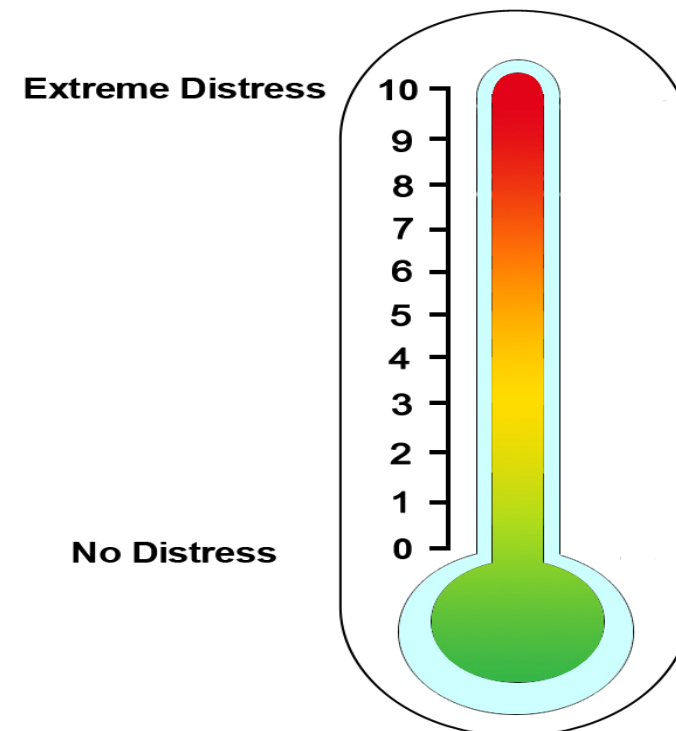


Coping with Stress: The Distress Thermometer



Adapted from the Distress Thermometer booklet
Produced by: Hillingdon Oncology & Palliative Care Team
The Hillingdon Hospital
Pield Heath Road
Hillingdon
UB8 3NN

Introduction

“Distress is anything which impacts negatively upon your life and stops you from doing anything you enjoyed before your diagnosis”

Having a serious illness can impact on many aspects of a person's life. The physical challenges presented are often the most obvious and are the focus of any treatment. However, health professionals are also often well placed to advise people when dealing with other difficulties such as psychological, spiritual, social and practical.

For many reasons, we know that it can be difficult for both the health professionals and the person to discuss the broad range of challenges that some diseases present. The Distress Thermometer is a tool that can help both the person and staff to begin a conversation with each other about the wider range of difficulties, together with the services and resources that may be helpful in addressing them.

How to Use the Distress Thermometer

There are many ways of using the Distress Thermometer. Most importantly it is a way of enhancing communication between people and their health care teams. It allows a whole range of concerns to be explored. As an individual you may find your own way of using the Distress Thermometer and sharing it with others. Listed below are three ways of using this measure.

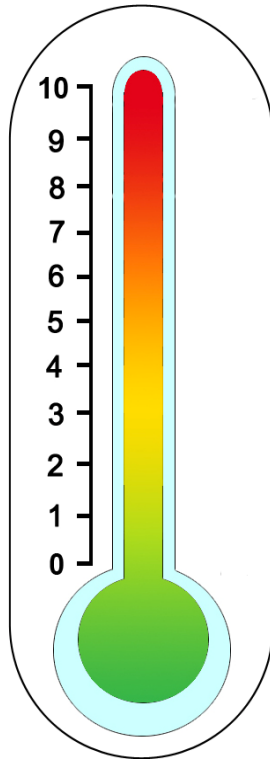
1. Just Circling a Number: You may find that you only want to do the first part of the tool, circling the number on the thermometer that best describes the distress you have felt over the past week. This is a quick way of identifying for yourself the extent of any distress that you may be experiencing.
2. Adapting the Instructions: After step 1 tick any problem boxes that apply to you. This can help you identify what has been contributing to your distress.
3. Following the full instructions: rank the top four problem areas. This can help you to identify which are the areas of greatest concern, providing a good starting point for developing a plan to address the concerns.

The Distress Thermometer

First please circle the number (0-10) that best describes how much distress you have been experiencing in the past week including today.

Second, please indicate if any of the following has been a problem for you in the past week including today. Be sure to check YES or NO for each.

Extreme Distress



No Distress

YES	NO	Practical Problems	YES	NO	Physical Problems
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appearance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bathing/dressing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insurance/financial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breathing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Changes in urination
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work/school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Constipation
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diarrhoea
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eating
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling Swollen
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fevers
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealing with close	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting around
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend/relative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indigestion
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Memory/concentration
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mouth sores
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nausea
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fears	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nose dry/congested
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nervousness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sadness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Worry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skin dry itchy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loss of interest in usual activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sleep
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual/religious concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tingling in hands/feet

Other problems

Scores & what to do now

Each person is unique. You know yourself and the best way for you to respond to any score that you obtain.

