

AMAZING
THINGS
ARE
HAPPENING
HERE

Waiting for the other shoe to drop: Anxiety and Prostate Cancer

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Today's Questions:

- What is Anxiety? How much is “too much”?
- Why does cancer cause so much anxiety?
- What can I do about it?

“I’m going to die...”

- 75 year old retired lawyer diagnosed with stage II prostate cancer.
- In chronic treatment with androgen deprivation therapy
- Prognosis is years
- Experiencing anxiety and insomnia.
- Stopped most meaningful activity – in particular, avoids wife and social gatherings
- What could be of help?

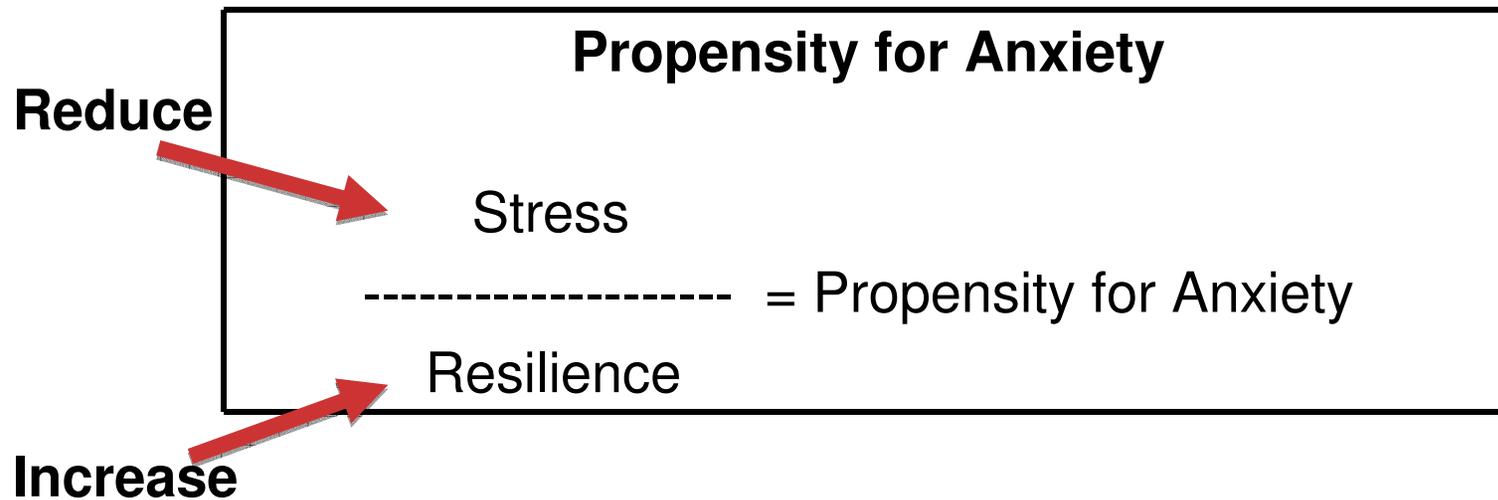
What is Anxiety?

(...How do you know you have it?)

Anxiety: A Word, a Clinical State, a Diagnosable Syndrome

- **A word** meaning apprehensive uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill
- **A clinical state** characterized by an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear, often marked by physical signs. Accompanied by distress and disfunction in one or more life domains.
- One of several chronic and/or intermittent **clinical syndromes** defined in the DSM5 that significantly impair function or cause clinically significant distress for patients.

Anxiety in Medical Illness



Anxiety: Prevalence

- “Anxiety” is common in serious illness
 - 30-40% patients with advanced cancer report *severe* “anxiety”
 - Approx 20% meet criteria for formal anxiety disorders (similar rate to general population in the US).

