



# Enhancing Dignity and a Sense of Personhood in Cancer Care

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# Key Objectives

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- 1) “Dignity” – important in cancer care?
- 2) Illustrate Dignity Therapy
- 3) Gather practical tools : Take away(s)

# What is “Dignity”?

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American Webster Dictionary definition:

*Noun.* dig·ni·ty \ 'dig-nə-tē\

*the quality of being worthy of honor or respect*





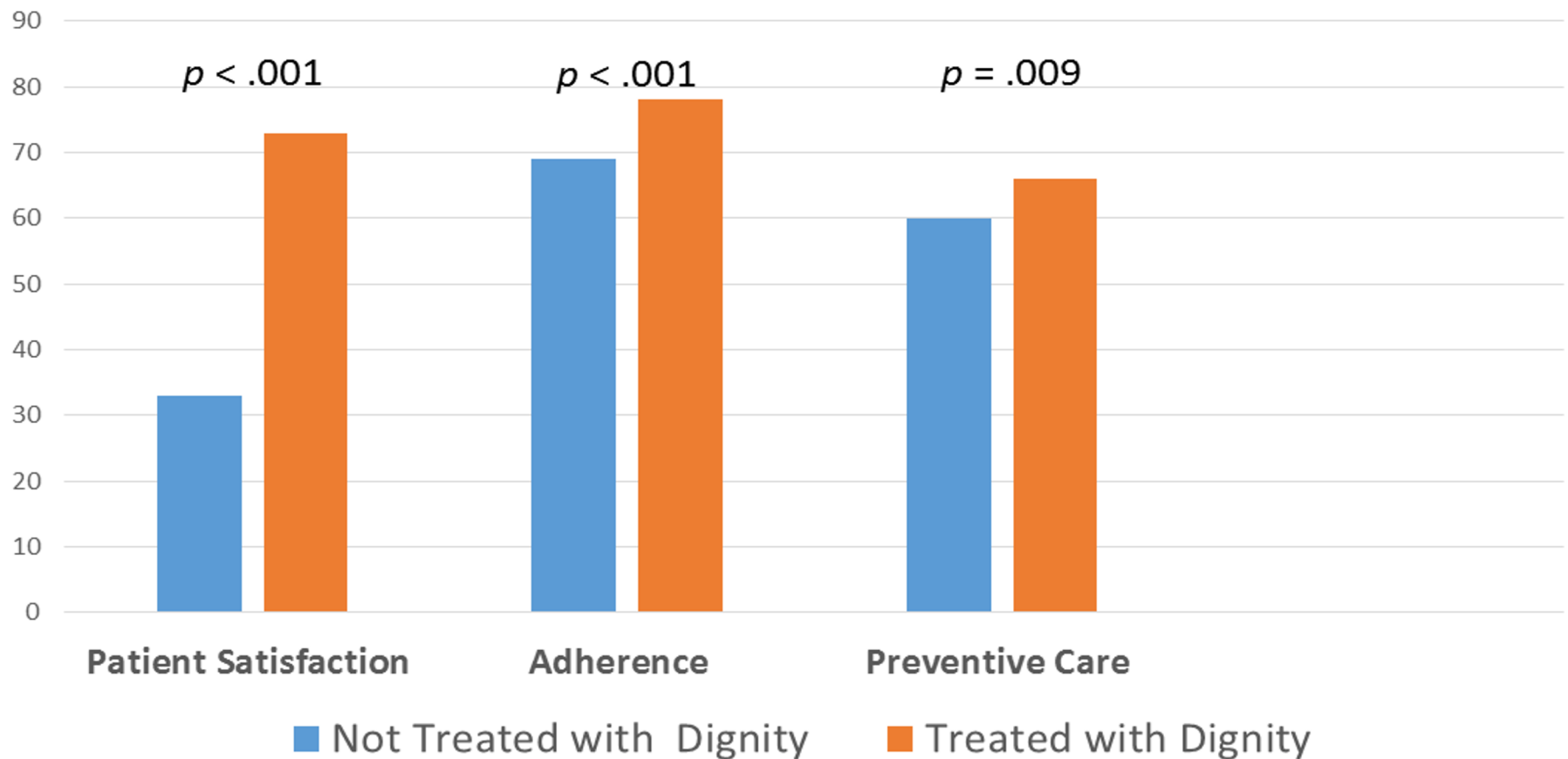
# Commonwealth Fund 2001 Health Care Quality Survey

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6,772 adults in the U.S.  
who had a medical encounter in the last 2 years

“Did the doctor treat you with a  
great deal of respect and dignity?”

