



Life After Cancer

Psychosocial Health in Cancer Survivors

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+ Discussion Topics



- What does the research say about psychosocial health in cancer survivors?
- Developmental considerations
- Life after cancer
- Areas of difficulty to address
- Resources and recommendations



What does the research say?



- Survivors are generally resilient and may experience positive outcomes related to enhanced coping abilities and “posttraumatic growth.”
- However, having been treated for cancer increases risk of psychological distress, somatic symptoms, cognitive late-effects, developmental deviations.
- Psychosocial health often affected by physical health.



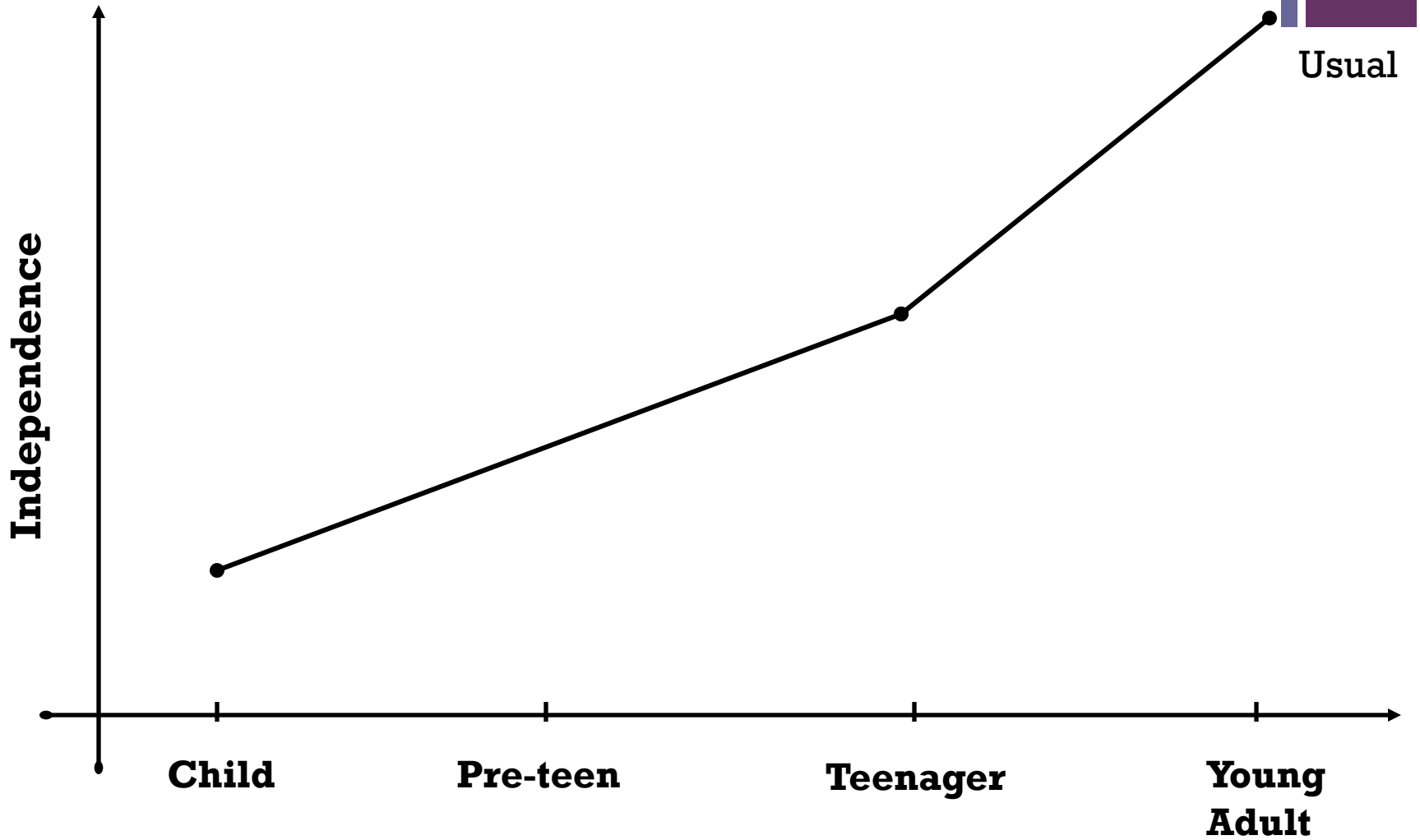
Developmental Considerations



