



Coping with it all: The Radiation Technologist in the Context of Care

A Quote

“I have been probed and cut and medicated, but no one has *talked* to me or asked me what I think I should do to live my remaining life better. Everyone worries about the *cancer*, but no one sees that it is only part of me.

It is time someone looked at me as a *whole person*. Perhaps then I could think of myself that way.”

Overview

- Review psychological background of the interaction from the patients' perspective.
- Review technologist related stressors.
- Illustrate critical role of the technologist in the patients' experience.
- Discuss the “Psychology of the Brief Encounter” as a supportive model for use by technologists.

Patient Perspective

Background Factors

- 49% of the adults sampled reported that the mere mention of word *cancer* frightening.
- 37% felt that cancer was the worse thing that could happen to them.
- 27% would avoid seeking medical care because of fears concerning cancer.
- 48% regarded cancer as extremely painful disease relative to other medical conditions, #1.

American Cancer Society, 1979

Background Factors

- 54% rated pain as a major concern.
- 42% rated cancer pain as very or extremely painful.
- 69% endorsed the statement “Cancer can become so bad that a person with cancer might consider suicide”.

American Cancer Society, 1979

Why so Stressful?

Powerful Mythology

- Cancer is a mystery
- Cancer equals death
- People who are diagnosed with cancer did something wrong
- Cancer is contagious

Why so Stressful?

- Threat of loss and death
- Awareness of a sense of “*radical contingency*”
- Loss of control
- Loss of body integrity
- Must learn a “new kind of medicine”
 - exposure to technology based interventions

Dimensions

- Intraindividual impact
 - Emotional
 - “Why me?”
 - Sense of a “just world”
- Family and social support
- Social interaction patterns


Psychological Impact

High Risk Profile for “difficult interaction”:

- Passive/Helpless/Pessimistic stance
- Rigid approach to new environments
- Demanding
- Excessively anxious patients
- Low social support
- Time pressures “being behind”

Psychological Impact: Summary

- Appreciation of the patient's psychological status and cancer beliefs can help you to understand your interaction with the patient.
- Understanding helps you successfully manage patient interactions in a potentially stressful environment for both technologist and patient.
- Now focus on second element:

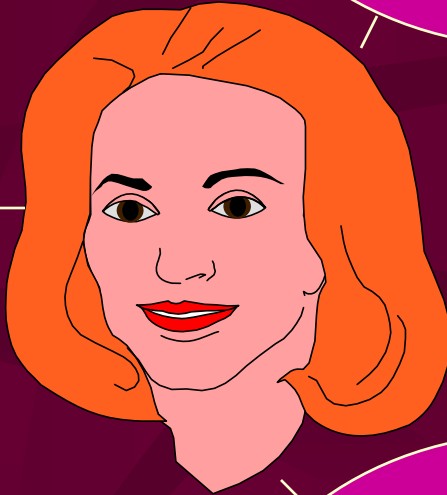


*Technologist
Stress*

Who Cares ???

Cancer
Background
Factors

Environment



You are the focal point..

Patient
Specific

The Focal Point

SOME DAYS...



Trials and Tribulations of the Technologist

Study identified:

- Long hours.
- Low compensation.
- Status not commensurate with responsibilities.
- Little direct control over work environment.
- Lack of supervision.

Trials and Tribulations of the Technologist

**Bulletin of the American Society of Clinical
Laboratory Technicians**

November 6, 1935

Why Care?

