



## Chapter 3 Our Brains Lead the Way

### *Tips for Fight Mode*

When in fight mode, we tend to focus more on doing than feeling.

Make a list of two or three people that you designate as the ones you want to ask you how you are doing. Ask them to use the word doing rather than feeling to honor your fight mode (at least for now). Be specific about how frequently you want to be asked; you can always increase it or decrease it later. Ask them if they're willing to take on this "job" for you. List these people below.

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**Fight** mode places us on high alert and makes it easy to miss important pieces of information. We think we heard everything that was said, but we didn't. Circle which suggestions you want to use.

Audio record your medical visits.

Bring someone along with you to important medical appointments as a second pair of ears, or to take notes, so you can just listen.

Stay away from people who ask prying questions. People who pry create a feeling of rage and generate a feeling as if they are using your crisis for gossip.

Avoid know-it-alls. When we are in fight mode, we don't want to hear dissenting opinions, because it distracts us from our well-thought-out plan.

Keeping a routine is important in fight mode because when following routines, the brain doesn't have to think and make decisions about ordinary tasks. Maintaining routines preserves energy for creating plans and gathering needed information.

Decide on two or three routines from your daily life you can deliberately keep during the challenging period of diagnosis. Routines to keep are

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**Fight** mode takes energy. It's important to occasionally distract yourself and let your system settle so you're not further taxing your health.

Create a list of five mind-distracting activities that fit your specific health situation. Ideas include work/volunteer, if possible; exercise; social interaction (sports, games); crossword or jigsaw puzzles; gardening; playing with children; cooking; repetitive prayer; or singing. Distracting activities...

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### Chapter 3 Our Brains Lead the Way

#### *Tips for Flight Mode*

When in flight mode, we tend to be overwhelmed by emotions that make us want to escape. Thinking about the details and gathering information can increase our distress, so it is important to enlist others to help with these tasks.

Make a list of two or three friends/family that you would like to have on your support team. Choosing someone with a medical background is helpful, but not crucial. Meet with them to talk about what you want them to do. Support team...

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As a group, decide who will go to which medical appointments. Record them on a shared calendar (Google Calendar, Outlook.com, etc.) You can also share this calendar with others, such as select family members or friends.

Audio record your medical visits so all team members can hear what has been said and stay up-to-date.

Have the person who accompanies you to medical appointments take notes, particularly the main facts you need to know, so you can refer to them when you feel ready. After a medical appointment, the team member asks if now is a good time to tell you three pieces of information. If you hear one piece and that's all you can handle, tell them that's all you can listen to right now. It helps to add that you are feeling overwhelmed because that gives the helper clarity as to why they need to stop. The helpers need to know these "rules". Person to attend medical appointments with you

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When in flight mode, grounding activities are good. Grounding activities are those that keep us more present in the here and now — hence, less likely to take flight. Ways to be more grounded when in this mode include engaging one or more of the senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, sound). Mark the items you want to use.

\_\_\_\_\_ Listen to music

\_\_\_\_\_ Eat enjoyable foods

\_\_\_\_\_ Drink warm/cold beverages

\_\_\_\_\_ Smell scents that bring positive memories. Put a whole citrus fruit in the freezer and when frozen, take it out and smell it. The aroma of the citrus can be grounding. Some people use aromatherapy diffusers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Be in nature, which is full of sights, smells, sounds, and touch

\_\_\_\_\_ Spend time with pets

\_\_\_\_\_ Lie under a weighted blanket

\_\_\_\_\_ Wear clothes that are comfortable and have a texture you like

Some actions are particularly **unhelpful to take when in flight mode.**



- Don't visit Dr. Google
- Don't listen to the medical visit recordings unless you have moved into fight mode, because hearing the information in medical jargon can increase the anxiety

### Chapter 3 Our Brains Lead the Way

#### *Tips for Freeze Mode*

When in freeze mode, much of the world around and inside of us feels overwhelming. We don't want a lot of input.

