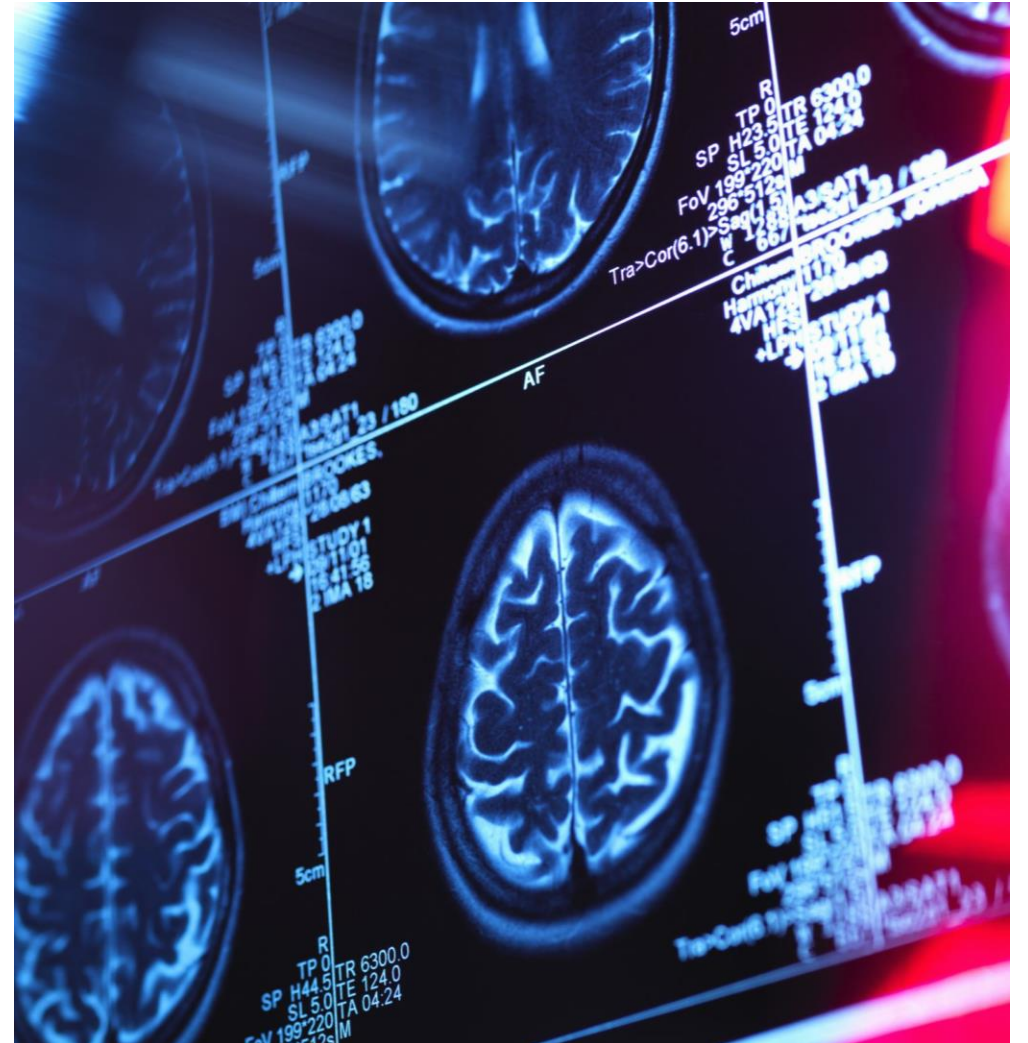


Supporting Your Mental Health and Maximizing the Quality of Your Life

Valeria Morado, LCSW

Topics covered:

- What is Depression and Anxiety?
- How do I get diagnosed?
- How does low testosterone affect my mental health?
- How to manage depression and anxiety
- Common pitfalls
- Coping skills
- How to support the cancer patient's mental health
- Taking care of yourself as a caregiver



About me



I am a licensed clinical social worker currently in private practice providing psychotherapy



I have over 7 years of experience as a medical and hospice social worker with experience working in:

Geriatric health facility
Home health
Hospice
The VA hospital

Let's talk about mental health

Quality vs Quantity

What is depression and anxiety?