Work Stress

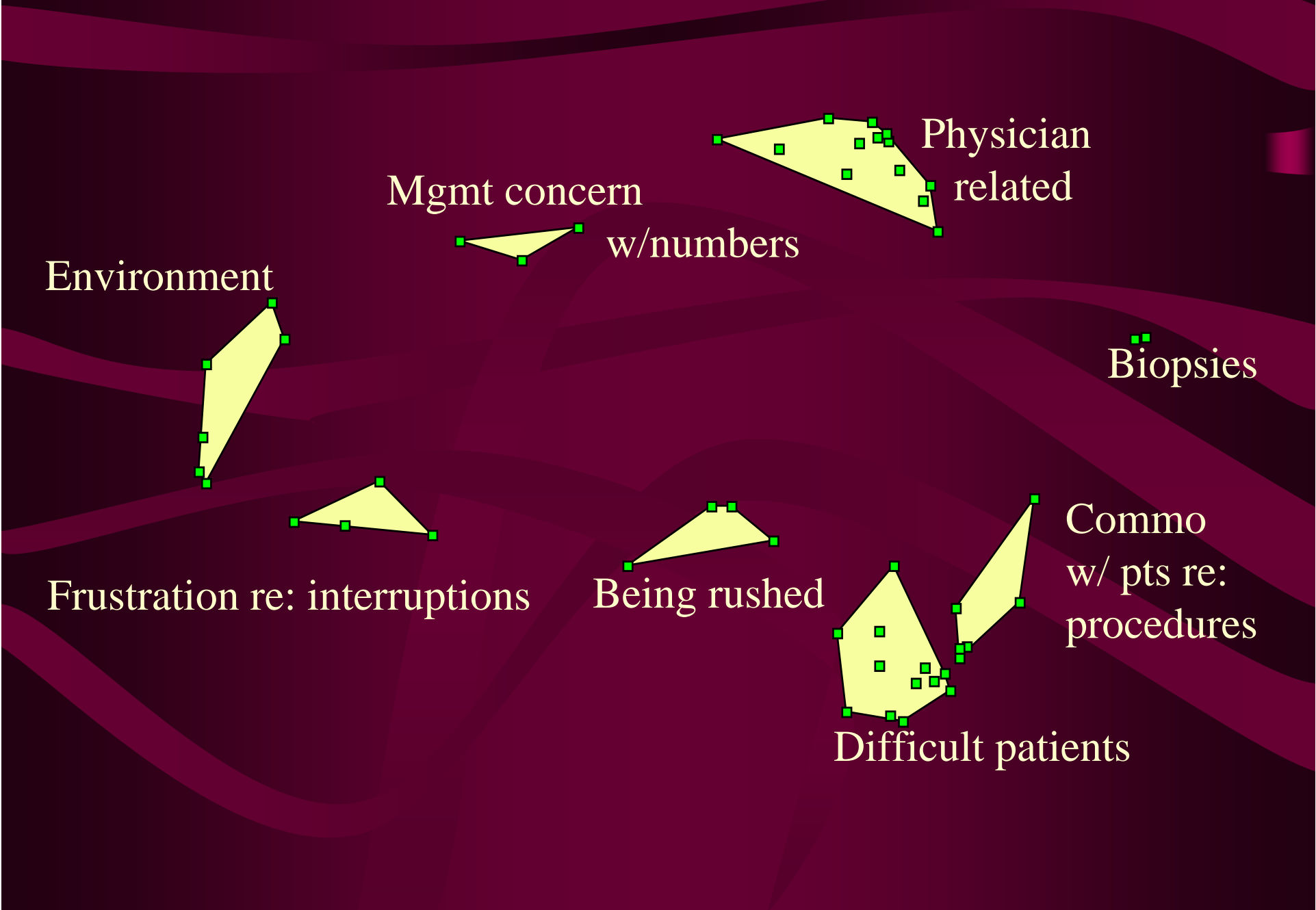
Personal Life Stress

- Reduced satisfaction with work
- Reduced effectiveness
- Patients as objects
- Reduced empathy
- Emotional exhaustion
- Reduced perceptions of personal accomplishment
- Depersonalization
- Responsibility without control

