



JUST DIAGNOSED:

How to support your mental and social well-being to navigate life with a skin condition



Canadian Skin Patient Alliance
Alliance canadienne des patients en dermatologie



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The impact of a diagnosis that affects your skin, hair or nails is not just on your physical health. It's likely to also impact your mental, social, and psychological health and wellbeing. This guide was built to provide you with a general understanding of the psychological impact and some strategies to cope with your new diagnosis.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU HAVE JUST BEEN DIAGNOSED

It's common for people to experience a variety of emotions when they get a new diagnosis. There is no proper way to go through these different emotions as they do not occur in a certain order or for a specific amount of time. Emotions can come and go unpredictably. You may feel multiple emotions at once, so much so that you may not be able to identify what you are feeling at first. Just know that what you are feeling is normal, even if it is confusing or different from someone else. You could move from one emotion to another differently than other people do. One person may take more time to move through these emotions than another. This is to say that it's important not to compare yourself to others during this process. Be kind to yourself. Just because someone else is on their way to accepting their condition, does not mean you are wrong or inadequate for still needing more time to get there. It is important not to compare your experience to others and to be kind to yourself throughout this journey.



MANAGING EMOTIONS

It's helpful to remember that fear is a normal reaction to uncertainty. Grief is a normal reaction to loss. Chronic disease distress is a normal reaction to a chronic condition. The presence of these emotions does not mean something is "wrong" with you.

The word "emotion" means "to move" but the behaviours that emotions suggest we do may not be the best coping strategy. Often, emotions suggest coping that involve short term solutions that may work to immediately alleviate the emotion but do not help build a meaningful, fulfilling life in the long run. For example, someone might be using alcohol or food to alleviate anxiety. It may work in the short run but can interfere or cause other issues with the important things in their life in the long run. It is important to keep in mind that we don't have direct control over the parts of our brain that generate emotions. Which is why trying to "get rid" of feelings usually fails and can cause more issues later on.

Instead, approach your feelings with the attitude that 1) they are normal and expected to happen; 2) they are signs that you're a healthy-functioning human; and 3) you can work on increasing your willingness to experience the distressing feelings. Willingness does not mean liking the feeling or being okay with it. It's about "accepting what is given." It's about recognizing that these feelings are uncomfortable but not abnormal. Allowing yourself to process these feelings can allow them to pass faster than trying to make them "go away."

Feelings are like waves, they will come and they will go. For example, the chemicals that create the feeling of anger only last for 90 seconds. After that, we need our thoughts to keep fueling the anger. Riding the wave of anger for 90 seconds, while engaging in self-talk that normalizes the experience (e.g., "This is anger. It's normal for this to be here," "it feels uncomfortable, but I will be okay") can help you cope until the feeling fades away. This doesn't mean that it won't show up again, well-functioning humans feel emotions! It just means with good coping strategies we don't have to waste energy trying to get rid of emotions in harmful ways. This strategy can be used to cope with many uncomfortable emotions.



Grief

The concept of grief, which is a reaction to loss, can be applied to losses related to a diagnosis. Your condition may bring about many losses. There is the loss of health and the potential consequences like the loss of your job. It may change your social life in small but meaningful ways like no longer going to the hairdresser or being unable to go swimming or big ways such as friends who are unable to support you in the time of challenge. It may be a loss of independence. Your identity may change if your condition is visible and it impacts how you see yourself or how you are treated by others. It may be the loss of how you saw your life turning out, which now may be different because of your condition. You may have heard of the five stages of grief, however, the five stages of grief theory has been disproved. There are more than five emotional stages that you can experience because of loss and they do not happen in a linear way or in the same sequence for everyone. Studies show that when people believe that they must follow a set sequence to deal with a loss it can create more complicated grief. It is more important to recognize that having a lot of different emotions is normal and a common experience. These emotions can include things like denial, numbness, sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, embarrassment, shame and frustration.