Although freeze and flight modes are different from one another, they have similar features that prompt some of the same suggestions.

Make a list of two or three friends/family that you would like to have on your support team. Choosing someone with a medical background is helpful, but not crucial. Meet together to talk about what you want them to do. List the two or three friends/family that you would like to have on your support team.

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As a group, decide who will go to which medical appointments. Write the dates on a shared calendar (Google Calendar, Outlook.com, etc.) (You can also share this calendar with select family and friends if you choose.) Who will go to medical appointments with you...

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Audio record your medical visits so all team members can hear what has been said and stay up-to-date.

Have the person who accompanies you to medical appointments to take notes, particularly the main facts you need to know, so you can refer to them when you feel ready.

After a medical appointment, the team member is to ask if now is a good time to tell you three pieces of information. If you hear one piece and that's all you can handle, tell them that's all you can listen to right now. Let them know that you are feeling overwhelmed because that gives the helper clarity as to why they need to stop. The helpers need to know these "rules" ahead of time.

To help **unlock the freeze reaction**, touch or movement are essential. Check off the items that are appealing to you.

- Wrap yourself in a cozy or weighted blanket
- Listen to music
- Be hugged by someone you trust and love Eat enjoyable foods
- Drink warm/cold beverages
- Smell scents that bring positive memories. Put a whole citrus fruit in the freezer and when frozen, take it out and smell it. The aroma of the citrus can be grounding. Some people use aromatherapy diffusers.
- Be in nature, which is full of sights, smells, sounds, and touch
- Spend time with pets
- Dance
- Wear clothes that are comfortable and have a texture you like
- Ride a bike
- Dig/plant in the dirt
- Fish, as casting and reeling are calming movements

## Chapter 3 Our Brains Lead the Way

### Support

Throughout the stages of a medical crisis and more, we move back and forth between the three modes: fight, flight, and freeze. Most of us, though, tend to have a “go-to” approach. Which is your primary reaction?

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Our relationships with family, friends, and colleagues vary. Identifying what type of support you need from specific people allows you to let them know. When you are in your primary mode of reaction (fight, flight, or freeze), what kind of support do you need?

I Need This Kind of Support	From This Person

When your stress is heightened, what mode (fight, flight, freeze) do you move into as a reaction? \_\_\_\_\_ mode. When I am in this mode I need

I Need This Kind of Support	From This Person

## Chapter 4 What Do I Do Now

Here's one way to evaluate if you need or want a specific piece of information about your situation.

### Step 1

Will this information help me	Yes	No	Maybe
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### Step 3

A final area is to acknowledge what you don't want to know. Maybe you don't need to know it and don't want to spend time on it. Maybe you don't want to know it now. Maybe you just don't want to learn about it at all.

What I don't want to know

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## Chapter 7 Figuring It Out

### I can't believe this is happening. It is...

Once the feelings have surfaced in the letter, put the letter away for a few days or a week, and then pull it out. Reading through the letter, you may find there are some other ideas you would like to add.

The next step is to write what it is you want/need. This can start with the ideas below. Again, it's important to give yourself enough uninterrupted time to work on this.



**I wish...**

**I want...**

**I need...**

After time has passed, read over what you wrote. Take what you wrote and determine if there is something or someone who can help you meet a want or a need. For example, there were times when I wanted to be distracted by the reality of what I was going through. I found that being with my grandchildren was a distraction that took me away from the tough times. Playing games and interacting with them required my full concentration. The result was joy. See what desires surface for you and how they can be fulfilled.

Need	Who or What Can Meet My Need
Example: distraction	watching movies; playing a game with a child; talking to my friend Leslie

## Chapter 7 Figuring It Out

### My Emotions

1. Throughout this initial stage, as well as subsequent phases, we move back and forth between the three modes: fight, flight, and freeze. You identified your

primary reaction mode in Chapter 3. To look further, which reaction (fight, flight, freeze) do you identify as your primary reaction mode?