0-4: Your score indicates that your distress levels are well under control at present. However, there may be some additional sources of help available to you. Please see the section on [Support Services and Useful Contacts](#).

5-7: Your score indicates that you are experiencing some distress that may be affecting your life quite significantly. It could be worth discussing this with your health care team and finding ways to get some additional support. A starting point may be to look at the section about [Support Services and Useful Contacts](#).

8-10: Your score indicates that you are experiencing high levels of distress and this may be very difficult for you. It is highly recommended that you talk with someone in your health care team about what may be contributing towards your distress. This can be useful in finding additional ways to cope. In the meantime look at the exercise on the next page to help you to identify what you are doing already that helps.

You might like to think about some of the things you are doing to help you cope, for example; talking to close friends and family, going out, listening to music, and trying to keep a helpful frame of mind. Identifying them is an extremely valuable strategy that can strengthen and sustain you through difficult times.

Things that help me

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

[Depending upon the problems that are causing you distress, you may find the list of phone numbers on the following pages useful.](#)

Support Services & Useful Contacts

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS	
Housing	
Social Services general switchboard	
Handy Person Scheme	
Care line Emergency Alarm System	
Meals	
Community food coordinator (Meals on Wheels)	
Finances	
Macmillan Benefits Advice Line	0800 801 0304
Benefits Advisor at the Lynda Jackson Centre at Mount Vernon Hospital	
Benefit Inquiry Line (Department of Work and Pensions)	0800 882200
Citizens advice bureau (CAB) Call for details of your local office	0870 126 4021
Social Services	
Older Adult Social Services	
People with physical and sensory disabilities team	

Transportation	
Dial a Ride Membership application is available to download from www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/1187.aspx	0845 9991 999
London Taxi Card Scheme	0207 4842929
Blue Badge scheme (Civic Centre)	
Wheelchair loan service	0208 581 5502
* Hospital Transport	
General inquiries	
** PALS (Patient Advice & Liaison Service)	
hospital PALS	
Primary Care Trust PALS	
'PICS' Service User Involvement (Patients Improving Cancer Services)	

* Hospital Transport

Ask your hospital medical team for assistance in contacting the hospital transport service 'Door2Door' to help you with non-urgent transport to and from the xxxx and xxxx Hospital

** PALS

A service introduced into every NHS Trust. PALS a supportive service, providing advice, information and offering on the spot help to patients, carers and relatives by working in partnership with hospital staff.

PHYSICAL PROBLEMS	
Cancerbackup: Help line www.cancerbackup.org.uk	0808 800 1234
Older Adult Social Services	
People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities Team	
Lymphodema Service	
FAMILY PROBLEMS	
Dealing with children	
Child and families Social Services	
Cancer Research UK Support for children whose parents have cancer www.cancerhelp.org.uk	
Riprap Website for 12-16 year olds who have a parent with cancer www.riprap.org.uk	
Institute of Family Therapy	0207 391 9150
Family carers	
Carers	
Age concern	
Crossroads	
RRICHH Relatives of Residents in Care Homes	0207 3598136
Mental Health Advocate for Older People	

Home Start Parent volunteers supporting local families through home visiting. www.home-start.org.uk	
Young carers	
Young Carers This service provides support for young people aged 5-18 who are a carer for a parent, grand parent, sibling, relation etc. They provide a youth service run at the Harlington Young Peoples Centre and are able to provide one to one support	
Holidays	
Willow Foundations Dedicated to bringing special days to the seriously ill who are between the ages of 16 and 40 years of age and live in the United Kingdom	01707 259777
The HoneyRose Foundation Helps people who are terminally ill do something special. <i>At the moment not taking applications due to lack of funds</i>	01744 453062
Albany Lodge Owned by Macmillan, designed to give patients with cancer & their families a special holiday hotel in Bournemouth, with professional advice available.	01202 425236

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS	
NHS Psychological Support	
Specialist Macmillan Clinical Psychology Service A service providing short to medium term psychological support to patients and families affected by cancer (a referral will be required from a relevant medical team but enquires welcome)	
Local centres & National Support Provide specialist information, counselling and support for cancer patients and their families	
Cancerbackup www.cancerbackup.org.uk	0808 800 1234
Macmillan National helpline support providing information, advise and support Emotional support	0207 840 7840 0808 808 2020
Relationship problems	
Relate	0300 100 1234
British Association for Sexual & Relationship Therapy	0208 543 2707
Bereavement	
The xxxx Hospital Bereavement Office	

(Patient Affairs) Located in the Main Hospital building, next to Cashiers <u>Opening Times</u> Monday 8.30am to 2pm Tuesday to Friday 8.30 to 1pm	
Cruse Bereavement Care Helpline www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk	0844 477 9400
Winston's Wish Child bereavement support	08452 030405 01242 515157
SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS CONCERNS	
The Hospital Chaplaincy Team The xxxx Hospital Trust in conjunction with the appropriate religious authorities appoints the Chaplaincy. Chaplains may be contacted via the Hospital switchboard Ministers and representatives of other mainstream religious faiths are available on request.	