

# Emotional Wellness in Women with PCOS

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# What Poses Challenges to Emotional Well Being with PCOS?

## Short Term

- Irregular periods
- Hair growth
- Acne
- Infertility
- Psychological: depression, anxiety, self-esteem and reactions

## Long Term

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Increased risk of cardiovascular disease eg. strokes, heart attacks

Managing a chronic disease



## And other issues.....

- Foggy brain/concentration problems?
- Sexual side effects
  - Pain during intercourse



## Chicken or Egg Syndrome?

- Are mood/emotional problems in PCOS are caused by the distress associated with the symptoms often seen in PCOS or are they part of PCOS?



...it was me, right?

## Anxiety and Depression

- 12 comparative studies were included; all studies assessed depression (910 women with PCOS and 1347 controls) and 6 also assessed anxiety (208 women with PCOS and 169 controls)
- women with PCOS on average tend to experience mildly elevated anxiety and depression, significantly more than women without PCOS
- women with PCOS with lower BMI tended to have slightly lower anxiety and depression scores, suggesting that having a lower BMI reduces anxiety and depression

Barry JA, Kuczmierczyk AR, Hardiman PJ. Anxiety and depression in polycystic ovary syndrome: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Human Reproduction*, Vol.26, No.9 pp. 2442-2451, 2011.



## More research

- Higher emotional distress was consistently found in PCOS patients (28 studies with 2384 patients and 2705 control women) and in all the three examined emotional distress domains; i.e. depression, anxiety and the emotional Quality of Life measures
  - Many women perceive the visible features of PCOS (e.g. hirsutism) and its common correlates (e.g. infertility and obesity) as stigmatizing and a source of distress
  - depression was present in obese and infertile women as well as in lean and fertile patients with PCOS

Veltman-Verhulst SM, Boivin J, Eijkemans M, Fauser B. Emotional distress is a common risk in women with polycystic ovary syndrome: a systematic review and meta-analysis of 28 studies. *Human Reproduction Update*, Vol.18, No.6 pp. 638-651, 2012

## Weight, body image, and distortion



How do we distort our own self-image?



# Infertility

- Associated independently with high levels of distress
- Impact of treatment
- Impact on relationship with partner

# Hirsutism

- Excessive hair due to elevated androgen levels
- Is associated with distress
- So what is good self-care?
  - Medical management
  - Electrolysis
  - Laser removal
  - Waxing





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# Finding and building support

## Physical and Emotional Support

- Find a physician with whom you can partner
  - Bring along a health partner
- Find your support network (and keep a deep bench)
  - No one person can do all the support
- Consider skills building with a therapist

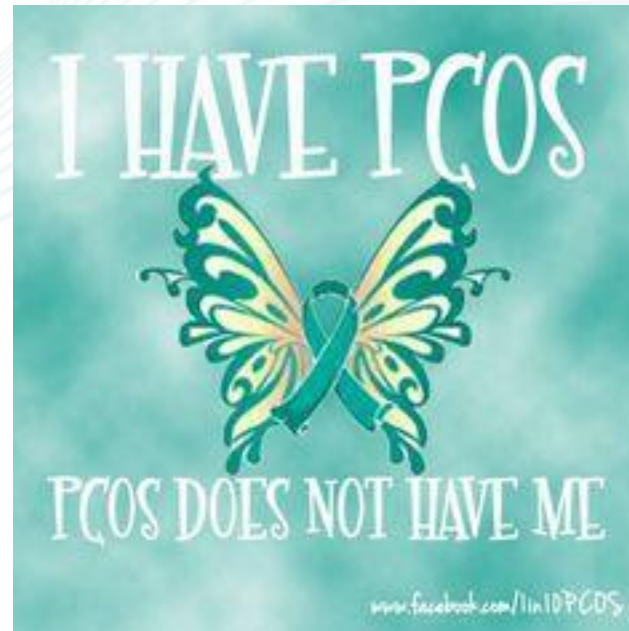


# Anti-Isolation





So.....How Do you View PCOS?



## How Do You Frame Things?



OR



OR



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# Counseling and other tools

## Consider Counseling

- Normalize for yourself
- Building skills
- Acknowledge the fears and reactions
- Understand what counseling might be able to provide for you?”
- What burden do you carry?
  - Giving coping strategies
  - Reducing suffering

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- Considers that we all have core beliefs, thoughts and reactions that can be inaccurate, distorted or negative
- Training to be aware of these allows for the ability to challenge these negative thoughts and beliefs

# Core Beliefs

Everyone looks at the world differently. Two people can have the same experience, yet have very different interpretations of what happened. **Core beliefs** are the deeply held beliefs that influence how we interpret our experiences.

Think of core beliefs like a pair of sunglasses. Everyone has a different "shade" that causes them to see things differently.



To begin challenging your negative core beliefs, you first need to identify what they are. Here are some common examples:

I'm unlovable	I'm stupid	I'm boring
I'm not good enough	I'm ugly	I'm worthless
I'm a bad person	I'm abnormal	I'm undeserving





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# Exercise

# Exercise > 3-5 times week



- Increase energy
- Reduce muscle discomfort
- Reduce depression and anxiety
- Improve sleep
- Reduce hot flashes
- Improve body image
- Weight control
- Weight bearing exercise
- Helps with cognitive functioning
- Improve health outcomes
- Small steps add up! Start slow and build up!