Depression Symptoms

- Depressed mood (Feeling sad, empty, hopeless)
- Loss of interest
- Weight loss or gain
- Fatigue
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Feeling worthless or excessive/inappropriate guilt
- Decreased concentration
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Example of the PHQ- 9

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?
(use "✓" to indicate your answer)

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite — being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself	0	1	2	3

add columns

+ +

Anxiety Symptoms

- Excessive anxiety and worry (At least 6 months)
- Fatigue
- Restlessness
- Increased muscle aches or soreness (somatic symptoms)
- Impaired concentration
- Irritability
- Difficulty sleeping (due to trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, restlessness at night, or unsatisfying sleep)

Example of the GAD-7

NAME	DATE			
1. Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all sure	Several days	Over half the days	Nearly every day
• Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
• Not being able to stop or control worrying	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
• Worrying too much about different things	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
• Trouble relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
• Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
• Becoming easily annoyed or Irritable	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
• Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
<i>Add the score for each column</i>				
TOTAL SCORE <i>(add your column scores)</i>				
	Not difficult at all	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
2. If you checked off any problem on this questionnaire so far, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

How to get diagnosed?

- A therapist, psychiatrist or primary care doctor can diagnose through the previous assessments and patient self disclosure
- A psychiatrist or a primary care doctor can provide medication management

Medication Management

- **Antidepressants:**
 - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) most common type
 - Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
 - Work by altering the chemicals in the brain including norepinephrine and serotonin
- **Antianxiety medication:**
 - Antidepressants are the first line medications for the treatment of anxiety disorders
 - However, benzodiazepines can also be used to treat anxiety disorders

How does low testosterone affect mental health?

- Low testosterone can cause mood issues like depression, irritability, lack of focus
- It can cause fatigue, which can cause a lack of self care
- Low sex drive – lack of connection with partner/spouse
- Loss of lean muscle mass and strength - unable to do things you used to do before

How to manage depression and anxiety

- Therapy
- Medication: antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication

... This is just two things of many that can help, there's so much more to mental health.



Let's look at a holistic approach to mental health

Protective factors



Protective Factors

Protective factors are things that contribute to mental health and allow a person to be resilient in the face of challenges. Someone with a lot of protective factors—such as strong relationships and healthy coping skills—will be better equipped to overcome life's obstacles.



Social support

- Ability to talk about problems



Coping skills

- Ability to manage uncomfortable emotions in a healthy way



Physical health

- Medical compliance, adequate physical activity, balanced diet



Sense of purpose

- Meaningful involvement in work, education or other roles



Self-esteem

- Belief that one's self has value



Healthy thinking

- Does not ruminate on mistakes, personal flaws or problems

Activity: Protective Factors

Social support
Coping skills
Physical health
Sense of purpose
Self-esteem
Healthy thinking



Which protective factor has been most valuable for you during a difficult time?
How has it improved your quality of life in the past?



What is one protective factor you would like to improve?



Describe how things would be different if you were able to improve these protective factors.



List specific steps/actions that might help make this a reality.

Common Pitfalls

- Basic needs are not being met (example: not taking care of your body)
- Judging yourself from not feeling great. “I should be getting up early.” “I should be exercising”
- Isolating yourself from loved ones
- Avoiding your feelings
- Turning to alcohol and drugs to cope

How to improve these pitfalls



Be mindful of the foods you are eating



Be active at least 30 minutes a day, could be taking a walk, gardening, biking



Good sleep hygiene



Reframing negative thoughts – instead of “I should” say “I plan” or “I want to”



Staying in touch with loved ones – social interaction releases oxytocin which supports the secretion of serotonin



Take some time to reflect on your feelings and validate them – could be done through therapy, talking to a loved one, journaling

Coping Skills



Mindfulness – meditation, being present and aware of what you are experiencing in the present moment, breathing exercises




Cognitive Behavioral therapy – how our thoughts affect our emotions and thus affect our behavior