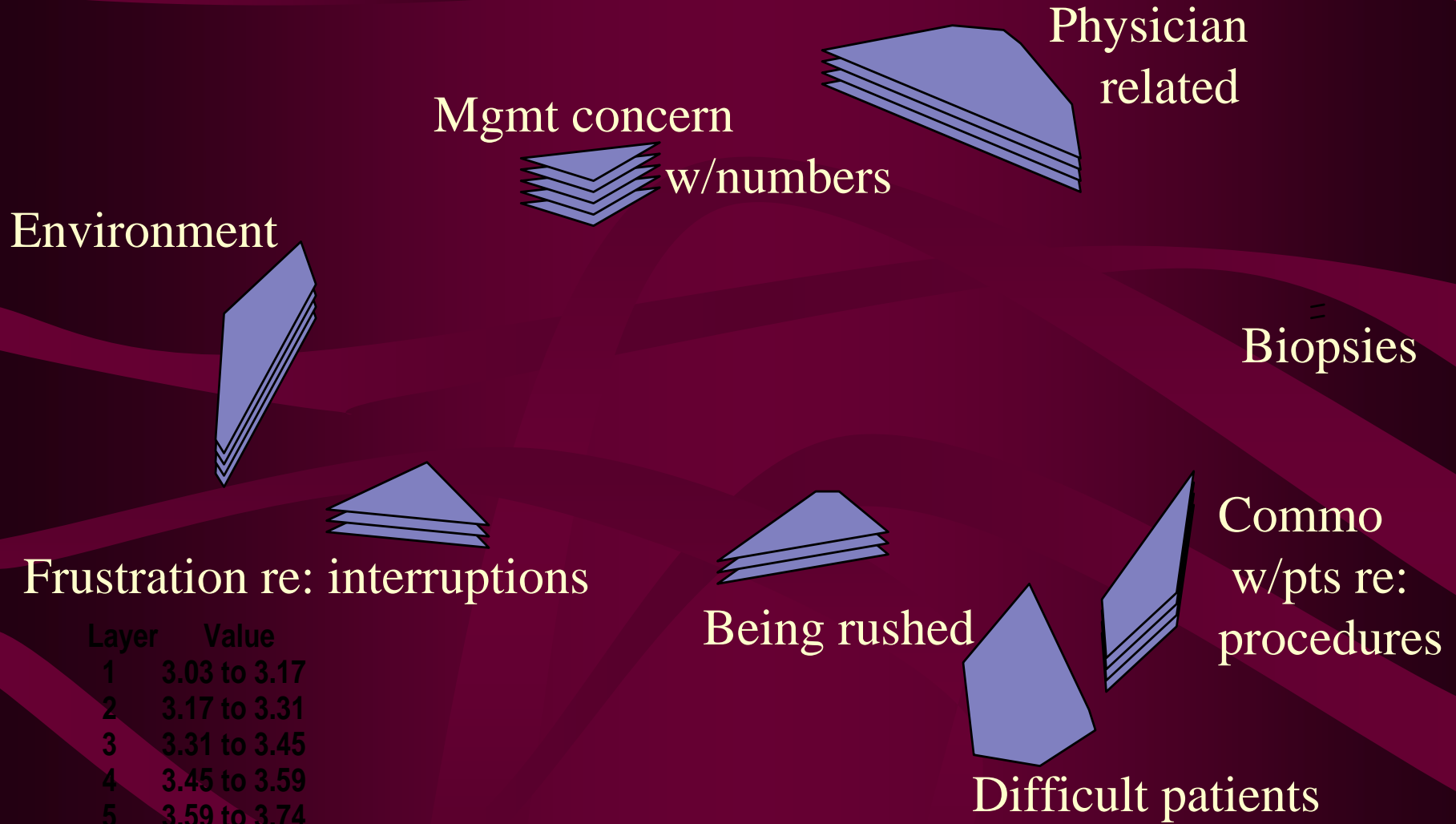
Technologist Stress Study

- Conducted multivariate examination of stress reported directly by technologists.
- Innovative methodology using multidimensional scaling and cluster analyses.
- Analyses resulted in 8 distinct stress domains