%



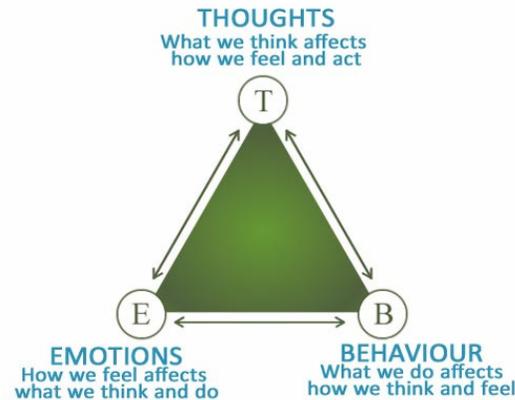
Brintzehofo-Szoc, KM, et al. *Psychosomatics*, 2009
Kroenke, K. *Ann Intern Med*, 2007.
Harman, JS, et al. *Gen Intern Med* 2002.

Normative vs. Pathologic Anxiety

- Normal anxiety is adaptive.
- Inborn response to threat *or* to the absence of people or objects that signify safety
- Can result in cognitive (worry) and somatic (racing heart, sweating, shaking, freezing, etc.) symptoms.
- Pathologic anxiety is anxiety that is excessive and leads to **impaired function.**

Clinical Anxiety: Definition

- A sense of dread and foreboding with a variety of autonomic (primary sympathetic) symptoms
- The “fight or flight” response in overdrive
- Distress / dysfunction in one or several life domains



Physical Signs and symptoms of Anxiety

Anorexia	Muscle tension
"Butterflies" in stomach	Nausea
Chest pain or tightness	Pallor
Diaphoresis	Palpitations
Diarrhea	Paresthesias
Dizziness	Sexual dysfunction
Dry mouth	Shortness of breath
Dyspnea	Stomach pain
Faintness	Tachycardia
Flushing	Tremulousness
Headache	Urinary frequency
Hyperventilation	Vomiting
Light-headedness	

Pollack, et al. *Anxious Patients*, *Handbook of General Hospital Psychiatry*. 2010

Additional Symptoms of Anxiety

- **Cognitive:**

- Recurrent, unpleasant thoughts about illness along with fears of death, disfigurement
- Overgeneralization and catastrophizing cognitive styles

- **Behavioral:**

- Perceive environment as hostile and therefore flee/avoid treatment or are non-adherent

Why does Cancer cause so much anxiety?

...What Cancer “is”

For Clinicians, Cancer Is...

