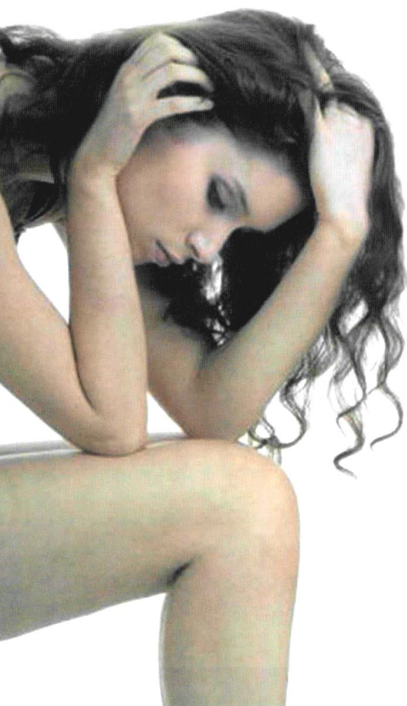


Broad Shoulders with Dr Magda Rall

Dr Rall studied at FSU, UJ and COU (UK). She is a Specialist Counsellor focussing on trauma. She serves two NGOs and facilitates a CANSA support group. magdarall@mweb.co.za



Self-support VERSUS Self-destruction

This will not work, I know I am getting worse, I am convinced the medication I am taking is not working for me!

In the case of following a regime of intensive cancer treatment we often experience the feeling of helplessness; it is a normal and acceptable emotion that overwhelms us in the face of the severe challenges that we encounter at times on this journey.

However, there is also another reason why we may get ourselves submerged in an environment of vulnerability and that resides with what is termed Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or commonly known as self-talk. We are continuously in dialogue with ourselves and it is important that we take note exactly what this dialogue entails. In these conversations, we tend to focus more on the negative and, at times, we battle to stay afloat in the downward current.

How we approach a challenge, an individual, or any issue in life determines to a great extent the outcomes thereof.

So should we be inclined not to believe in the treatment, or question the efficacy of the medication, we set ourselves on a road to self-destruction.

Despite all the support we receive from external sources; the medical team, our family and friends and even strangers, we are quite capable of drowning ourselves by passively joining the downward spiral. Yes, we need the help and encouragement from our loved ones, but first and foremost, we need to be able to be supportive of ourselves. The crucial times are those lonely midnight hours, or the very early hours before the break of day when we go looking for reasons where there are none, or explanations or future prospects when the door is still closed.

Cancer is a journey – both medical and emotional. It is an agonising universal experience for all patients but we can triumph over it by believing in the strength our positive thoughts will have in re-directing our emotions and

behaviour in a way that is beneficial to our well-being.

In the dark and sleepless hours of the night instead of feeding our fears we can turn to scripture or a favourite poem to bring a ray of much needed light. When we feel overwhelmed and depressed by our thoughts we should sit back and do a couple of breathing exercises. Music is always a good way to bring tranquility to our emotions.

When struggling with feelings of sadness, fear or longing we can entrust these emotions in a personal journal and transfer our unspoken words and lamentations to this ‘friend’ who will always come to our rescue and willingly take up the weight of our burden.

Visit www.sadag.org on this website you will find comprehensive mental health information and resources to help you, a family member or loved one.