

# Emotional Support for the Congenital Patient



# Emotions

- Managing our emotional response is quite difficult because our emotions are constantly changing in reflection to our environment and our perception of that environment. Life is a continuum of constant change. Our adaptation to change is very individualized.

- I am going to show some pictures.  
Pay close attention to how they  
make you feel.







- These are beautiful pictures. These feel calm and peaceful. We can feel their beauty. Isn't interesting that they are just pictures, yet they move us. We feel something.
- Now I am going to show more pictures and see what you think of them. Focus on how they make you feel.

# EXTREME POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES



**THIS IS WHAT INVISIBILITY LOOKS LIKE**





- Now isn't it interesting that you felt different emotions just by viewing different pictures. Emotions change quickly. Imagine being told you need a heart transplant. Do you really want another person's heart? Yes and no... You do want to live but does someone really have to die? Or another open heart surgery. Or how about this one.....there is nothing further we can do. You are not a transplant candidate but we will try to keep you comfortable. Our emotions are a part of us. We can't ignore them. We have to be able to address them to feel healthy and whole.

- Adult congenital heart patients are essentially professional patients. They have had many surgeries, set backs and anxiety provoking situations. How do they cope? How do their families continue to ride the roller coaster of unpredictability?
- They need **SUPPORT** and lots of it.
- A support group for these patients is not a luxury but a necessity.

- They face many obstacles. Along with medical issues that might present in adulthood they have increased risk of psychosocial difficulties including heart focused anxiety, concerns about mortality, treatment and decision making, insurability issues, employment and financial concerns, surgery and recovery periods, transportation issues, and body image issues. It is a long list.

- According to Adrienne Kovacs Ph.D. director of behavioral health at OHSU Knight Cardiovascular Institute about 1/3 of the ACHD patients deal with clinically significant anxiety or depression. She reminds us that the physical, mental and emotional health of an individual are connected due to the strong relationship between the mind and the body.
- We must provide emotional support for our patients. A touch, a hug, a few extra minutes and a smile go a long way. Take a minute and tune into your patients. Trust me, you will reap the rewards too.

# SOMETIMES YOU JUST NEED SOMEBODY TO LISTEN