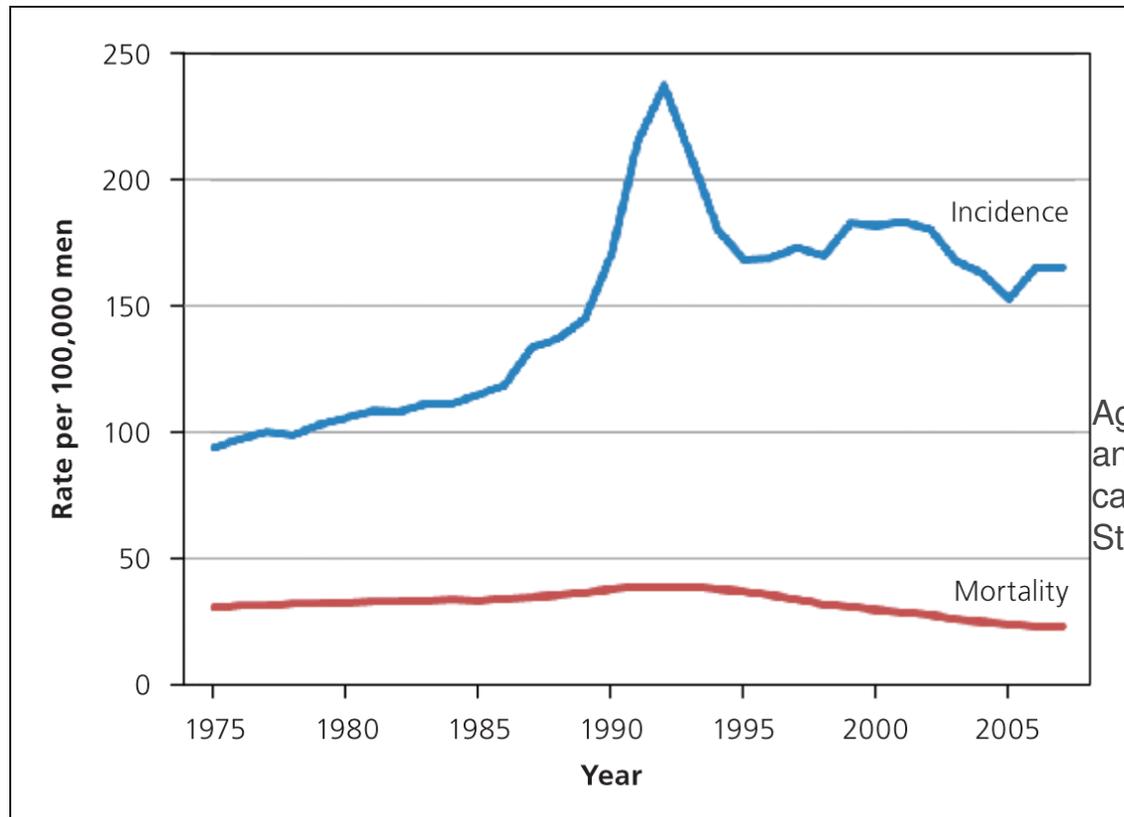
- A set of conditions characterized by multiple trajectories, with ongoing physical and psychosocial concerns.
 - Starts with symptoms or screening
 - Progresses through diagnostic uncertainty/certainty
 - Progresses through treatment planning and implementation
 - Diverges into remission/monitoring, chronicity (of illness or post-illness symptoms), or palliation & death.
- Not a single event with a particular end.

For many patients, Cancer is...

- Death...or at least an arrow pointing towards one's mortality
- In fact, Cancer has *become* the metaphor
 - Unique for medical disease
- "Cancer" as a punitive adjective, a moral judgement.
 - Merriam-Webster: Cancer is "something evil or malignant that spreads destructively"



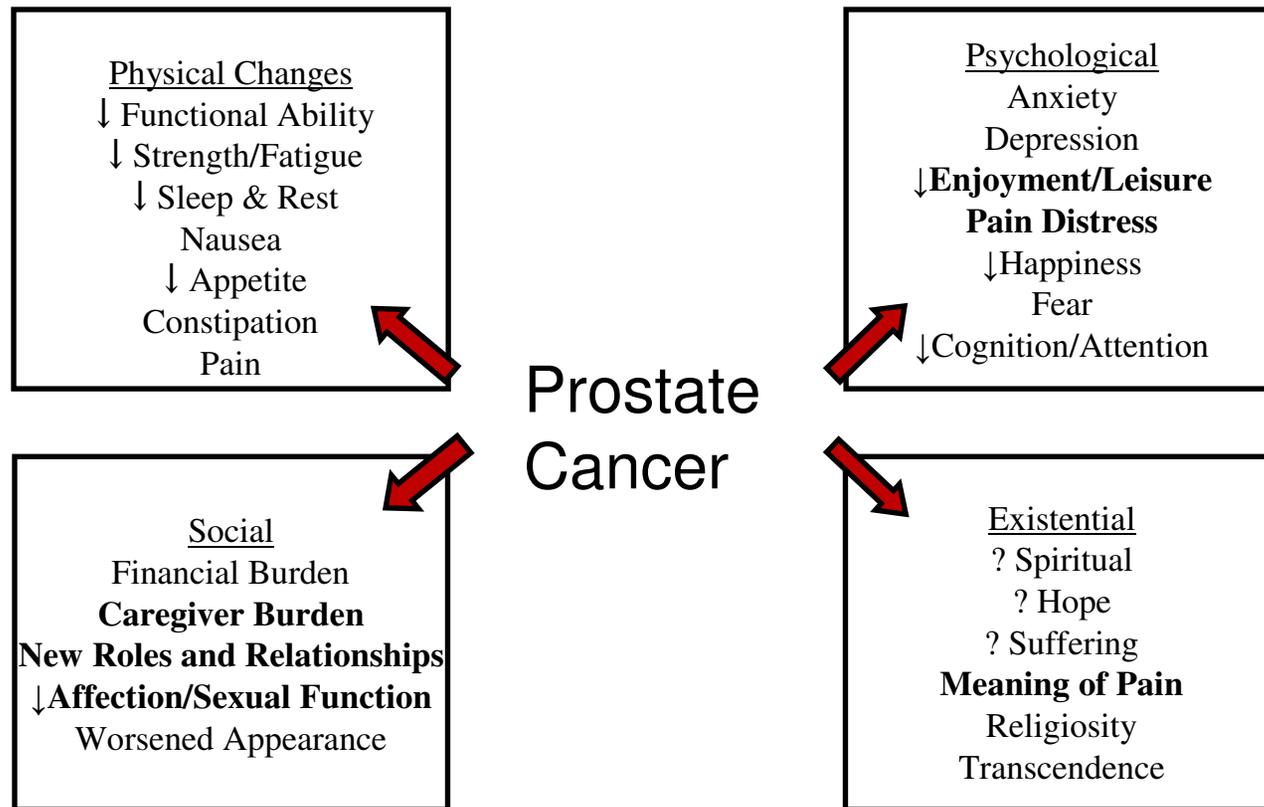
Prostate Cancer: Incidence greatly outnumberers mortality