~~0.0~~

# Improve Sleep Quantity and Quality

# Coping With Stress in General

“Stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with demands being made on them or with threats to their well-being.”

Lazarus, R.S. (1966)

# Stress

- Anything that stimulates and increases your level of alertness
- Stress is perceived as pressure and strain with a sense of urgency attached
  - Where's the urgency with the holidays?

## You know you are stressed by:

- Anxious
- Irritable
- Loneliness
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Blaming others
  - Hostile or aggressive behavior
- Emotional outbursts/crying



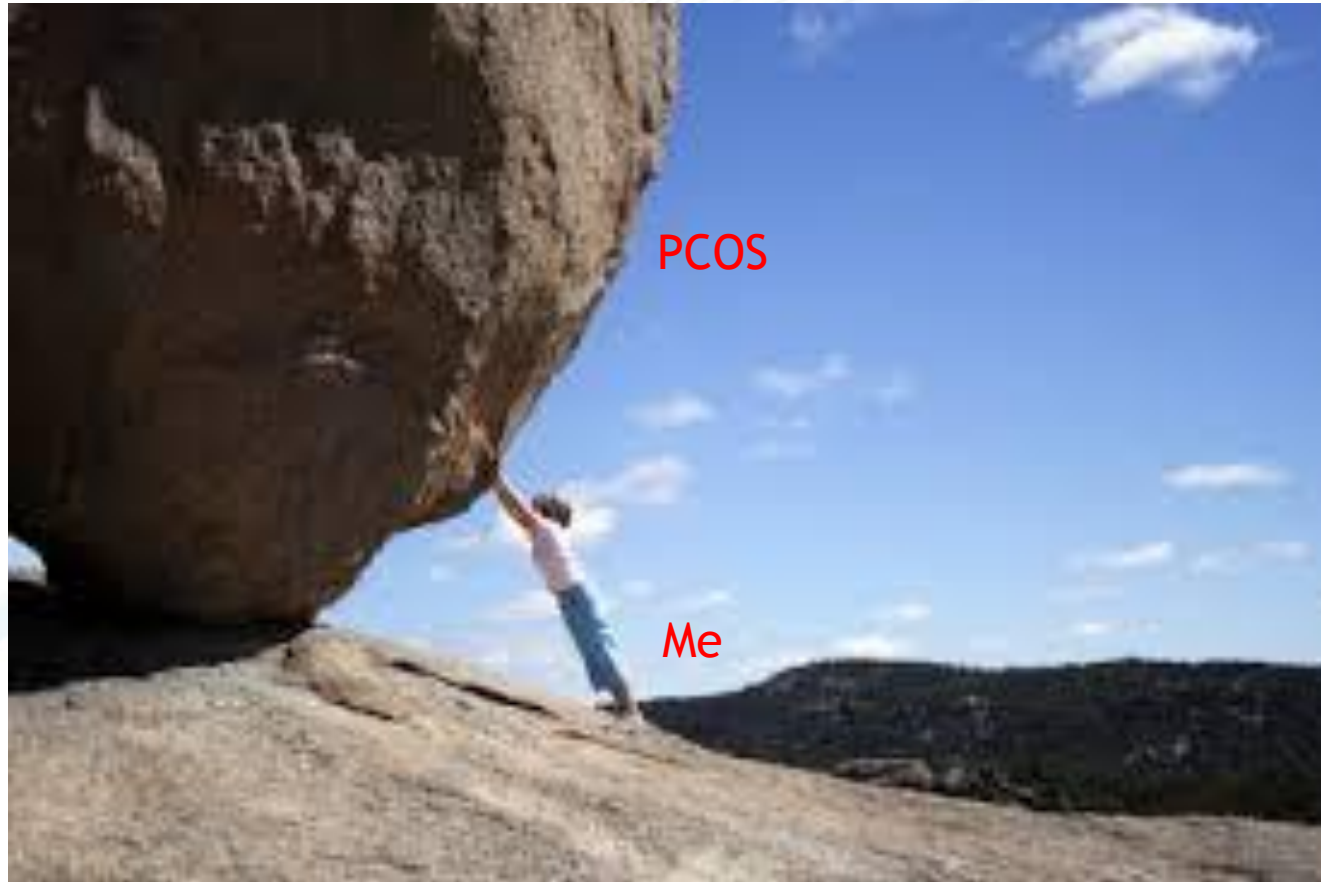
# Multitasking, Rumination, Insomnia, Agitation & Depression



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Be Careful Of *Comparitis*

## Change your image



We Can Move This...



But not this



# Call BS on yourself! Be active with your self care!

- What's BS?
  - Breath
  - Shoulders
- Being present and mindful







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**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
NOPE...  
LOST IT**



## Set Reasonable Expectations





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**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
DO YOUR  
BEST**

# Increase Support – Ask for Help!

- Reduce isolation
- Not the only one walking in your shoes
- Ask for support



Ultimately



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**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
STAY  
STRONG**

You Rock the Journey!

