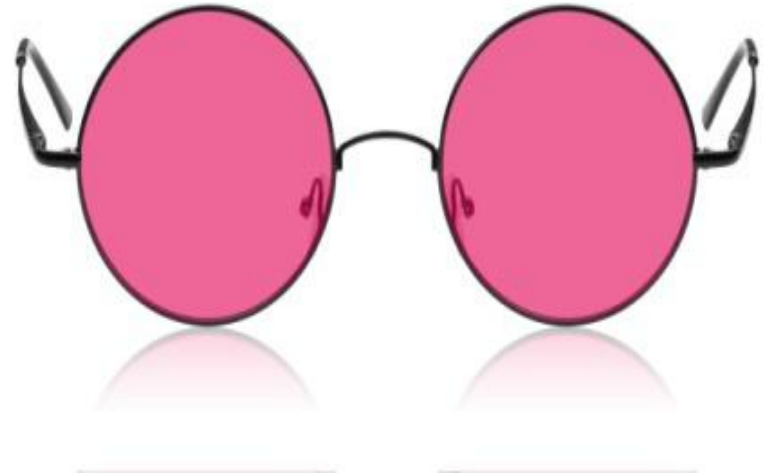


Mastering Perspective

Perspective Management

“...only 10 percent of your long-term happiness is based on the external world, while 90 percent is based on how your brain processes the world,”

- Shawn Achor, Ph.D.



"Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own thoughts, unguarded. But once mastered, no one can help you as much, not even your father or your mother."

~Buddha~

Managing Attitude

“We who lived, in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that **everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.**”

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

The Most Important Legacy

- Teaches us to think about not just how to invest our money, but how to *invest our time*
- If we're not paying **attention**, we may spend all most of our time on ***things that are urgent, but not important***
- “Teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Psalm).
- **So we can spend time on things are important but not urgent**

Legacy: Living with Intent

“You have no idea what your legacy will be. Your legacy is what you do everyday. Your legacy is every life you’ve touched, every person whose life was either moved or not. It’s every person you’ve harmed or helped, that’s your legacy.”

- Maya Angelou

Cultivating Gratitude

What Good is Gratitude?

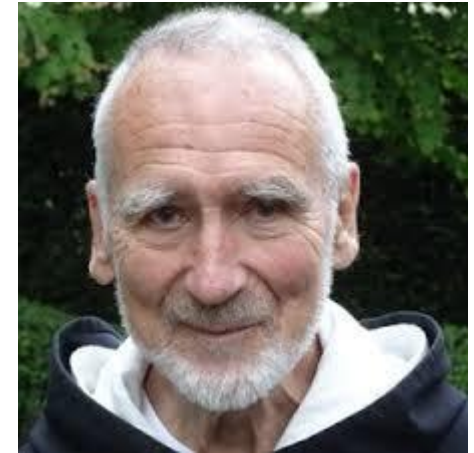
- **Gratitude allows celebration of the present**
- **Gratitude blocks help negative emotions:**
 - Anger
 - Resentment
 - Envy Emmons RA, McCullough MC, *Journal of Personality and Psychology*, 2003
- **Gratitude helps the quantity and quality of sleep**
Digdon N, Koble A, *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 2011
- **Stronger immune systems**
- **Grateful people are more likely to empathize and help others**
- **Gratitude helps strengthen social ties**
- **Grateful people are more resilient to stress**

Kashdan TB et al, *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 2006

Not about thinking that life is perfect

On Being Grateful

“Does that mean that we can be grateful for everything? Certainly not. We cannot be grateful for violence, for war, for oppression, for exploitation. On the personal level, we cannot be grateful for the loss of a friend, for unfaithfulness, for bereavement. But I didn't say we can be grateful for everything. I said we can be grateful in every given moment...”