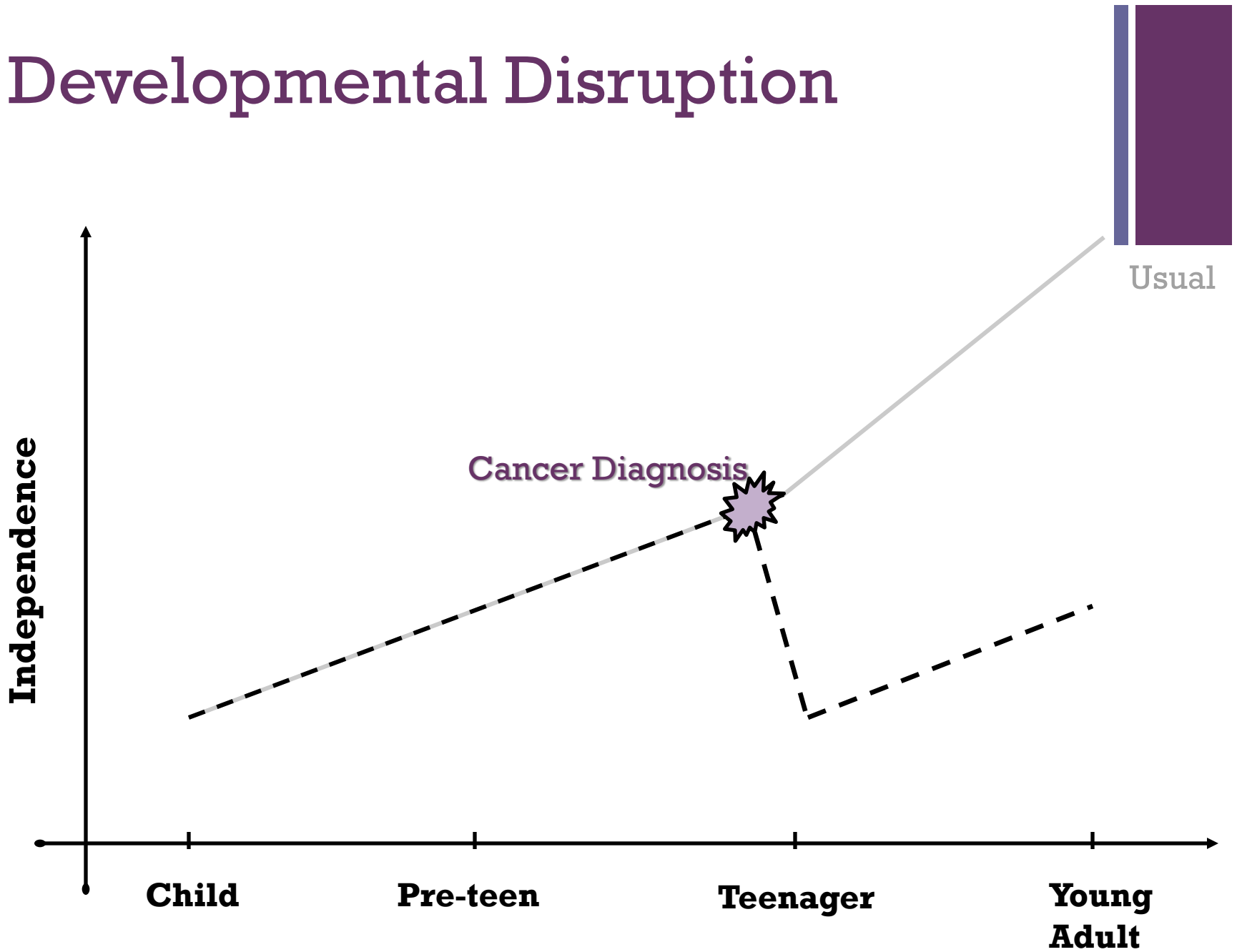
- Impact of developmental stage at time of diagnosis and treatment, and current developmental stage.
- Consider degree of independence and engagement in:
 - Self care activities and household responsibilities
 - Social activities (friends, romantic interests, hobbies, clubs)
 - School
- Developmental Stages
 - Early Childhood: bonding, separating, early emotion regulation skills and independence
 - School Age: interests, friendships, school, natural consequences
 - Adolescence: peers, identity development, preparing for future

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/Pages/default.aspx>
<http://www.zerotothree.org>

+ Typical Development



+ Developmental Disruption





Nobody said this would be easy....