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2. Our relationships with family, friends, and colleagues vary. For example, we may be receptive to a hug from one person, but not another. Identifying what type of support you need from specific people allows you to let them know. When you are in your primary mode of reaction (fight, flight, or freeze), what kind of support do you need?

I need this kind of support	From this person

3. When your stress is heightened, what mode (fight, flight, freeze) do you move into as a reaction? \_\_\_\_\_ mode. When I am in this mode I need...

I need this kind of support	From this person

## Chapter 12 Pathways to Coping

### Gratitude

Write down the people in your life you are grateful for and what it is they bring to your life to make it better.

Person	What they bring to my life

List things you like about yourself.

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List experiences for which you are grateful.

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## Chapter 13 Dealing with Others



I think of our lives as consisting of three tiers of relationships.

- Tier 1 contains those to whom we are most close. This level may include a spouse, partner, best friends, and siblings. These are the folks with whom we share the most and want to keep aware of our experience.
- Tier 2 consists of people we consider friends, family (sometimes not), certain colleagues, and close neighbors.
- Tier 3 includes people we encounter but don't feel particularly close to, or with whom we don't share personal information. Many people at work fall into this category, as we want to keep a professional separation from some colleagues.



Being aware of whom you place on each level is helpful. Some people around us may think they are closer to us than we feel to them. While we can't control that, we can prepare what we will and won't share with each of the groups. That way, when you meet someone at the grocery store and they ask how you are doing, you can share as much or as little as you want based on what level the person is in. If someone is a Level 3 individual and says, "I heard you had heart surgery," you can respond with "I'm doing fine now, thanks." If you encounter someone who is on Level 2 and asks about your surgery, you might be more forthcoming. Preparing responses ahead of time can be helpful.

Write who is on your different tiers. Decide what you want to share with each tier, and how. Have an idea of how you might respond to someone in each tier when they ask how you are or how they can help.

Person	What to Share
Example: A neighbor up the street I rarely see ( tier 3) says, "I heard you're sick."	"Yes, I'm going through treatment, but I'm doing well."


## Chapter 17 Triggers

### Sensory Triggers

I Am Triggered by These	Plans/Techniques to Help
Smell	
Smell	
Sound	
Sound	
Taste	
Taste	
Touch	

Touch		
Sight		
Sight		

### Anniversary Triggers

The one advantage of anniversary reactions is that we know which dates might be challenging and can take action to cope. Jot down some dates that may trigger you and what you can do to support yourself.

Date	I Plan to...

## Chapter 18 Rebuilding

### How Do You Want to Be Now

Knowing your personality traits is helpful during many times of your life, but it is particularly important now. The better we know ourselves, the easier it is to figure out how to move to more solid ground.

Identifying your personality characteristics or traits. First, think back to what you were like when you were in elementary school, as children tend to be closer to their pure selves (also known as the soul self). Picture yourself back then and write down traits you exhibited as they pop into your mind. Try not to censor or evaluate them; let the words bubble forth. How would you describe yourself back then?

Personality characteristics/traits
Example: adventurous


If you have difficulty generating words that describe you, there is a list of character traits in the Appendix.

Looking over the list you generated, write the five or six words that best capture the real you/soul self often expressed in childhood.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Next, list words that describe you as a result of your medical journey. Again, don't overthink, go with your first reaction.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Compare the first list of words (your "child self") and the list related to the present. What traits are on both lists?

_____	_____
_____	_____



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Which traits are different?

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Are there any on the child list that you would like to recapture?

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Are there any current traits you would like to build on as you move forward?

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Any traits you would like to let go of?

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## **Chapter 18 Rebuilding**

### ***The Gifts of Trauma***

Can you identify three positive things your crisis brought you?

1.

2.

3.

If you want to build on any of the three positives you identified above, list what you can do to continue to benefit from them.

1.

2.

3.

## Chapter 18 Rebuilding

### Activities

Choose activities below that might interest you and indicate what your next step would be.