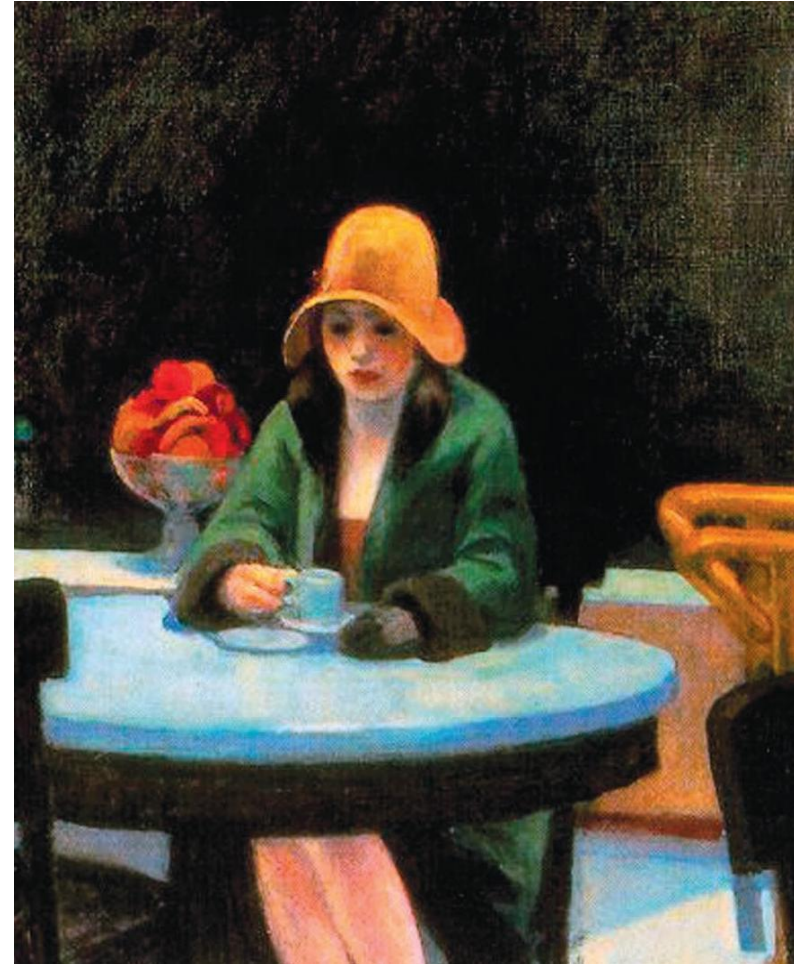


David Steidl-Rast

Connectivity

Chronic Loneliness

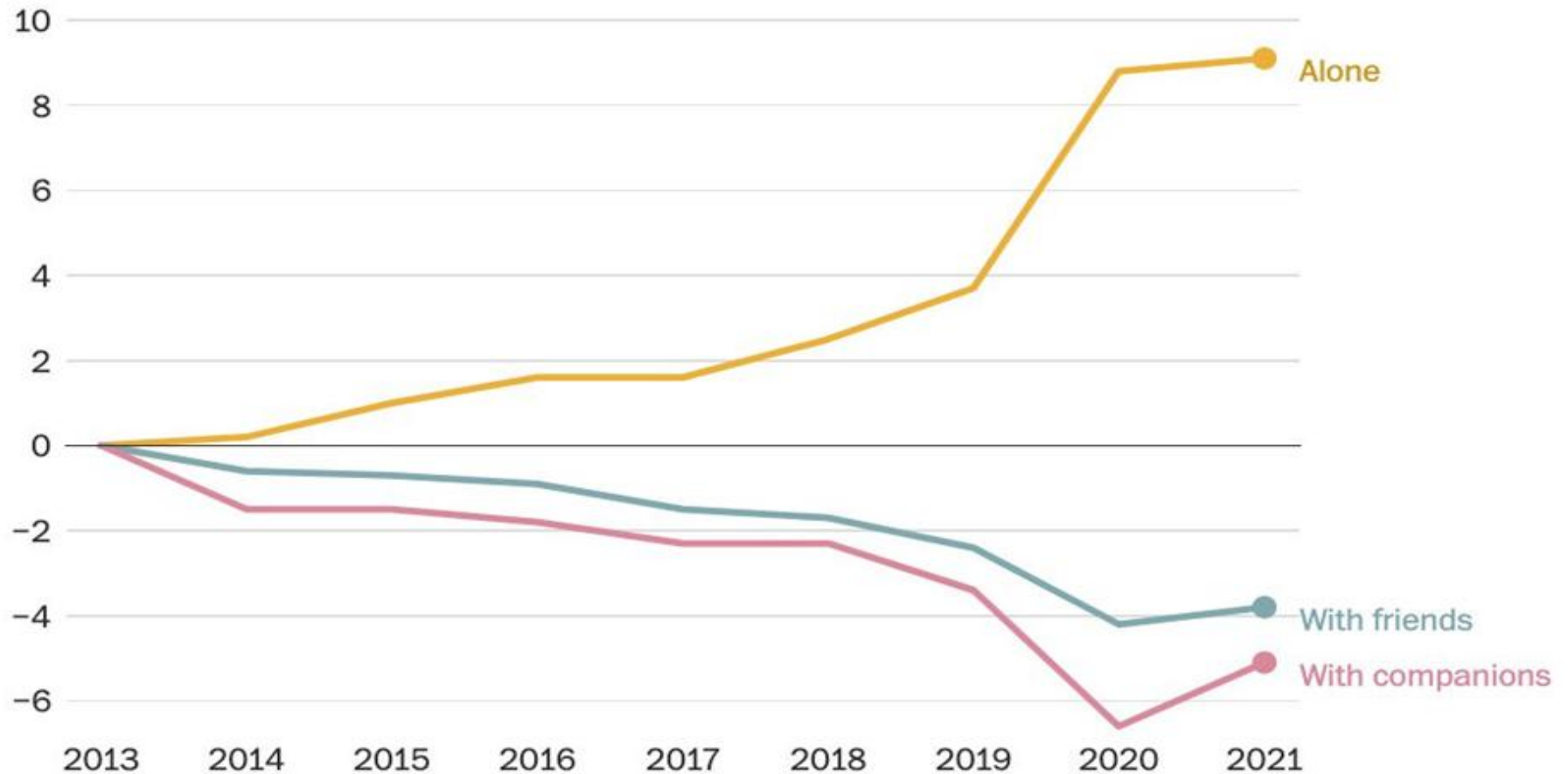
- Chronic loneliness can cause changes in the cardiovascular, immune, and nervous system
- Associated with 26% higher mortality rates in general population
- Associated with a hazard ratio of 1.7 for breast-cancer related mortality