- Adjustment around time of diagnosis
- Adjustment to major stressors of treatment
 - Hair loss, NG tube placement, port access, extended admissions, hospital food, etc.
- Adjustment to unexpected or unplanned (negative) events
 - Recurrence, adverse event, permanent effect of treatment, etc.
- Adjustment to ongoing treatment
 - “I’m sick of this already”
 - “I didn’t plan on missing 8th grade graduation”
- Adjustment to life after cancer
 - Getting back to “normal”



Adjusting to Life After Cancer



- How do you fit back in with your family?
- How do you fit back in with your friends?
- How do you regain independence and build more independence?
- How do you go back to school?
- How do you go back to not being in or at the hospital all the time?
- How do you build health behaviors and life habits?



What to expect and what can help



- Expect a that adjustment will take some time
- Facilitate adjustment with conversation and preparation
 - Spending time with a few friends prior to larger social gatherings
 - Going to school to meet with teachers prior to returning to school
- As health improves, set developmentally appropriate expectations with graded support as needed
 - Independence (sleeping, going places, ordering for self, hygiene behaviors, etc.)
 - Household duties (chores, behavior, participation, etc.)
 - School
- Do fun things!
 - Social activities
 - Camps!!!
 - Active activities



Increase Health Literacy



- Get familiar with the “End of Therapy” summary and keep notes from Long Term Follow Up clinic in 1 binder/folder.
- Encourage developmentally appropriate independence in transitioning knowledge from parent to child. For children who were treated when they were young, develop a concise narrative that includes treatment essentials.
- Encourage developmentally appropriate independence in monitoring health, scheduling follow-up visits, refilling current medications, etc.
- Regular discussions of health promotion and risk behaviors
 - Primary prevention (use sunscreen, avoid drugs/alcohol, eat well, exercise, safe sex practices, etc.)
 - Secondary prevention (BSE and TSE, other screening/labs).



When to consider mental health support:



- Persistent sadness or worry
- Persistent difficulty integrating with friends and peers
- Risk behaviors
- Significant effects of treatment, requiring more extensive support
 - Academic issues
 - Mobility or sensory impact of treatment
 - Medical complications requiring ongoing management
 - Transition support to address academic, occupational, and independent living needs. <http://www.gottransition.org/>

+ When discussing mental health services, use a helpful framework:

Common Misconceptions

- I don't want to be *forced* to talk about this
- The therapist will *fix* this
- I don't want to be *analyzed* or *judged*
- What did I say that made my doctor place the referral? Do they think I'm crazy?

Helpful Reframe

- A therapist is like a “talking doctor”
- A therapist will teach me specific skills to make life easier, less uncomfortable.
- A therapist will help me think through and “process” my thoughts and feelings about what happened or what is happening
- I don't have to protect mental health providers from my sad or worried feelings
- We can all learn new ways of coping, communicating, working together, etc.
- It is normal for people who have been through extremely stressful circumstances to talk to a mental health provider.

+ Mental Health Interventions: What (usually) works?



