

# Stress, Emotions and Pain in Palliative Care

A workshop specifically for parents with a child or adolescent with cancer or life-limiting condition in palliative care



Having a child or adolescent in palliative care can be complex, emotional and stressful for the child, siblings and parents. As a parent you need useful practical skills to help you through the day-to-day difficulties and struggles that come with having a child whose life is shortened. The aim of this workshop is to provide you with skills that will help you to cope with the stress, emotions and pain of having a child or adolescent in palliative care.

This small-group workshop for parents presents a contemporary approach to living with stress emotions and pain in palliative care. The workshop is grounded in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson 2011) and Personal Construct Psychology (Caputi, Foster & Viney, 2008; Kelly, 1955). ACT is both a set of guiding psychological principles and a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; its application is widespread and emerging in palliative care (Feros, Lane, Ciarrochi & Blackledge 2011).

The ACT framework in this workshop moves away from a 'fix it', 'control it' and if that fails 'avoid it' approach towards a model that is based on acceptance. It is important to understand that acceptance in this context means a willingness to 'be with' rather than a sense of giving up or throwing in the towel.

Typical approaches to managing stressful and painful events tend to rely on patterns of avoidance because in the main, avoidance works with the day-to-day unpleasantness of life; at least in the short-term.

However, with the deeper issues of life, death and pain - 'try not to think about it' or 'don't let it get to you', tends to fall rather short of the mark.

In addition to the ACT framework and skills in mindfulness, parents will learn and practice guided imagery. These skills can be used with pain and symptom management, sleep disturbance or simply creating a special place for you and your child.

Upon completing this workshop you will be able to:

- Describe and use principles from ACT and PCP to living with the pain, stress and emotions of having a child whose life is shortened;
- Use mindfulness and defusion techniques to help you and your family to be with the stressors that come with having a child in palliative care;
- Use and develop skills in guided imagery, which you can use yourself and/or with your child/family.

Caputi, P., Foster, H. & Viney, L. (2008). *Personal construct psychology: New Ideas*. New York: Wiley.

Feros, D., Lane, L. Ciarrochi, J. Blackledge, J. (2011). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for improving the lives of cancer patients: a preliminary study. *Psychooncology*, doi: 10.1002/pon.2083. Epub 2011 Oct 6.

Hayes, S.C., Strosahl, K.D. & Wilson, K.G. (2011). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: the process and practice of mindful change*. (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford.

Kelly G.A. (1955). *Psychology of personal constructs*. New York: Wiley.

## Workshop Program

09.00 – 11.00 Pain: sensation, cognition and emotions - useful stuff for the everyday challenges for a family in palliative care.

ACT 1: The Approach - Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

ACT 2: Developing psychological flexibility: Practical skills in mindfulness and defusion techniques for you, your child/adolescent and family.

11.00 – 11.15 Tea Break

11.15 – 12.50 ACT, values and developing a sense of direction.

12.50 - 13.30 Lunch (provided)

13.30 – 15.30 Guided Imagery Technique: theory, practice and demonstration.  
Guided Imagery Cases: review and discussion of videos.

15.30 – 17.00 Small group practice in guided imagery.

Tea Break

Group discussion and feedback: putting the skills into practice.



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Registration: Please contact Bernie for details via the contact page at [www.top-downpaincontrol.com](http://www.top-downpaincontrol.com) or email

**Cost £90 single or £160 both parents**

Bernie Whitaker is an Australian who has been UK-based since 2010. He has, since 1995, conducted 160+ workshops on distraction, pain and guided imagery in hospitals in 42 NHS Trusts and hospitals worldwide.

Bernie's professional background, presentations and the numerous hospitals where he has taught can be found on the website at [www.top-downpaincontrol.com](http://www.top-downpaincontrol.com)