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 caused by the distress associated with the symptoms often seen in PCOS or are they part of PCOS?

...it was me, right?
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.

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

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
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?

Today I feel fat.

OR

I AM NOT FAT
I AM BOLD

OR

I AM NOT FEAR
I AM BOLD

OR
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Core Belief</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You meet a new person and think about asking them to go out for coffee.</td>
<td>I'm not worthy</td>
<td>Thought: “Why would they ever go out with me?” Behavior: Does not ask the person to coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'm not worthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am worthy</td>
<td>Thought: “We might have fun if we go out together.” Behavior: Asks the person to coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am worthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I'm unlovable</th>
<th>I'm stupid</th>
<th>I'm boring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm not good enough</td>
<td>I'm ugly</td>
<td>I'm worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm a bad person</td>
<td>I'm abnormal</td>
<td>I'm undeserving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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!
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
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
KEEP CALM AND NOPE... LOST IT
Set Reasonable Expectations

TO-DO LIST:
1. BE
2. BETTER
KEEP CALM AND DO YOUR BEST
Increase Support – Ask for Help!

- Reduce isolation
- Not the only one walking in your shoes
- Ask for support
KEEP CALM AND STAY STRONG
You Rock the Journey!