+ Cognitive Behavioral Model: Teaching Concepts, Skills, and Strategies



Thoughts

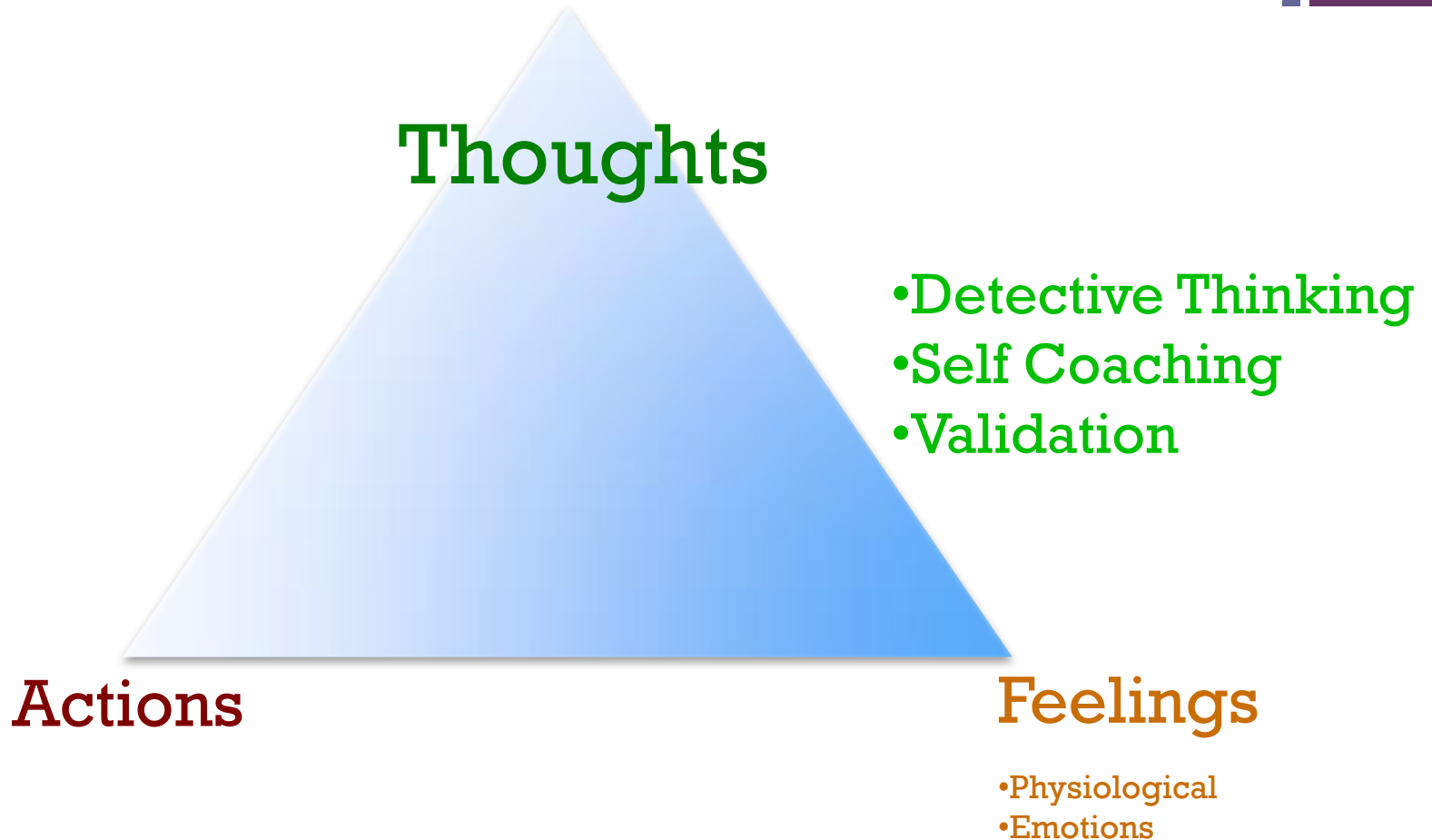


Actions

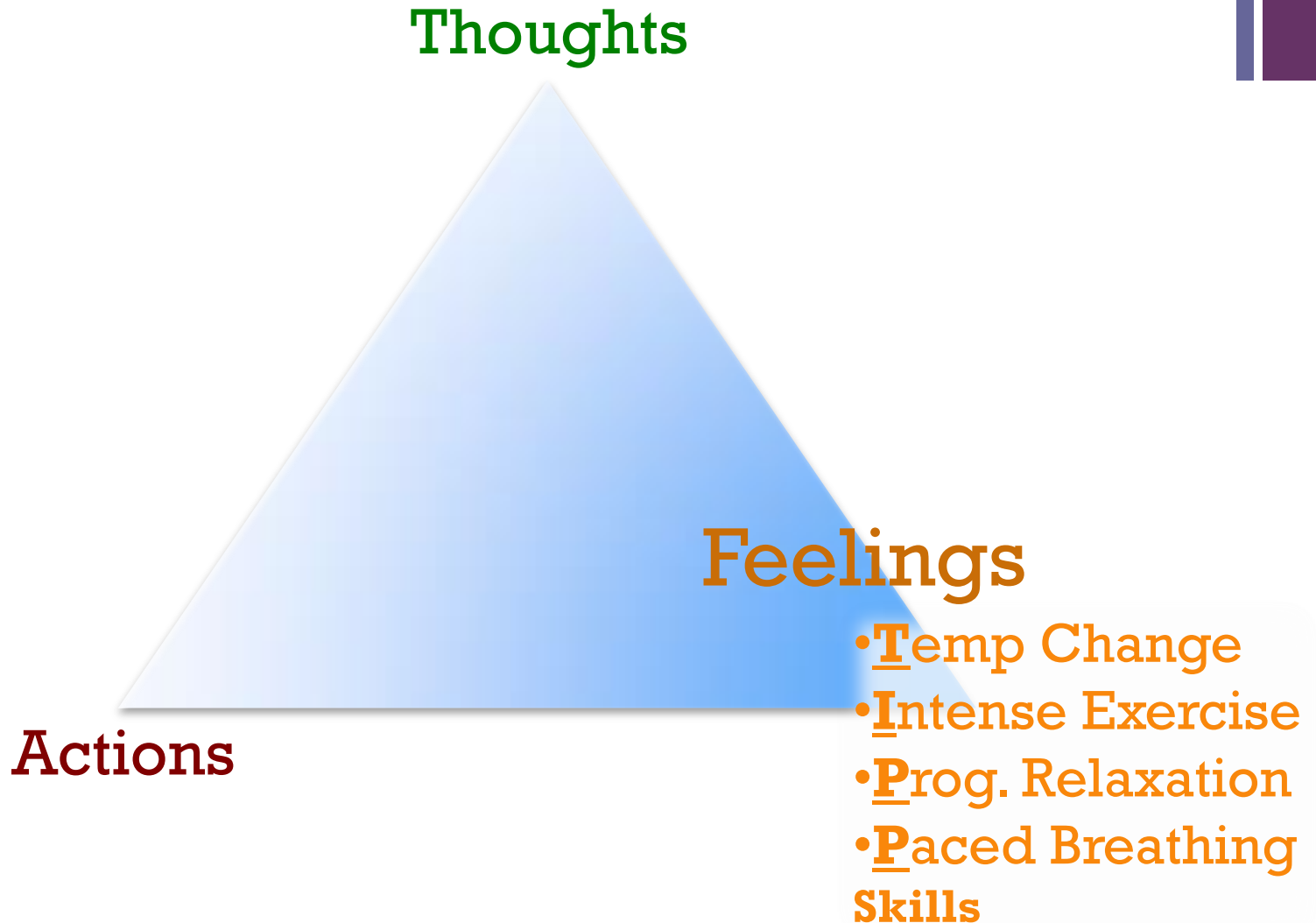
Feelings

- Physiological
- Emotions

+ Cognitive Behavioral Model



+ Cognitive Behavioral Model



+ Cognitive Behavioral Model



Thoughts

Actions

- Wellness Toolkit
- Distraction
- Positive Activity Scheduling

Feelings

- Physiological
- Emotions

+ Therapy services at SCH



- Joanna Thome Patten, PsyD, Outpatient Psychiatry
 - Individual therapy
 - Consultation and referral
 - Transition planning
- Possible expansion of social work
- Group Therapy
 - Life After Cancer: Group for patients 12-14 years old who have completed treatment for cancer, concurrent group for parents
 - AYA Group: Group for 17-23 year olds who have or have had cancer.



Evidence Based Services available at Seattle Children's Hospital



- Outpatient Psychiatry:
 - Reorganized into specialty clinics
 - Mood and Anxiety Program
 - Pearl Clinic (ADHD and Disruptive Behaviors)
 - Transgender Evaluations
 - Substance Abuse
 - Training Clinic
 - Neuropsychological Consultation Service
 - Integrated Psychiatry
 - Early Childhood Clinic

+ Finding Support



- Call your insurance carrier and ask them to help you find a therapist with specific experience working with children with medical conditions.
- If they cannot find someone in their network, ask them if they will create a single case agreement with an out of network provider with this experience.
- Intervention through research or training programs
- Ask your communities for recommendations

+ Resources



- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) has a variety of resources, including podcasts, support groups, videos, websites, coping tools, books, camps, and other resources on their website: http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/oncology-psychosocial-services-program/health-resources#.V_QN7aKUJZ8
- Other resources?

+ Questions and Discussion



- What services would you like to see here at SCH?
- For how many of you is distance a barrier to obtaining appropriate mental health services?
- Pie in the sky ideas to support cancer survivors at SCH?