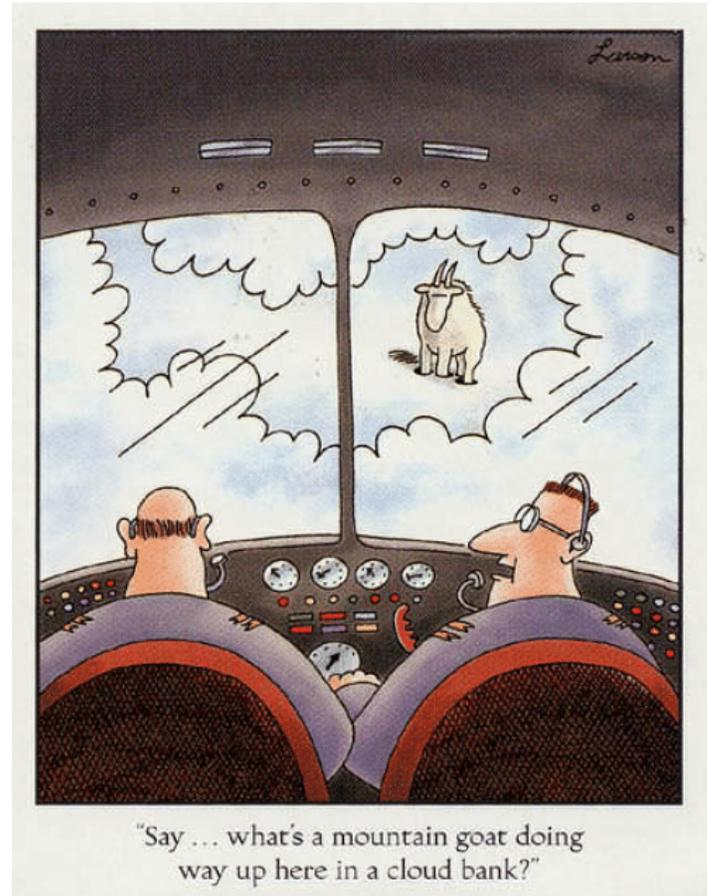
Age-adjusted incidence of and mortality from prostate cancer in the United States, 1975–2007.