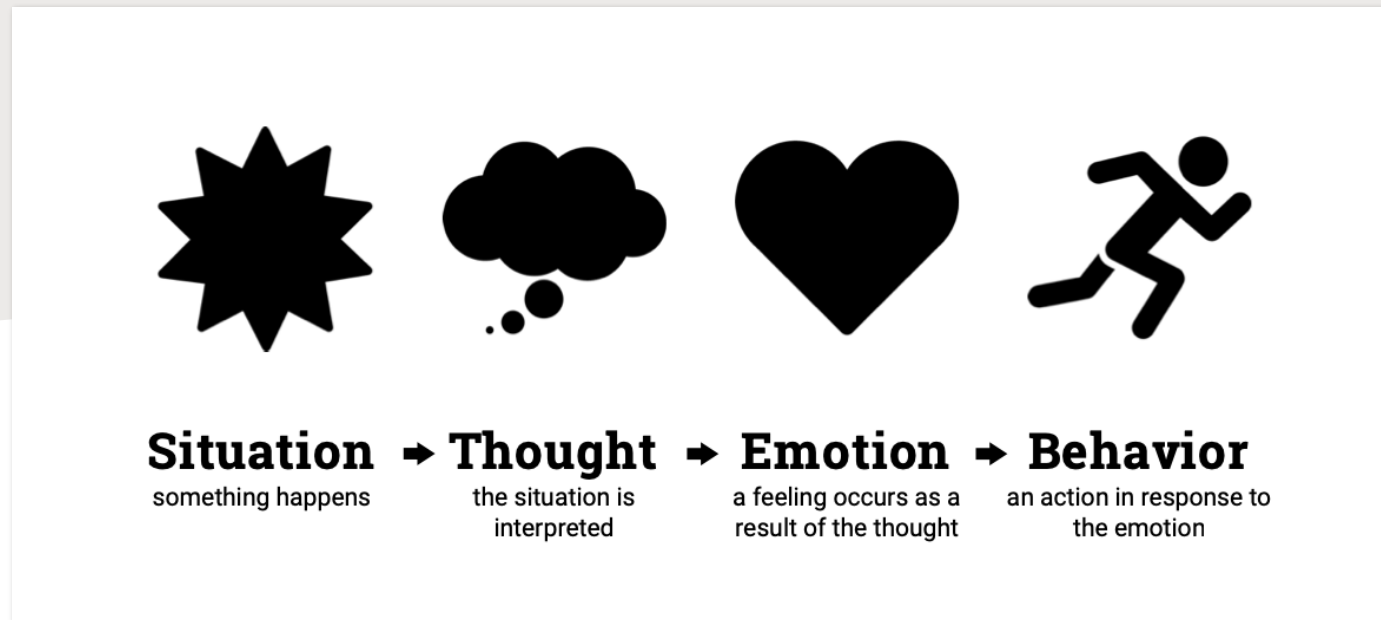


Dialectical Behavioral therapy – helps people accept the reality of their life, helping them change unhealthy behaviors

Example of Mindfulness

 Key Elements	
Awareness	Acceptance
Noticing your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they happen. The goal isn't to stop thinking—it's to become aware of your experience, rather than getting lost in it.	Noticing your experience without judging or trying to change it. For example, if you notice a feeling of anxiety, simply state to yourself: "I notice I'm feeling anxious."

Example of CBT



How our thoughts affect our emotions and thus affect our behavior



Example of CBT

How our thoughts affect our emotions and thus affect our behavior

What do you see in this photo?

Person A vs Person B

Example of a DBT skill

Situation	Typical thinking	Radical acceptance
You didn't get a job you wanted.	"This isn't fair—I did everything right. I was the best candidate for the job."	"I'm frustrated, but there's nothing I can do now. They felt someone else was a better fit."
You receive an untreatable medical diagnosis.	"I'm too young for this. Everyone else gets to go about their lives and I have to deal with this."	"I have to play the cards I'm dealt. This is awful, but I'll push forward."

- Radical acceptance – learning to accept things that are out of your control

Getting diagnosed with cancer

Stages of Grief



How to support the cancer patient's mental health

- Validating their experiences – saying “it must be difficult to go through this” vs “I understand what you’re going through”
- Making space for the patient to feel comfortable expressing grievances (example: allowing them to complain)
- Providing emotional support
- Express your willingness to help by setting up appointments, going with them, and attending therapy sessions as needed
- Urge them to take self-care steps
- Make plans with them

Stages of Grief

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

The Three C's of grief

- **Choose**
 - Choose what is best for you
- **Connect**
 - Connect with others, grief intensifies feelings of loneliness which often leads to isolation
- **Communicate**
 - Let others know how you can be supported, keep them updated

Taking care of yourself as a caregiver



Ask for help – caring for someone isn't always easy, asking family/friends to help can provide you time off to take care of your own needs (another option can be home health or respite through your insurance)



Making self care part of your routine



Having a support system – family, friends, support group, church/faith

Open for questions...

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