Anxiety

It is a common experience to feel fear about the future, especially if the outlook of your condition is uncertain or has a prognosis that may change. Anxiety can stem from worries about what the condition will mean, what others might think of you or how it will impact important parts of your life like work or relationships. It can be helpful to recognize that anxiety tries to keep us stuck in the future. It often prompts us to problem solve multiple different options for the future in an effort to gain more control. But it's a trick! We often don't have enough information to effectively problem solve and trying to solve multiple different versions of the future can be overwhelming! You only have to deal with one of these futures and when you get there you will have more information to effectively problem solve.

Rather than spending time thinking about the future, try to come back to the present moment and deal with the current moment. Often, the current moment feels manageable. Observing your five senses and grounding yourself can be a good strategy. For example, noticing two things you can see or noticing one thing you can hear, can bring you back to the present moment. You will likely need to repeat this process again and again to bring yourself back to the present moment when anxiety wants to pull you into the future. This is not failure. The skill is your ability to bring yourself back to the present when your mind wanders, instead of trying to stop your mind from wandering.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Exercise

The 5,4,3,2,1 grounding method involves recognising each of your senses and what you are experiencing in the present moment. To use this grounding method to calm your anxiety, begin by taking some slow, deep breaths, then, one by one, name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

You can repeat this process as many times as needed to relieve feelings of anxiety.

Being present in the moment can help you stay engaged with the important tasks and people in your life, rather than being physically present but mentally absent. It is a common experience to feel anxious, and acknowledging these feelings can help you learn to feel what's happening in your body in the moment. Most people try to get away from anxiety in various ways because it feels uncomfortable. Instead, thank your brain for trying to protect you and focus on the present moment. Deep breathing and meditation are strategies that can be used to help reduce stress and refocus on the present.



Chronic disease distress

Chronic disease distress can involve symptoms of anxiety, depression, irritability, and other emotions because of the burden of a chronic condition. This is different than major depressive disorder or an anxiety disorder because with those there is not always an identified cause or source of the distress.

Living with a chronic condition is stressful! It generates emotions appropriate to the situation. About 50% of individuals living with a chronic condition will experience chronic disease distress. Chronic disease distress requires different treatment than a standard mental health intervention for depression or anxiety. While these treatments are effective, they do not always take into account the presence of unpredictable and uncontrollable stressors caused by chronic conditions.

It is important to recognize and to normalize the presence of chronic disease distress as a common reaction to stressors. Treatment for emotional distress should take into account that a stressor may not go away. Which is why developing skills to live with the unpredictable nature of a chronic condition are important (see section below on “coping strategies” for suggestions).

Judging our own emotions

There is an expression, “pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.” This refers to the fact that all humans experience “negative” emotions (the “pain”). Despite what popular culture portrays, it is entirely normal and human to experience “negative” emotions. We are in fact hard wired to feel these emotions. Fighting against them and trying to make them go away creates “secondary” emotions (i.e., “suffering”). Now we’re not just anxious, we’re anxious that we’re anxious! We’re not just sad, we’re mad that we’re sad! While we can’t eliminate feelings completely, the judgement we add onto feelings makes them bigger and that much harder to manage. Allowing for time and space to process the feelings lessens the secondary emotions that could occur so the overall amount of emotions is less. These feelings can tell us useful cues such as “I’ve lost something” (sadness) or “there’s something I don’t like” (anger), or “I feel powerless” (frustration). Ignoring these only makes them louder. Learning to ride the waves of emotion is a skill you can get better at. Most importantly, recognize that the presence of uncomfortable feelings is normal and is not a sign that there is something wrong with you.

Getting additional support

It’s important to note that anxiety symptoms are not the same as fear and that depressive symptoms are not the same as sadness. It is possible to get “stuck” in these uncomfortable emotions (depression or anxiety) which can impact your daily life. If you feel “stuck” by any feelings and emotions or if they start to interfere with your ability to do daily tasks and the things you enjoy, that is a great time to get professional support from a social worker, counsellor, therapist, or psychologist.