# Patient Outcomes as a Result of Being Treated with Dignity



Beach et al. (2005), Do patients with dignity report higher satisfaction adherence, and receipt of preventive care? *Annals of Family Medicine*, 3(4), 331-338.

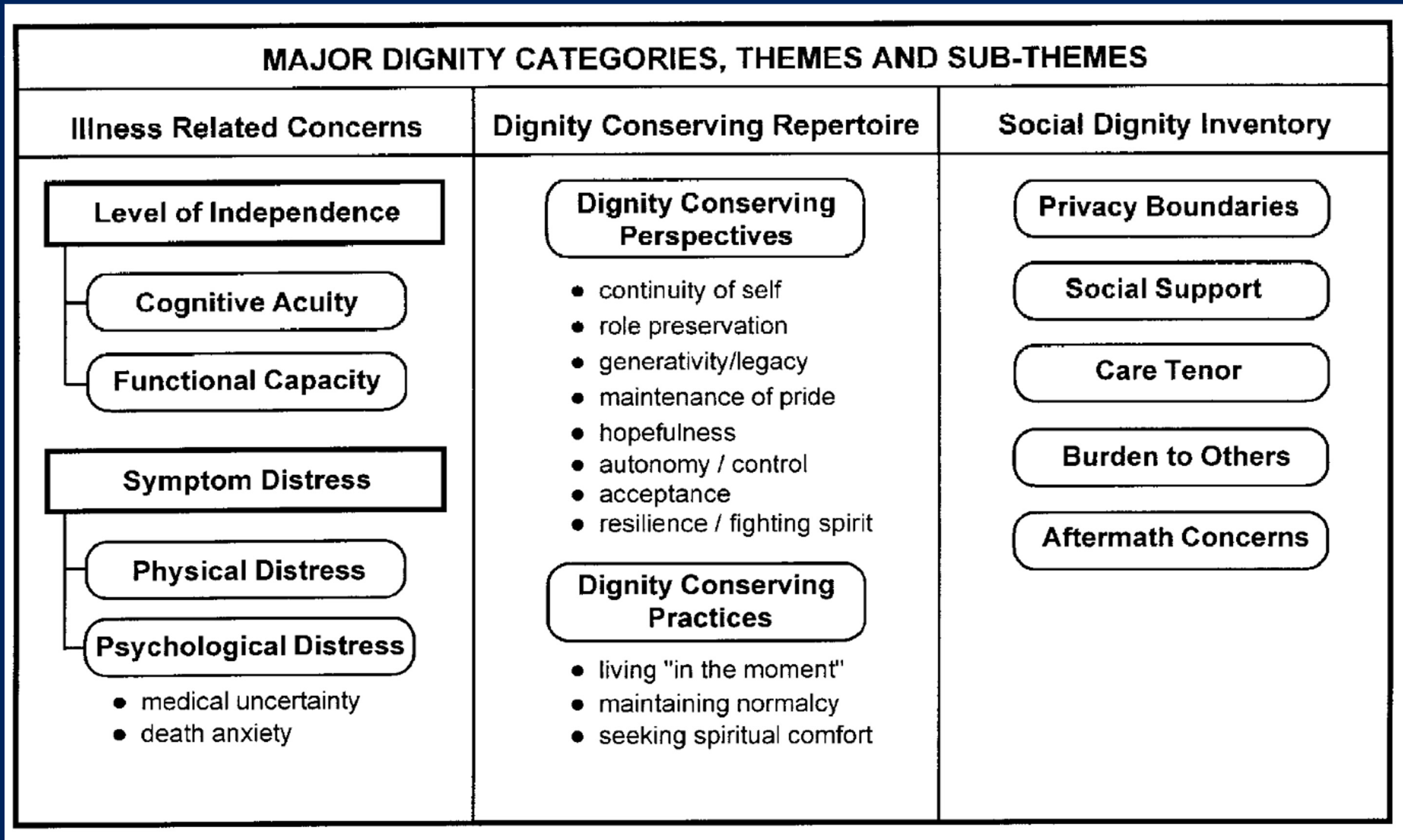
# How *do* we provide dignity in care?