Eight Cluster Mammography Stress Concept Map with MDS Points



Eight Cluster Mammography Stress Concept Map with Stress Ratings



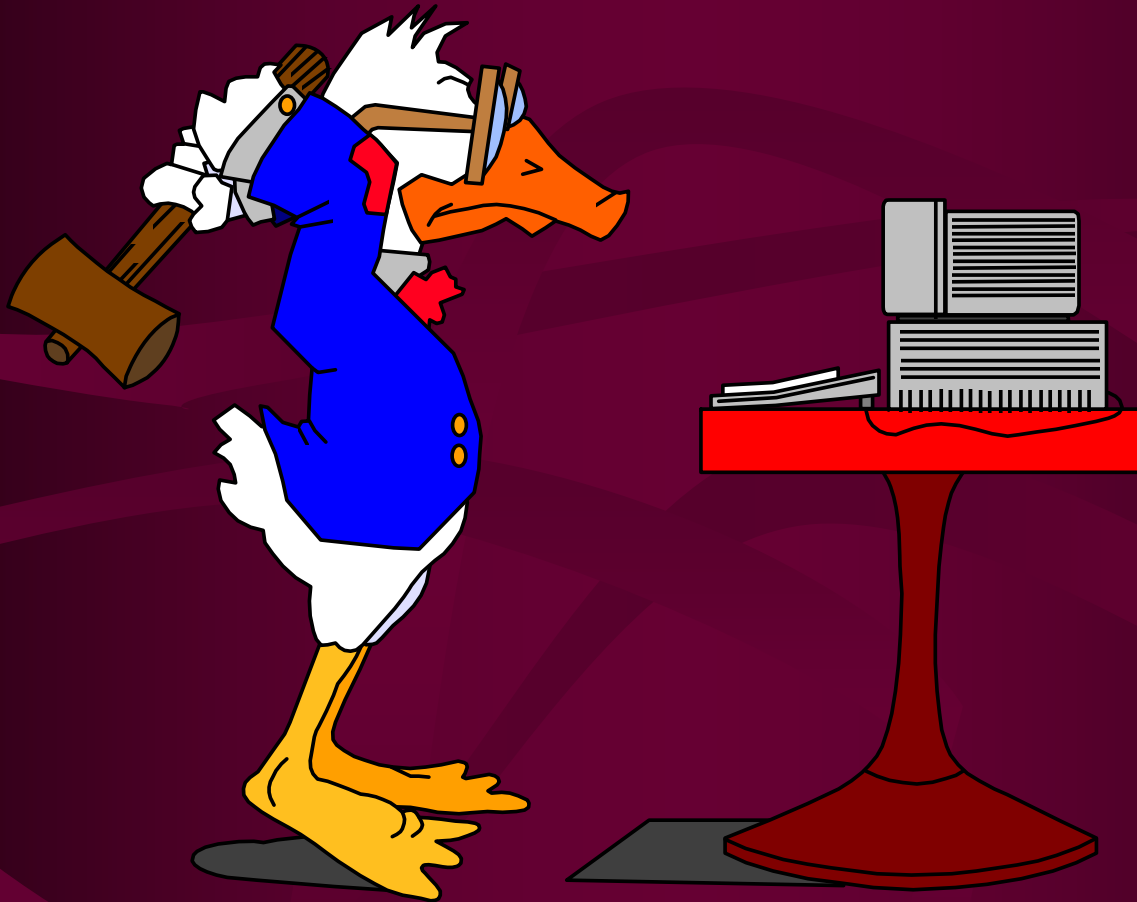
Patient Driven

- Review of stressors reveals significant component of stress patient related.
- Feeling “caught” between patient needs and organizational demands.
- Challenges of communicating and managing patients in often stressful environment

Patient Driven

- “Calming very hyperactive or excessively anxious patients.”
- “Patients who ramble on when giving history”
- “Patients who expect to be seen immediately even if late or early”
- “Too little time with the patients”