Remember, most of us have not been trained in the skills to manage a chronic condition. Just like you go to a specialist physician for help for the physical aspects of your health, it also makes sense to receive expert advice on the psychological aspects of your condition. Keep in mind, that just like not all physicians treat all kinds of physical illnesses, psychological professionals also differ in what they treat. Finding professionals familiar with chronic conditions (even if it’s not your specific condition) is helpful. Someone who has been trained only in “mental health” and not “health psychology” may not know how to treat mental health symptoms like chronic condition distress.



HOW TO TELL OTHER PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSIS

It is helpful to have different versions of explanations for your diagnosis. This is particularly helpful if you have a condition that is visible to others.

The “elevator pitch”

An elevator pitch refers to having only the time during a typical elevator ride to “pitch” an idea. The same can be done for your diagnosis or condition. It means having a quick explanation to offer. It is normal for humans to stare and look at something that’s different. We often do so without even realizing we’re doing it. Having an elevator pitch about your condition can be an easier way to handle these awkward interpersonal moments. For example, the elevator pitch may sound like, “No, I don’t have cancer. I have hair loss for a different reason. It is called alopecia areata. I appreciate your curiosity.” Or, “Perhaps you’re wondering about this ___ on my skin? It’s a skin condition but it’s not contagious. Thanks for your concern.” It’s easiest for you and for them if you say this with kindness, compassion, and a smile. People don’t often intend harm even though that’s the impact. Assuming a kind attitude spreads that to others and makes it easiest for everyone to move through the experience.

You may have another type of elevator pitch for people you know but maybe don’t know that well. For example, “I just learned I have a diagnosis of ___ which helps explain some of my symptoms. I am up and down about it but hope I can get better treatment now that I have a diagnosis. Thanks for your concern.” Another example: “It’s a chronic condition, which means I’ll have to manage it forever but I can still do the things that matter most to me.” It’s helpful to acknowledge some positive and negative aspects related to your situation with the condition, as people take that as more credible and it sometimes reduces questions. If the description is all bad or all good people will often try to counter it with the opposite.

For people with whom you are closer, you may offer a more involved discussion. Keep in mind that people often ask a lot of questions (including inappropriate questions) to try to reduce their anxiety by decreasing uncertainty. Our brains trick us into thinking that if we have enough knowledge, the fear of the unknown will go away. This can result in inappropriate or uncomfortable questions. You can interpret other people’s behaviour as care and concern for you or, perhaps, you can have compassion for their anxiety or fear. This might help you cope better with their questions and comments.

It can be helpful to have a way to end a series of questions such as: “Thanks for your questions and concern. Why don’t we switch to another topic now. I don’t want to take up all the conversation.” Or: “Thanks for your concern. That’s about all I’d like to share about this for now so how about we talk about something else?” Framing it around the idea that you appreciate their concern makes it easier to set a boundary.

You may also find that this type of disclosure opens up a conversation for the other person to give you their “cure-alls” (“Trust me, do this and I guarantee your hair will grow back”). Most commonly their suggestions will not be helpful and don’t take into account the complexity of

your condition. Some may potentially be unsafe if they are not an approved treatment. Typically the other person's intention are good but it can be emotionally distressing and exhausting. The main goal is not to get into a debate about treatments with this person. A simple "thanks for that suggestion" or "I've got a treatment plan right now but if it's stops working I'll consider that" can end the discussion more quickly. If they ask about it later you can simply state "it didn't appear to be a viable treatment option for me but thanks so much for your concern" or "I'm working with my doctor/dermatologist on a treatment plan that considers all possible options." It's best to remind yourself that the person is making this suggestion most likely in an effort to help even though their suggestions are unlikely to be helpful. So again, thank them for their support and concern and direct the conversation onto other topics.