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# Theoretical Model of Dignity in Care



Chochinov, Hack, McClement, Kristjanson, & Harlos (2002). Dignity in the terminally ill: A developing empirical model. *Social Science & Medicine*, 433-443.

# Dignity = Being Seen...



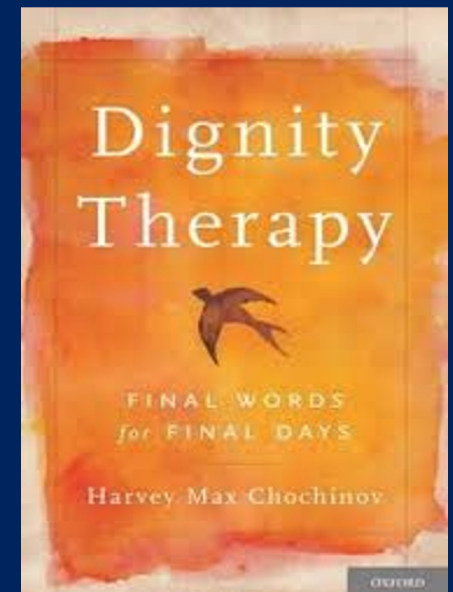
Tom Hussey "Mirror" Series [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)



# Being Seen: Dignity Therapy

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- \* Brief, individualized, evidenced-based psychotherapy for adults
- \* Typically performed in 4 Sessions over 2-4 weeks

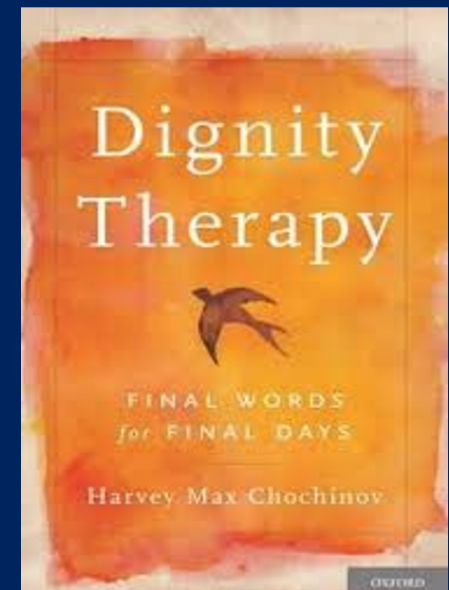




# Dignity Therapy Sessions

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- 1) Consult
- 2) Dignity Therapy Interview
- 3) Editing Session
- 4) Final Presentation of Legacy Document



# Dignity Therapy Question Protocol

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- Can you tell me about your life history; particularly those parts you either remember most or think are the most important?
- When did you feel the most alive?
- What are the most important roles you have played in life?
- What are your most important accomplishments; what do you feel most proud of?

## Protocol (*continued*)

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- What are your hopes and dreams for your loved ones?
- What have you *learned about life* that you may want to pass along to others?
- What advice or words of guidance would you wish to pass along to your \_\_\_\_\_ (son, daughter, wife, parents, others)?