Hoffman RM. Clinical practice. Screening for prostate cancer. N Engl Med. 2011;365(21):2015.

And if not “Death”...Prostate Cancer is Unexpected and means a lot of change!



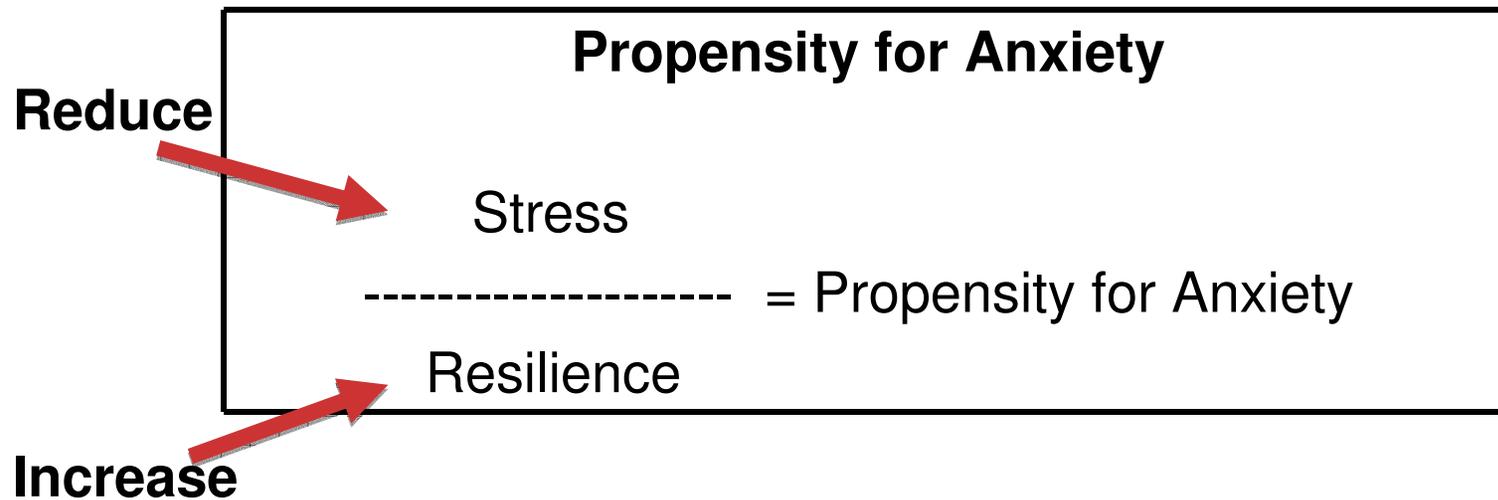
**...And the
Unexpected leads
to Apprehension
and Anxiety**



What can I do about Anxiety?



What can I do about Anxiety?



Questions to Ask Yourself...

- What worked in the past when times got tough?
- What have you stopped doing recently that you used to do to take care of yourself / you enjoyed?
- What have you started doing more of to feel better (e.g. eating unhealthy food, alcohol use, avoiding people, etc.)?

Enhancing Resilience

“Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin
As self-neglecting”