Friends and family

After a new diagnosis your friends and family may also want to talk about it all the time. They may start every conversation with you with "How are you?" or "How is your condition?" It is helpful to give them permission to talk about something else. Often people don't want to seem insensitive by talking about ordinary daily things when you have faced a new diagnosis or health condition.

It can be helpful to give people permission to talk about ordinary things. For example, you might say, "Thanks for your concern about my diagnosis. Actually, it would be really great for me if we could just talk about some ordinary everyday things." Alternatively, you could say "I appreciate your concern. I feel like I've been thinking about it enough lately, so I'd love a break to hear about what's going on in your life."

The opposite may also happen, that others "forget" that you have a condition or ask you do things that you can't because of your condition. It doesn't mean they don't care, it is easy for humans to forget new data like this and to rely on "old" information. You can gently remind them that because of your condition you would need a different plan. It may also be the case that you want to talk about your condition but are nervous to bring it up or have trouble speaking about your mental health. The best way to overcome this is to start small and do it regularly. The more you do it the easier it becomes. Perhaps try to get into a routine where you check in on your loved ones and give them an update on how you're doing. The easiest way we have found to do so is to give a "battery charge" that represents how you're doing today from an overall perspective. "I'm at 50% battery" or "I'm at 80% battery" can give everyone a metric to use to understand your wellbeing but using language that seems easier and less stigmatizing.

Figuring out how and when you talk about your condition with family and friends can be confusing and overwhelming. As a part of the *Self-Empowerment Toolkit*, CSPA developed *Talking to Kids: How to talk to children, youth and adult children about your skin condition*. *Talking to Kids* dives into why it's important to talk to children about your health condition and how to do so in a way that is age appropriate and relevant to the child. This guide is designed to help parents, teachers, coaches and other adults with skin, hair or nail conditions open communication channels between adults and youth to talk about their health concerns: canadianskin.ca/education/self-empowerment-toolkit.

Intimate or romantic partner

It's helpful to keep in mind that telling an intimate partner or somebody you're interested in romantically about your condition should not be seen as a shameful disclosure of a personal failing. Your condition just happens to be the way your body works. It's not a reflection of you as a person.

We all have parts of us that we don't like. We all have parts of us that we inherited without any choice in the matter. Acting like you're revealing a shameful secret only contributes to a sense that there's something wrong with you because you have a chronic condition. There is not! This is just how your body is working now. We all have limited control over certain aspects of our bodies.



Dermatologist, specialist, or family doctor

When meeting with your dermatologist it is helpful to have a list of questions that you would like to review. It is also helpful to bring someone along with you. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and anxious in medical appointments. Having another set of eyes and ears in the room can be very helpful. Bringing a notebook and having a binder of information can help you keep all the information together and organized. Or, if a digital option may work better for you, there are some apps you can use to store all the information about your condition in a digital binder.

It's really important for you to advocate for your own health. Your healthcare provider, while caring about your well-being, is serving hundreds – perhaps thousands – of patients. There is no one who will care more about your health than you, and nobody knows your body better than you do.

It can be very helpful to ask for copies of diagnostic tests, blood work, scans, etc. so that you have a copy that you can bring to appointments or another specialist. Many of these records can get lost in the healthcare system. You have a right to have copies of all your medical files and it can help you communicate more effectively with various healthcare providers if you have all of the data under your own control.

Also, do not be surprised if your dermatologist or specialist does not talk about many of the things that are most important to you. For example, we know that patients are often concerned about the psychosocial aspects of their condition (the thoughts and feelings you might experience and the ways you interact with the people, institutions, and physical structures around you). However, healthcare providers are rarely provided with appropriate training on dealing with psychosocial factors, so they may avoid “opening a can of worms” that they can’t help with. It is therefore really helpful to participate in patient advocacy groups or patient support groups so that you can have appropriate support with other people who understand what you’re going through. To support you and your loved ones, CSPA has a complementary resource in our Self-Empowerment Toolkit called, *You and Your Derm: How to get the most out of your dermatology appointment*. *You and Your Derm* walks you through the before, during and after of a dermatology appointment, step by step, so that you can feel confident and prepared heading into your appointment and more empowered to advocate for the best care: canadianskin.ca/education/self-empowerment-toolkit.

