

Medical treatments: how do I decide what to do?

The Decision Making Process

I am often asked how to evaluate medical treatment options. So to help to clarify how to decide what to do medically, we have reproduced the following extract from my book *You Can Conquer Cancer*.

The logical way to assess any proposed form of treatment is to ask the following questions:

1. What does the future hold for you if no treatment is given, and in such circumstances what range of life expectancy would you have?

The best way to ask this question is statistically. Ask if there were one hundred patients just like me and they had no treatment, what would be a reasonable estimate for the following:

- i). How many people would be alive after one year, and what would their health be like?
- ii). How many people would be alive after five years, and what would their health be like?

2. What range of life expectancy would you have if given the proposed form of treatment?

Again, ask for the answer to this question in statistical terms. If there were one hundred people like you who had the same condition and they received the proposed treatment, what would be a reasonable estimate for the following:

- i) After one year, how many people would be alive and what would their health be like?
- ii) After five years, how many people would be alive and what would their health be like?

Note: These statistical ranges should be available in virtually all but experimental situations. If they are not provided on request, I would be suspicious and seek another opinion. If you are considering an experimental treatment, you can only make an assessment on its possible merits.

In other words, through these first questions you are aiming to find out the anticipated benefits of the treatment.

3. What are the possible side effects of the treatment?

Again it is essential to obtain the answer to this question in statistical terms so that you have a real sense of any potential risks. So ask: If there were 100 people like me who had this treatment, what side effects are possible and how many people are likely to be effected by those side effects, e.g., do 5% or 95% have nausea?, do 5% or 95% loose their hair? etc.

4. What impact will my own response to the treatment have on the outcome?

In truth, the answer to this question may be harder to define than the previous three. The medical system is very good at evaluating its results. This is made easier by the fact that a single intervention, such as a drug therapy, is relatively easy to study and accurately evaluate. By contrast, the human being is incredibly complex - the role of emotions, mind and spirit are extremely interwoven. They are not amenable to the standard double-blind, cross-over trials used to research and evaluate so many drugs.

What does seem clear, however, is that how you respond has the potential to affect the outcome of anything you do. If in cancer treatment you are treated with chemotherapy, full of fear and loathing, preoccupied with potential side-effects and the possibilities of damaging your immune system, you are highly likely to undermine the potential benefits of that treatment. If, on the other hand, you think it through and decide to accept the treatment, regard it as in your best interest and do all you can to work with it, you are likely to get the very best from that treatment.

This is why I strongly advise you to make conscious decisions about all you do. Nearly always, there are pluses and minuses to consider when making decisions. Take your time and think things through. If you need help with this, there is a very useful decision making technique that draws on both the intellect and intuition set out in the chapter 'Setting Clear Goals' in my book *The Mind that Changes Everything*.

Once you do come to a decision, the strong recommendation is to embrace all you do. Embrace! Not just put up with, not just tolerate, nor even just accept. Embrace it! Understand that this is what you have chosen to do. It is in your best interest. Know that whether it be having chemotherapy, changing your diet or practicing meditation, the more you welcome it into your life, the better you feel about doing it, the more you support your choice, the more you embrace it - the better it will work.

When you embrace what you do, you release all the positive potentials of your mind, emotions and spirit.

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