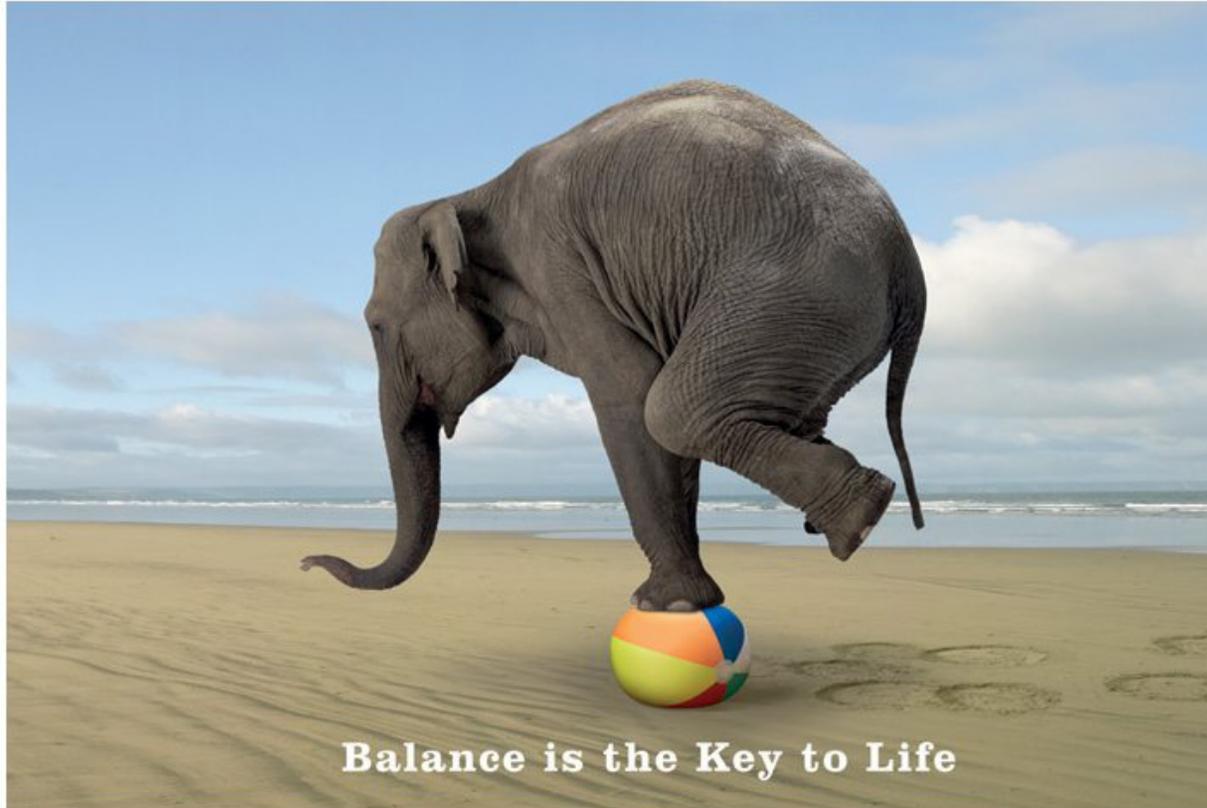
King Henry V, Act 2, scene 4

Major Categories of Enhancing Resiliency

- Take Care of Yourself
 - Including learning stress-reduction techniques
- Connect With People
- Set Appropriate Boundaries and Limits
- Practice Hope (Gratitude)

Take Care of Yourself: Be Human

- Humans need: 8 hours of sleep a night, three meals a day, exercise, sunlight and frequent watering.
- Do what you enjoy. And be kind to yourself if you cannot.
- Humans get sad and excited, angry and happy, and tired. Allow space for all of it.
- Humans are social creatures – Connect with others to take care and be cared for.



Balance is the Key to Life

Stress Reduction Techniques

- Typically, at least one technique ‘clicks’ for each person
 - Exercise
 - Meditation
 - Silent, focused, prayer, guided (imagery, progressive relaxation), active (yoga, laughter...)
 - Hypnosis
 - Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)



"Stress relief techniques include meditation, slow breathing, and visualization of chocolate bars."

Connect With People

- Resilience literature identifies need for a sense of community.
- Share your laughter, joy, sadness and fear with others in a meaningful, non-judgmental way.
- Support groups (even online) help
- Psychotherapy (individual or group) can make a difference

Set Appropriate Limits

- Learning to say “No” effectively without concomitant loss of self-respect is a skill to practice
- You may not be up to the same intensity of living as before. You may need more rest or to work less depending on your stressor.
- It is not selfish to want to spend time with others, to play a game, to watch television, to take a walk.
 - You don't have to “prove” anything.