The workplace

Deciding if and when you want to disclose your condition to your employer, educator, or colleagues is stressful. Not all employers may be understanding of the changing needs of someone with a chronic condition. The Canadian Human Rights Commission states that if you need accommodation in your workplace because of a chronic condition, you need to disclose this to your employer as soon as possible. If you do not need accommodation, then the decision to disclose is a personal one. When your condition involves skin, hair and nail related symptoms it may be physically difficult to “hide” that you have a condition. However, if it does not affect your ability to carry out all the essential duties of your job or your ability to perform in school, then it is up to you to decide who you share your diagnosis with. This Canadian Skin article on school and workplace accommodations dives further into accessing accommodations for people living with skin conditions: https://issuu.com/kelmanonline/docs/canadianskin_spring2023/12.

If you decide to disclose, using an “elevator pitch” can be a helpful way to communicate with your colleagues. You don’t need to disclose the diagnosis or the condition. It may be more helpful to describe symptoms that might impact your work. For example, “I have a condition that can cause pain in my hands, which sometimes impacts my ability to type and get a specific task done.” Describing the symptoms is more useful because that’s the part your colleagues may need to understand so they can support you as well in the workplace. If your condition is visible but doesn’t cause any symptoms that might interfere with your work, then your elevator pitch may simply be to state “I have a health condition, but it doesn’t impact my work” and perhaps “I’d prefer to keep the details private but thanks for your concern.”

COPING STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING A CHRONIC CONDITION

There are various coping strategies and techniques that can help you manage your chronic condition. Here, we go over the three main forms of coping: Problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and relationship-focused coping. However, it is important to recognize that they are not one-size-fits-all solutions. It is okay to pull different aspects from each strategy or to use a combination of techniques to help you lead a full and meaningful life. Most likely you will need to use all of them at some point to cope. Whatever works best for you in that situation is the best strategy.

Problem-focused coping

Problem-focused coping (PFC) is an effective strategy when you can eliminate the source of the stress in your life. That is, when the stressor can be solved or fixed, using PFC can be effective. For example, many of us go through our work lives using PFC very effectively. If we have a deadline, a paper that is due, an email that needs to be sent, or a presentation to give, these are all solvable problems. (Of course, in modern life, a new problem takes its place but in theory these are stressors that can be fixed, solved or eliminated.)

Problem-focused coping with a chronic condition is about doing the things you can to be healthy. This includes things like taking your medication and following your treatment plan. It includes keeping the rest of your body healthy with rest, nutritious food, and exercise and keeping your mind healthy with things like meditation, mindfulness or relaxation techniques. Since these are behaviours that you can “check off” as complete, they are PFC techniques, even though they don’t actually “fix” the chronic condition.

In the same way that another email shows up when you get through your inbox, these are not one-time solutions but things we have to engage in repeatedly over time. Engaging in healthy habits is part of managing your condition. Remember, what your body does with your healthy habits is not fully under your control. You can be doing everything “right” and still have an unpredictable condition that may flare up or worsen. It doesn’t mean what you are doing is not helping. Your condition could be progressing much faster, or it could be even more unpredictable if you were not practicing healthy habits. Keeping a condition stable or reducing the intensity or frequency of flare ups is a win. These healthy habits can help but they do not “control” or “eliminate” the chronic condition.

Emotion-focused coping

The second form of coping is called emotion-focused coping (EFC), and this is effective in dealing with stressors where they can’t be fixed or eliminated. This approach is about managing the feelings that emerge from an uncontrollable or non-fixable stressor. By definition, a chronic condition is a non-fixable stressor. Most conditions are chronic, meaning that they need to be managed long-term. Many of us do not have a wide range of emotion-

focused coping skills because we've never learned or needed them before. Many people can get through most aspects of life using only problem-focused coping. Therefore, be kind to yourself if you do not have a large range of emotion-focused coping skills.