Who Americans spend their time with

Americans 15 and older are spending a lot more time alone than they did in 2013. The trend started before the pandemic.

Hours per week



Note: 2020 numbers are not fully comparable to other years because the pandemic impacted data collection.

Source: American Time Use Survey

THE WASHINGTON POST

Loneliness is a *subjective* experience

Some people are socially isolated but they are not lonely

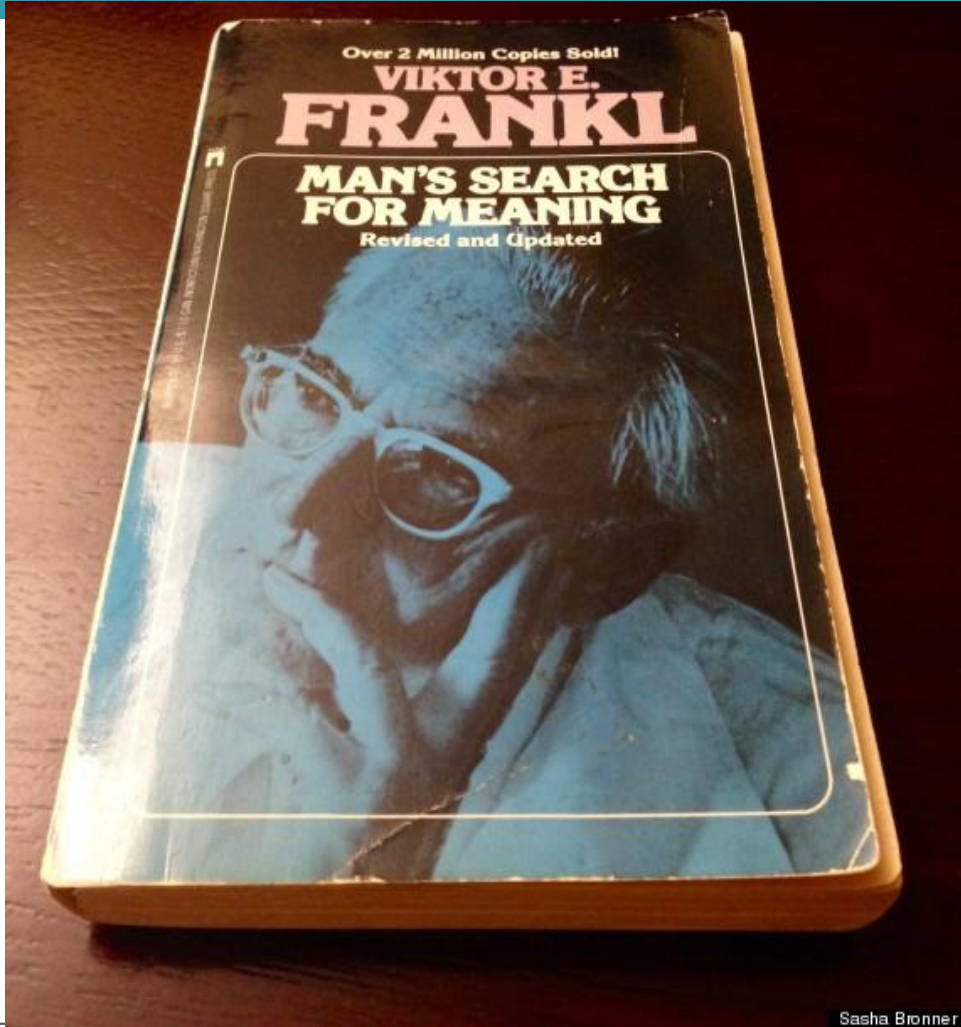
Some people are lonely even if they have a lot of social contacts

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the right of the word. The logo is centered within a dark blue rectangular background.