Now let's talk about coping: The Organization



Organizational Elements

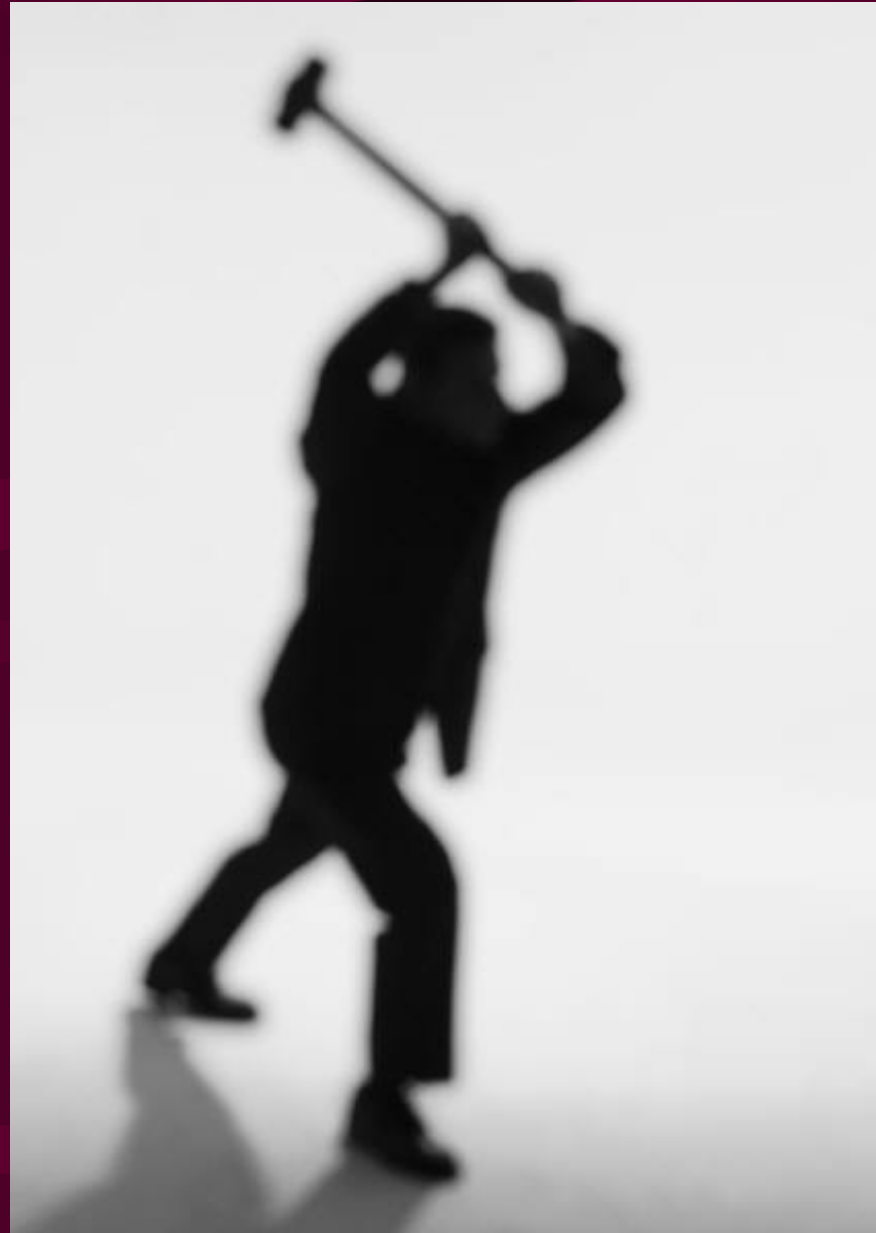
Education, Training, Preparation

- Expect to encounter these difficult interactions.
- Direct care staff at greatest risk due to intensity of exposure
 - Technologist in intense environment.
- Enhance staff sense of control via education and training.

Education, Training, Preparation

- No quick solutions, continuous effort
- Communicate staff is not on their own
 - They can expect continuing input and support
- Do not interpret behavior personally
 - Help staff identify and manage own reactions
 - Teflon not Velcro
- Intent is to manage situation not remake the patient

Now let's talk about coping: The Technologist



Importance of the Technologist Interaction

Psychology of the Brief Encounter

Psychology of the Brief Encounter

- “Challenging” environment for patient and staff.
- Technologist behavior makes a difference.
- Impact on quality of the experience and future behavior of patient.
- “Brantner” rounds.
- Review a number of factors important to the process and outcome of your contact with the patient.

Importance of Technologist Interaction

- More complex than it seems:
 - expressed emotion research
- Employ person centered versus position centered communication.
- Procedural and Sensory Information:
 - Combination most effective
 - Sensory alone better than procedural alone

Nonverbal Communication

- Nonverbal communication:
 - Rarely addressed but *critical component* of interaction.
 - Important in stressful situations.
 - Studies show patients more responsive to health professionals who display nonverbal attentiveness cues.

Nonverbal Communication

- Feedback Loop:
 - Patients naïve about technical aspects of their care.
 - Difficult to judge quality of care.
 - Determine quality based on their perceptions of the emotional response of the practitioner.
 - Nonverbal behavior *most powerful* medium for communication of emotional response to others.

Nonverbal Communication

- Facial expression primary site for communicating **emotional response** to others.
- Critical in regulating social interaction.
- Sophisticated research demonstrates that observers can reliably recognize range of emotion **based only on facial expressions**.

Nonverbal Communication

- Happiness, fear, sadness, anger, interest, disgust, primarily communicated by nonverbal facial expression.
- Differential responses to facial expression in 3-4 month old infants.
- Cross cultural.

Nonverbal Communication

- Specific facial regions more important for certain emotions:
 - Lower facial area:
Happiness, surprise, anger, correctly judged **over 90% of the time.**
 - Eyes and immediate area:
Fear and sadness identified here.

Nonverbal Communication

- Nonverbal critical in communicating attitude towards others:\ul>- 55% of interpersonal attitudes communicated by facial expression.
- 38% by vocal quality.
- **Only 7% from verbal content.**

Nonverbal Communication

- Additional considerations:
 - The “20 degree lean” posture.
 - Appropriate gaze:
 - Eye contact facilitates cooperation, communication and conveys support.

Overall Summary

- A significant component of technologist stress is associated with patient factors.
- Understanding the psychological impact of cancer can help the technologist manage the complex interaction with the patient.
- Technologist behavior can harness and capitalize on powerful effects that enhance the experience for all involved.

Dr. Zevon's Well-Being Recipe

- Nurture a system of **positive illusions**.
- Capture and reflect on the **positive aspects** of your life and work.
- Hold on to the experience of **joy**.
- Work off the **short list**.