Emotion-focused coping includes being mindful, which can help reduce catastrophic thinking and by using compassionate self-talk such as: "It's okay that I feel worried, that's normal and I don't need to fuel this feeling." Other stress management tools include relaxation techniques such as yoga, deep breathing and practicing mindfulness. EFC helps to work through waves of emotion rather than trying to get rid of them.

Pacing

An important EFC technique to consider when you have a chronic condition is pacing. Pacing focuses on keeping your activity level stable even when your condition is up and down. It involves picking a daily level of activity that you can do on a good day **and** on a bad day. It involves how you plan your day or week and how many activities or tasks you expect yourself to do. It's about finding an activity level you can do consistently, even when you have good days or bad days. It's a very normal human reaction to use how we feel to judge how much we should get done. It is common to wake up in the morning and judge how your condition is doing and then decide what kind of day you will have. However, this puts you at the mercy of a condition you don't have control over. It can make life feel very unpredictable because you never know when you will have a good day or a bad day. It can be easy to fall into the habit of on a good day you think "oh, it's a good day, I better get as much done as possible" which can often lead you to draining your battery and not having enough energy for the next couple of days.



The goal of pacing is to reduce the highs and lows of life with a chronic condition by keeping the activity level constant even if you are experiencing a good or bad day. Pacing can make you feel more in control because you know you can get this activity done regardless of whether it's a good day or a bad day. Learning how to accept and adapt your activity levels also makes you more reliable to others because you won't have to cancel plans as often.

There are two key aspects to pacing. First, the amount of activity is probably less than what you want to do and potentially less than what you could do before you had this condition. For example, you may only be able to go out with your friends for one hour instead of three hours. You may only be able to do one errand per day instead of four. It can really tough when your body is unable to do what you want it to. This goes back to the discussion about grief and loss. However, if you get better at pacing, you will be able to do activities more consistently even though they may be at a reduced level. But because you feel more reliable about what you can do, it can feel empowering instead of helpless.

The second aspect is the need to hold back on a "good day." When you feel capable of doing more or that you can keep going, you should consider resting to save that energy for the next day so you can do the same amount of activities again. Typically pacing allows you to gradually increase how much you can do over time although it may never reach the same level as before your condition. It allows you to build stamina slowly over time which will increase your overall capacity. Pacing isn't something that you "master" and never have to think about again. Much in the way that many of us have to continuously think about "work-life balance," pacing is something you need to keep thinking about and adjusting. But doing so will make you feel more empowered, more reliable, and less like your condition is in control.

There are health professionals who can help you with pacing including counsellors and psychologists but also professionals like occupational therapist and physical therapists. If they are familiar with chronic disease, they can help you find a suitable level of activity.

The other part about pacing is that we all have a limited battery. This battery is probably smaller if you have a chronic condition because part of that battery is being used to manage and cope with the condition. Use your battery for the things that matter most and the things that only you can do. If anyone can do the task, can you get someone else to do it? Save your battery for the things that matter most.



Relationship-focused coping

A third strategy is relationship-focused coping (RFC), which is about managing and maintaining relationships in times of stress. Human beings are intensely social creatures. We're in fact hard-wired to "feel better" when we are emotionally connected to people who we trust and make us feel safe. Utilizing social support opportunities, finding ways to laugh with your friends or family, and engaging with important people in your life, are all ways to practice RFC. Joining a support group with people who are experiencing similar challenges to you can be a very helpful way to make new connections. Sharing your experience with others can be a healthy outlet for you to express how you feel and comforting for one another. These groups are often run by patient organizations using social media as a facilitation tool. CSPA collaborates with many organizations that run support groups for people impacted by skin, hair and nail conditions. You can filter our Affiliate Members to find a support group that's relevant for your needs: <https://www.canadianskin.ca/about-us/affiliate-members>.