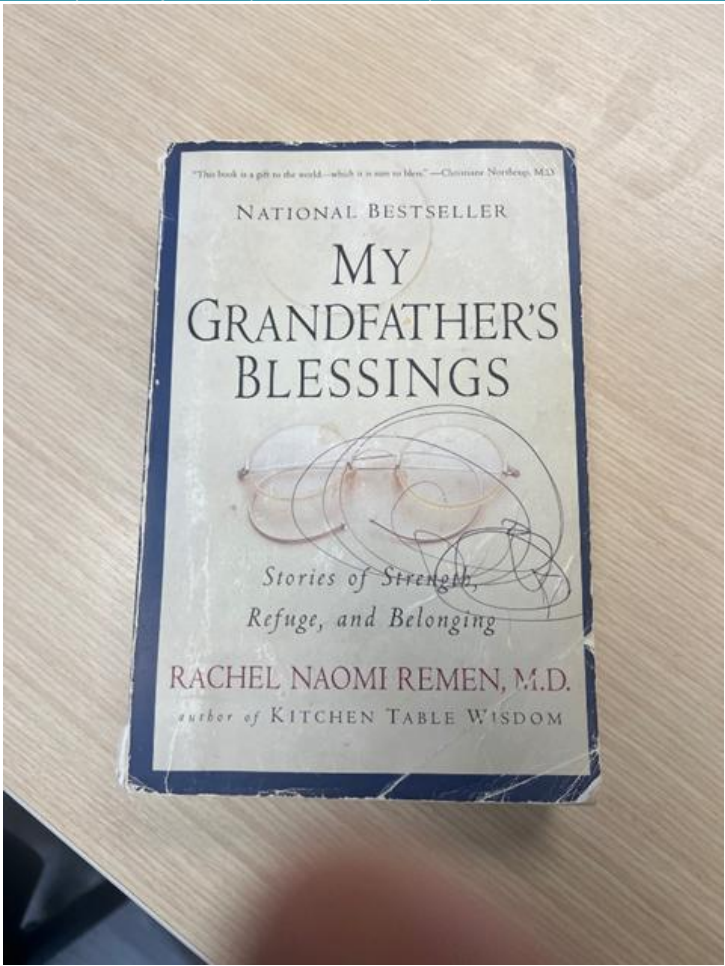
facebook®

Loneliness Can Be Overcome

- **Stay connected**
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy**
 - Shift people's attention and interpretation of social situations in a more adaptive direction
- **“The degree of social connection that can improve our health and happiness....is both as simple and as difficult as *being open and available to others.*” (Cacioppo, 2011)**



Sasha Bronner



Growing Resiliency And Courage (GRACE™)

- **Module 1: Insight & Wisdom**
- **Module 2: Hope**
- **Module 3: Gratitude & Humor**
- **Module 4: Connectivity**
- **Module 5: The Search for Meaning**
- **Module 6: The Art of Healing**
- **Module 7: Courage**
- **Module 8: Fulfillment**
- **Module 9: Living Your Legacy**



My GRACE Colleagues



Jeffrey Wertheimer, PhD, ABPP-CN



Bronwen Jones, MTheol

The Oncologist, 2023, **XX**, 1–14
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oncolo/oyad091>
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Original Article

OXFORD

A 6-Week Program to Strengthen Resiliency Among Women With Metastatic Cancer: A Randomized Clinical Trial

Arash Asher^{*1} , Celina H. Shirazipour^{2,3}, Jessica M. Capaldi², Sungjin Kim⁴, Marcio Diniz⁴ , Bronwen Jones⁵, Jeffrey Wertheimer⁶

A Randomized Controlled Trial to Strengthen Existential Resiliency among Women with Metastatic Cancer (GRACE)

- **Purpose:** To assess the impact of a six- week educational program on spiritual and psychological wellbeing among women with metastatic cancer
- **Two arm RCT- Waitlist control vs direct intervention; n=60**

