



Patient Power

Transform Your Outlook: How a Change in Perspective Can Change Life With a Chronic Cancer

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Andrew Schorr:

One of the terms that come up sometimes under mindfulness is gratitude. And I wonder—we've talked about this a lot across cancer, really, is has cancer changed you? And maybe, had you get to a point after the terror of the diagnosis to try to be thankful, to have grace? Ruben, you've probably seen the change over the years in your patients as they've picked themselves off the floor and maybe gotten to a better place. I'm sure you've seen that many times.

Dr. Mesa:

Well, I think without question, I really think what you speak of is perspective.

Andrew Schorr:

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Mesa:

I mean, life is a roller coaster for each of us, with challenges both health and non-health. And kind of how we walk that path clearly impacts us to a great degree.

I've seen patients, again, who have very advanced illness, but their perspective has brought them tremendous consolation and decreased anxiety, whether it be—the patient sometimes with the advanced disease that has participated in clinical trials that feel genuine satisfaction that even if that doesn't help them, that it will help people that come after them. I've seen people that have really enjoyed altruistic activities. Even though they are ill, they're volunteering. They're doing things with philanthropy. They're giving back. They're helping other patients who are newly diagnosed to try to alleviate their anxiety and stress, because they have gone through it. Just like all of you are

participating here today, this will help other individuals that are newly diagnosed and scared and uncertain—this will be a resource for them.

So, I think that is an expression of gratitude for everything that we do have, really the glass is half-full sort of approach, and realizing that we always have something to share, even when we have our own struggles.

Andrew Schorr:

And I know that Julia, you do peer-to-peer discussions with other patients for the Leukemia Society. Samantha, I'm sure you've talked to many patients over the years. Julia, that giving back, does that help you too?

Julia Olf:

Absolutely, as does participating in this kind of program. I feel like I always learn a little bit in the discussion. Every person is different. I enjoy the—hearing about someone else's experience, not—I don't enjoy their sadness. But yeah, there's something about the connection, sometimes about trying to help someone else who's really struggling that just—I don't know. It's an endorphin high. You feel better.

Andrew Schorr:

Samantha, you've had a long time to meet other people. Is that kind of connection with other people and trying, all of us, to raise each other up, that must be helpful.

Samantha Trahan:

It is helpful. I think it's helpful on an individual basis, and I think it's helpful across the entire MPN community. I tried it both ways. I started out first being very much alone and didn't want to talk about my disease. I didn't want to—I didn't go to the conferences or any other events. And I felt very alone, and an anomaly outside of the system. And I didn't know how to deal with it, and I don't think I dealt with it all very well. Having become more open about my disease, and gone to some conferences, and participated in these events with Patient Power, I personally feel better, and I like knowing that I'm connected to a growing community of people who also care. And I think that's—when you talk about gratitude, I am so grateful to be a part of a community that is open and wants to help one another.

Andrew Schorr:

I'll tell you, Esther and I are going to New Zealand. Ruben, you've probably been. We're going to New Zealand.

Dr. Mesa:

A great spot.

Andrew Schorr:

A great spot. And so, I've connected with the MPN community both in New Zealand, and we're gonna skip over to Melbourne, and they've been so welcoming. And we're gonna get together. And that means a lot to me. And I think also, as Esther meets other care partners, that will be helpful for her. And the goal of all of this is for all of us to feel more in control, support each other—and I'll just recap some of these activities as we get near the end of our program. For some, it may be meditation. For some, it may be walking the dog, like Samantha walks Sammy, and Julia still takes walks. For some, it may be eating foods that are joyful, like that croissant. Boy, good for you, Julia.

And it also may be, since we have Dr. Mesa with us, feeling good about open communication with a provider you've selected who's knowledgeable in MPN, where that conversation can give you confidence.

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