RFC also includes battery management skills. The best way to increase your battery isn't by expecting yourself to magically come up with more battery life. It's about adding new batteries to the system. What that means is getting help from other people (i.e., adding their batteries to your own battery). Asking for and accepting help is often necessary if you have a chronic condition. Have you ever had the experience of helping someone and it made **you** feel better? Accepting help isn't a one direction impact. If someone helps you, it doesn't mean they end up with less battery. You both will probably end up with more battery! Having lots of batteries allows the workload to be distributed so everyone is less likely to run out of battery.

It is also okay to pay people to preserve or recharge your battery if you have the means. A cleaning service may be a great use of your resources so you save your battery for things only you can do, like spending quality time with your loved ones. It can make it easier if you make a routine out of accepting help. For example, asking someone to get groceries for you once a month or booking a time for childcare so you can take a break every Thursday night. This makes it more predictable for those asking for help and those offering help to make consistent plans. It also requires fewer requests, so you don't have to feel like you are asking for help over and over.

LIVING A MEANINGFUL LIFE

One of the most challenging aspects of having a chronic condition is the fear about “how this will affect my life.” Life might not turn out the way you thought it would, but you can still live a meaningful and purposeful life.



Think about who and what is most important to you and consider finding flexible and different ways to express those values with your behaviour. It might look different than you thought it would look. It might not feel the way you imagined it would. But if you are willing to be flexible in how to express what matters most to you, then you can always live a meaningful life. For example, a parent may no longer be able to run around and chase their kids because sweating inflames their skin condition. But they probably can still cuddle with their kids and read them a bedtime story. A young adult may not be able to work long hours at their career to get ahead, but they can still engage in employment and find a career that allows them to contribute meaningfully to the world.

Being value-driven (meaning focusing on how **you** are contributing, connecting, and caring in the world), rather than goal-driven means that every step we take matters and is a move towards our values. Many goals and outcomes are outside of our control but focusing on being value-driven will make your life more meaningful every step of the way. Rather than focusing on what you want to GET from life (e.g., a certain career, a house, financial independence), focus on what you can GIVE to life. Consider who or what matters most to you. Consider what would make your life purposeful and meaningful. Focusing on how YOU are contributing, connecting and caring in the world can give you both purpose and satisfaction in your life.

We all have limited amount of time on earth and none of us know how long that time will be. Remembering that life is limited can actually help us live more meaningfully and in the moment. Consider what’s most important to you and spend your time and battery doing the things that matter most with the people who matter most. This doesn’t have to mean trying to end poverty or cure cancer. Spending time engaged and attentive with a loved one is a deeply meaningful thing to do. No one ever gets to the end of their life saying, “if only I had cleaner floors...” Connect with your values and what matters most and spend more time moving toward the people and the things that matter most to you. If you’re not sure, then it’s always a good bet to spend more time loving the people who matter most.

RESOURCES

Condition-Specific Patient Groups

CSPA Affiliate Members: canadianskin.ca/about-us/affiliate-members

Self-Empowerment Toolkit: canadianskin.ca/education/self-empowerment-toolkit

Accommodation in the Workplace

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/8-meeting-accommodation-needs-employees-job>

https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/accommodation_works_application_manual_format.pdf



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Dayna Lee-Baggley is a Registered Clinical Psychologist in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia. Her registrations include clinical psychology, health psychology, and organizational psychology. She is the founder and CEO of Dr. Lee-Baggley and Associates, which provides evidence-based workplace wellness solutions. She is the co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer of ImpACTme app. She worked for almost 15 years in multidisciplinary teams on medical, surgical and cancer care hospital units. She also conducts research as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine, with a cross appointment in the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience at Dalhousie University and an Adjunct Professor appointment in the Department of Psychology at Saint Mary's University. She is the author of the book "Healthy Habits Suck: How to get off the couch & live a healthy life...even if you don't want to."



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