

College with Chronic Illness- Studying Coping Methods of Students with Multiple Sclerosis

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Introduction

- Multiple Sclerosis (MS): impair cognitive, vision, motor, and sensory systems
- Young onset of MS: depression, failure of schools, difficulties to succeed in adult life
- College: a balance between disease, study, social, and financial burdens
- Traditional MS management: inadequate to support college students' success
- Aim: to learn MS management skills from students in college with MS and provide suggestions on how college can support these students
- Hypothesis: self-worth identification, high self-esteem, seeking illness needs and activating resource could help students succeed in college
- Impact: the findings of this study could be incorporated into disability management education and benefit all disabled people

Methods

- A comprehensive search on YouTube to find of MS students sharing MS management stories
- The searching key terms were "MS, Multiple Sclerosis, college, university, story"
- Inclusion criteria: diagnosis before or after college; student had MS-associated disabilities; the student was actively studying in a college
- Exclusion criteria: Students who attribute all the success in college to religious faith.

Results

Videos by Alex and Victoria⁶

- Community "MS reporters"
- Collected questions about how to tackle college struggles from several MS students
- Obtained suggestions from Victoria, a neurological occupational therapist



Fig. 3 Alex (left) and Victoria (right) discussing MS students' difficulties and solutions

Videos by Breea⁷

- Diagnosed with a severe and rare MS formand
- Life was suddenly changed at 18
- Speech, vision, motor functions were heavily impaired
- Study developmental psychology at Northern Arizona University



Fig. 4. Breea telling her MS stories

Videos by Sarah⁸

- Sudden MS attack at 16
- Right side of head to toe was completely numb and tingly
- Pre-medical student at the University of Texas



Fig. 5. Sarah telling her MS stories

Physiological and safety needs

Alex ⁶	Vitoria ⁶	Sarah ⁸
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have access to education resources Feel safe about not falling behind peers Get nutritious food and enough rest 	Actively seek and obtain resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From family and college: food accommodation, and transportation. From friends: notes from classes or preparing for exams together From college: techniques and strategies to help the students 	Had a therapist from the children's hospital to teach the essential actions to maintain health conditions in college
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many students went to distance learning Concerned that degrees from open universities were less professional and valuable 	If the difficulties could not be evolved, students should consult with the university about assignment deadline extensions, graduation deferral or temporarily pausing their study	The educational resources should be equally distributed to MS students and students without illness

Love and belonging

Breea ⁶	Vitoria ⁶	Sarah ⁸
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive families and friends Most important tools in fighting MS and staying strong 	Should talk to friends and families about their experience, struggles and hope	Friends didn't understand her experience

Self-worth

Breea ⁷	Sarah ⁸
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Embraced MS as a part of her life Focusing on dreams Confident to be successful in college and tackle all the problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accept her conditions Know her limit Show other students it could be possible to tackle college with a disease as long as one could have the right support

Self-Actualization

Breea ⁷	Sarah ⁸
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World MS day ambassador for the united states in 2013 Dedicated to promoting MS awareness through inspirational / educational projects Youtube channel shared her journey of healing, hope, recovery, and resiliency and, education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed to be a pediatric neurologist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believe that MS was a life lesson for them MS taught how important friends and family were and how they could conquer challenges 	

Conclusions

- The study presents disease coping strategies from college students with MS
- With confidence and support, MS students can achieve their goal of completing college study
- Basic needs including education resources, safety in family and friendship, respect, and understanding should be fulfilled
- Universities are responsible to have professionals to provide effective disease and time management coaching, offer equal educational opportunities and accommodate special needs
- MS awareness should be raised in the whole society so that friends and families can understand and support students with disabilities better.