Hobby	Next Step
Start a collection	
Explore more music	
Start puzzling	
Get a coloring book	

Take up journaling. <sup>[1]</sup>	
Take care of plants	
Get a pet	
Read more books	
Try knitting	
Paint by numbers	
Bake desserts	
Play an instrument	
Play cards	
Watch a documentary	
Rebuild a classic car	
Learn a language	
Go camping	
Volunteer in the community	
Start running	
Explore the art world	
Practice origami	
Pursue physical activity	
Go to dinner with a foodie	

<sup>[1]</sup> Popular apps include Universium, Five Minute Journal, and Day One.

## Chapter 18 Rebuilding

### Relating to Others

Jot down responses you feel comfortable giving to the level levels of people.

**Level 1** is those we are closest to. Responses in this area tend to be the most specific. Sample responses include "It's hard to adjust to the changes my body demands". "I worry about what can happen, but it doesn't preoccupy my thoughts like it used to".

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**Level 2** consists of people we consider friends, family (though sometimes not), certain colleagues, and close neighbors. Responses in this area could include I still have some challenges, but I am much better. I'm holding my own. I'm feeling well. Jot down responses you feel comfortable giving to this group.

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**Level 3** includes people we encounter but don't feel particularly close or with whom we don't share personal information. Responses in this area could include All is moving along. I feel so much better now. Jot down responses you feel comfortable giving to this group.

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## Chapter 18 Rebuilding

### *Adapting at Work*

List what you need from your workplace, who needs to know what you're going through, and what to say to them.

What I need	Who needs to know what	What can I say

## Chapter 19 Caregivers' Reactions

### *Worries*

Make a list of your worries and "what ifs". Turn each item into a question and list whom you can ask to find an answer.

Worries	What ifs	Whom can I ask

## Chapter 19 Caregivers' Reactions

### *Anger*

List three ways you can constructively release your anger.

## Chapter 19 Caregivers' Reactions

### What You Need to Know

Here's one way to evaluate if you need or want a specific piece of information about your loved one's situation.

#### Step 1

Will this information help me	Yes	No	Maybe
Will it help me be prepared			
Will it help me understand the diagnosis and treatment			
Will it help me learn about the course of treatment and what will happen			
Will it help me understand the side effects of medication, treatment, or illness			
Will it help me be a better advocate			

#### Step 2

After you think about the above areas, move to the next layer. Identify what you *want* to know, who to ask for the info, and who will ask. The latter column is helpful if a group of people is working together as caregivers. Together, you can determine who will gather what information and report back.

What I Want to Know	Whom Can I Ask	Who Will Ask


### Step 3

A final area is to acknowledge what you don't want to know. Maybe you don't need to know something and don't want to spend time on it. Maybe you don't want to know it now.

What I don't want/need to know

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## Chapter 27 Taking Care of the Caregivers

### Support

The chart below can help you decide what you want to do to support yourself.

Ideas	Yes	No	Maybe	When
Movement:				
Walk or run				
Work out				
Other:				
Other:				
Hobby (dance, sports, crafts, etc.)				
Be in nature				
Writing				
Art				
Yelling				
Meditation				

Entertainment (TV, reading, playing games, etc.)				
Be with children or animals				
Other:				
Other:				
Other:				

## Chapter 27 Taking Care of the Caregivers

### How Others Can Help

The list below suggests some ways others can help. Check which ones you want, and next to the item, list people you would feel comfortable asking to help.

Tasks	Possible helpers
Food preparation	
Grocery shopping	
Have someone organize a meal train*	
Household chores (laundry, cleaning, changing beds)	
Yardwork	
Visiting	
Childcare	
Overseeing homework time	
Carpooling	
Taking children out to do something fun	
Animal care	
Other	
Other	
Other	

\*Tip: Have a cooler by your front door so meals can be left there to reduce exposure to germs and not be overwhelmed by well-meaning visitors.