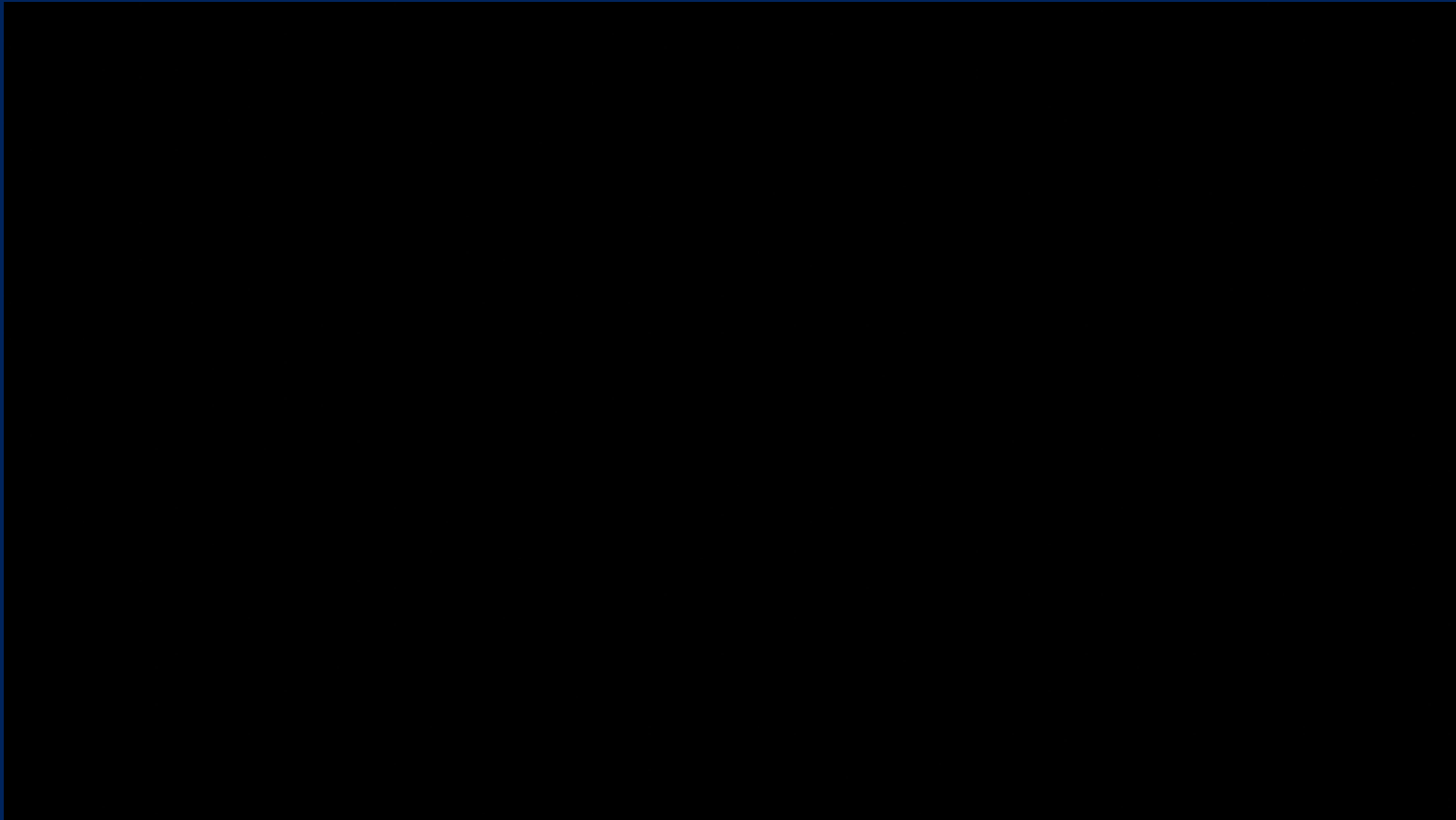
# Dignity Therapy Interview

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# A Life of Gratitude

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## Examples of Dignity Therapy

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# Family, Aircrafts, and Cowboys

April 2016

“The Cowboy Era”  
Bart Montana





# Daddy's Odyssey: For Lars and Melissa

April 2016



*The reason I say that cancer makes me feel most alive is because I did not appreciate life before.*



# Music, Medicine, Family

February 2020



Taking a walk with Tyler, 2/28/2020

*Finally, among my recent piano recordings is the Irish song “Oh, Danny Boy.” The modern lyrics express a father’s sorrow of parting with his son. The ancient tune has captivated me ever since I heard it as a child from an old Titanic movie. I hope the melody, especially the transition to higher notes, will always comfort and inspire my family.*



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# Lessons Learned

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Stories acknowledge personhood

- Increase patient satisfaction
- Reduce depression
- Decrease sense of suffering
- Increase sense of dignity
- Change the way the family sees them
- May increase positive outcomes
- May be adapted for other populations

# And...

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# Take Away(s)

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Questions you can ask...

**“When did you feel most alive?”**

**“What do I need to know about you as a person to give you the best care possible?” (PDQ)**





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<http://www.dignityincare.ca/en>

***Acknowledgements:***

Beloved Patients who Shared their Stories





<http://www.dignityincare.ca/en/>

Français



Dignity **IN CARE**

Research is helping us understand  
what care means to patients.



I work in  
health care

I use  
health care

I'm a  
researcher

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