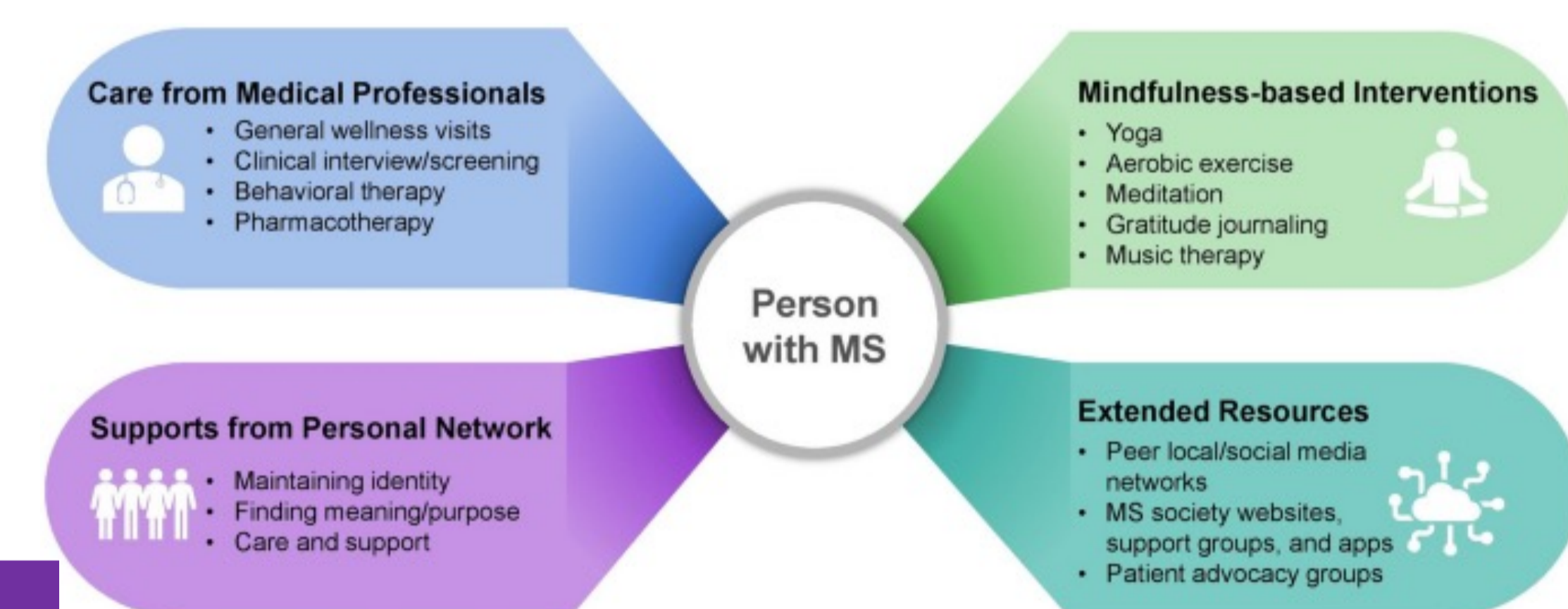


Fig. 6 interdisciplinary care model supports an individual with MS⁹

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Living with MS¹

- The onset of MS can range from 14 to older than 70
- A young onset can cause severe depression
- A large number of patients experience relapses which can cause anxiety
- Visible disabilities: unable to walk and see, bedridden
- Invisible disabilities: mental health issues, chronic pain, and chronic fatigue
- Causes disruptions in college studies which leads to failure of attaining college degrees and difficulties to succeed in adult life