Practice Hope



Practice: Hope

Hope:

1.to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment

2.to expect with confidence

- Hope as a practice and as a creative act
 - Not an accomplishment or destination.

Hope

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all

--Emily Dickenson

Seek Out Professional Help

- Psychotherapy

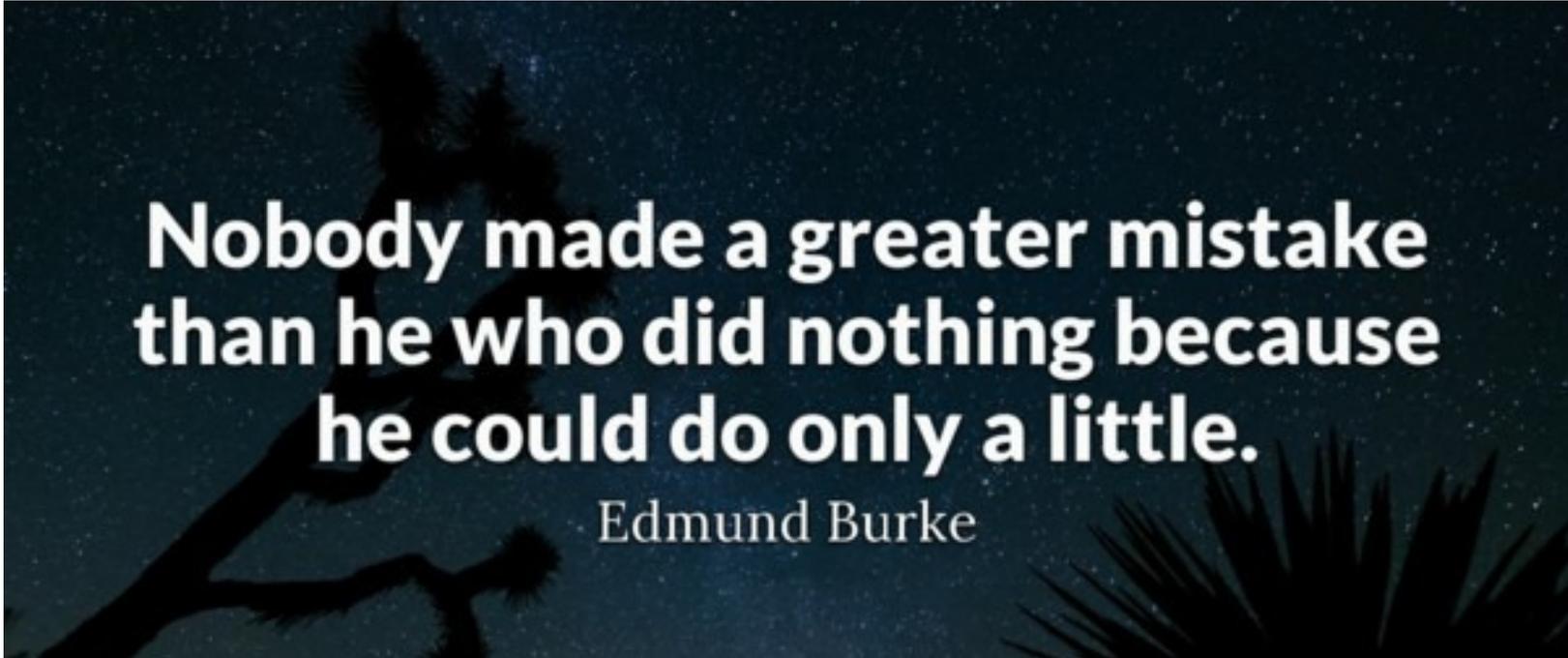


- Pharmacology



Ideal Treatment

- Some combination of Psychotherapy AND Pharmacologic treatment
- The choice of one vs. another, or to use combined treatment depends on clinical judgment and patient preferences



**Nobody made a greater mistake
than he who did nothing because
he could do only a little.**

Edmund Burke

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Questions / Discussion