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The Artistry of Compassion:
The Elephant that Lingers in the Room

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*I've learned
that people will forget what you've said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget
how you made them feel.*

Maya Angelou

Compassion



- Emphasis on data collection & technical skills
- Distract from focusing on human bond of compassion
- Core value in oncology social work
- Highlight Compassion in the 2019 “American Cancer Society Quality-of-Life Lecture”

Oncology Social Workers



- Clinician, supervisor, administrator, researcher, educator, advocate
- Proximity to profound human dilemmas
- Witness to suffering
- Likelihood for compassion fatigue

Rocky Road

- Each patient needs an individualized approach
- A helping hand over his or her rocky road
- Compassion requires foresight to know when to lend a steadying hand.



Definition of Compassion and Empathy



- Compassion: Caring, listening, kindness, dignity, respect, cultural competence, cultural humility
- Empathy: The ability to walk in another's shoes
- Compassionate care vs. ordinary care
- Teachable skills

Compassion



- Essential for:
 - Oncology social workers
 - People living with cancer
 - Colleagues, student interns & interprofessional team

Challenge of Digital Compassion



- Integration of digital technology in our work
- Novel opportunities for patient-centered communication
- Email, texting, web-based platforms, webcasts & online support groups
- Balance between compassion & technical expertise

Wiljer D, Charow R, Costin H, et al. Defining compassion in the digital health age: protocol for a scoping review. *BMJ Open* 2019

Who Teaches Us Compassion



- Parents, guardians, partners, spouses, family, siblings & friends
- Professors, teachers, mentors, supervisors, colleagues & co-workers
- Patients, survivors, caregivers & the bereaved
- Interprofessional oncology/palliative team
- Everyone

Compassion Mentors



- Anticipated & unanticipated mentors
- Role models for compassionate care
- Throughout the trajectory of our careers

Compassion Through the Lens of Our Humanity



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- Enhances our interventions
- Compassion as a buffer or antidote to stress
- Enriches our personal & professional lives
- Patients welcome caring from clinicians
- Invaluable in psychosocial oncology

Bumps in the Path



It may look like a straight forward bridge, but bumps in the path can trip anyone. Need a compassionate helping hand.

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Thank You



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