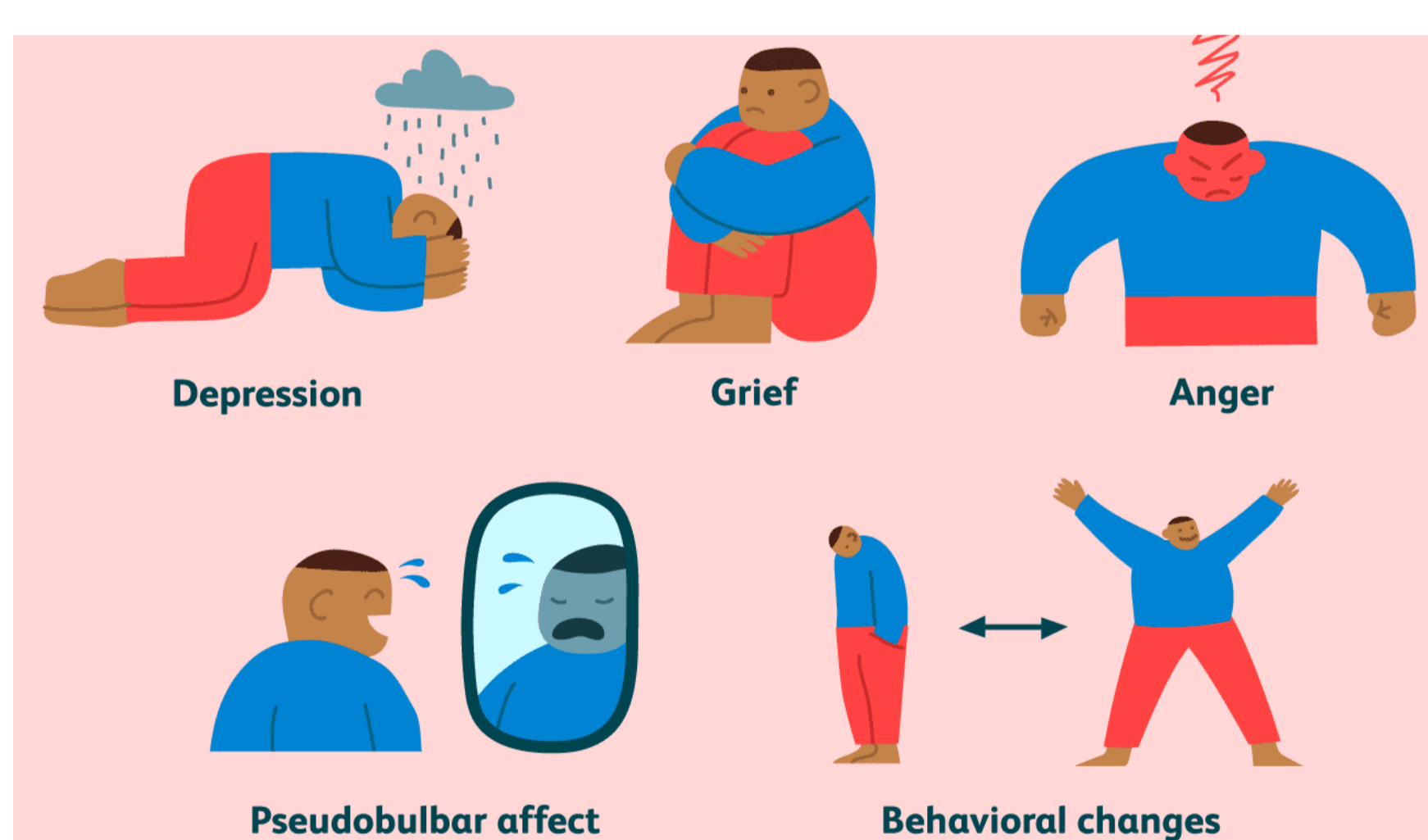


Fig.2 Mental health of MS patient²

Review of Disability Psychology

- People with disabilities have different self-identification³
- Self-esteem: the overall sense of self-value. Related to problem-solving and stress management skills which were related to education level⁴
- Focusing on illness needs and activating resource were common coping methods of chronic diseases⁵
- What mechanism could help college student's success with chronic diseases remains to be studied

Self-identification ³	Belief ³
Affirmation	Disability is a positive experience
Self-worth	Same worth as people without disability
Pride	Proud to claim their disability and believe disability is normal
Discrimination	Targets of bias and injustice