- **Co-Principal Investigators:**

- Arash Asher, MD
- Jeffrey Wertheimer, Ph.D., ABPP-CN

- **Co-facilitator:**

- Bronwen Jones, Chaplain

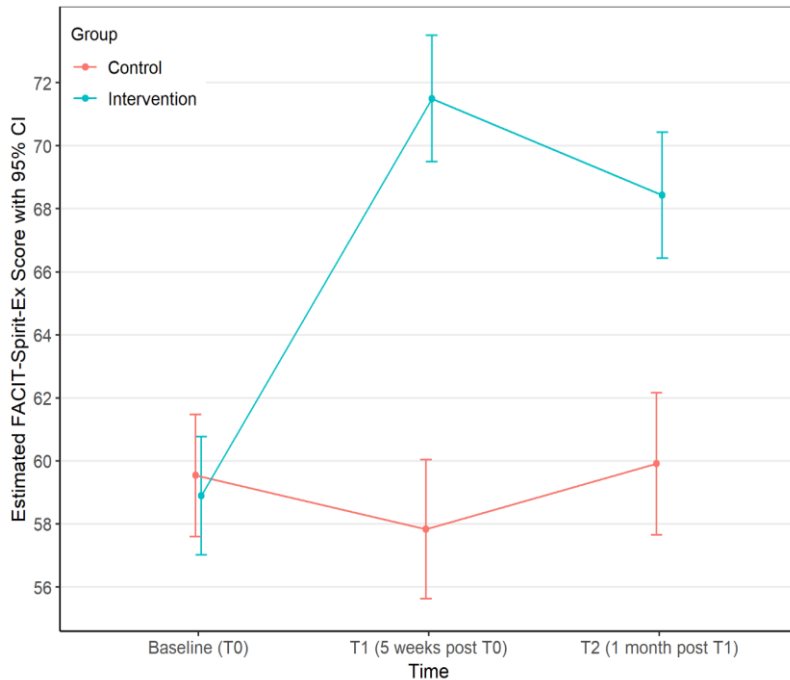
- **Funding Source:** NCCN (Pfizer), ABPP-CN

Inclusion

- Women with metastatic cancer with a minimum prognosis of 3 months
- Existential or spiritual concerns.
- Reasonable medical stability
- Commits to attending 5/6 of the GRACE classes
- English speaking

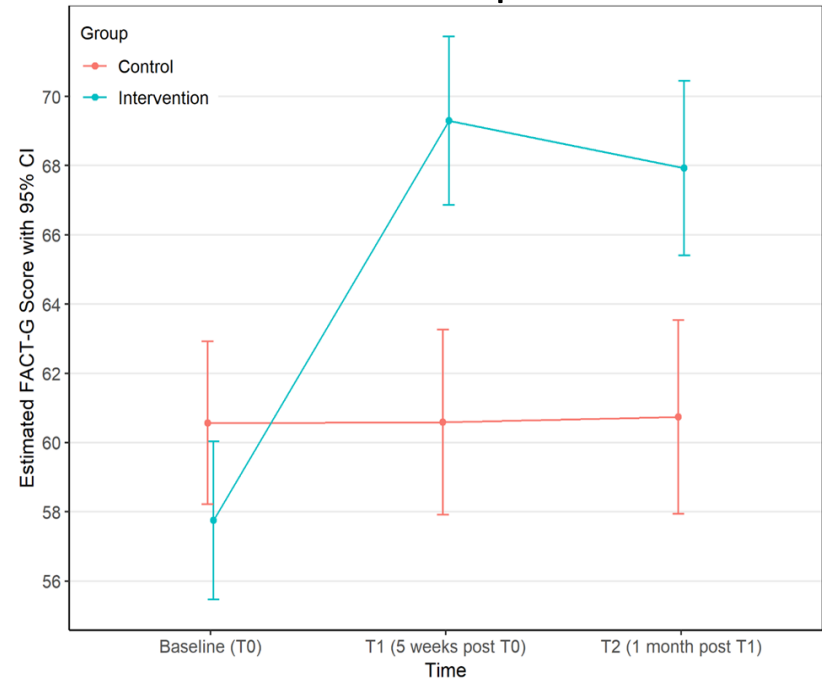
GRACE RCT Results

Spiritual Distress (FACIT-Spirit-Ex) for GRACE vs. Control Group over Time



Higher scores = higher quality of life

Quality of Life (FACT-G) Score for GRACE vs Control Group over Time



Higher scores = higher quality of life

- **The GRACE program statistically and meaningfully improved symptoms and well-being**

Pearls for Enhancing Resiliency

- **Meaning-centered living**
- **Mastering perspective**
- **Living with an attitude of gratitude (try a journal)**
- **Integrating a sense of legacy into our lives**
- **Staying connected**
- **Being mindful or meditating (however that makes sense to you)**
- **Try to maintain a sense of humor**



Thank you



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