Psychological Issues Relating to Pouch Surgery

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I didn't die. I don't think I've ever been more numb to my surroundings than I was that night, more locked into myself, more absent. Nothing felt real to me except my own body, and as I lay there wallowing in my brokenness, I became fixated on trying to visualize the circuits of veins and arteries that crisscrossed below my chest, the dense inner network of glop and blood. I was in there with myself, rooting around with a kind of scrambled desperation, but I was also far away, floating above the bed, above the ceiling, above the roof of the hospital. Lying there was the closest I have come to being nowhere, to being inside myself and outside myself at the same time. I was the person who inhabited my body, now the sum total of that body's failures.
Stages of Loss

• **Denial** – 'this can't be happening'
• **Anger** – 'I'm a freak', 'I hate this!'
• **Bargaining** – 'if only...', 'I wish...'
• **Depression** – 'it's not fair', 'I want to be normal', 'I can't live like this'
• **Acceptance**
Coping Mechanisms

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
Gut and the mind relationship

Holistic -
Physically / Socially / Psychologically
Physical

- Reason for surgery
- Chronic or Acute
- Preparation
Social

- Stage of life
- Relationships
- QoL
- Support system
Psychological

- Resilience
- Personal history / past / background
- Body image
- What a pouch (and stoma) can represent
Preparation Before Surgery

- preconceptions
- managing expectations
Where to find help

• Patient support groups
• Counselling – GP, hospital or privately
• Specialist counselling/psychotherapy via referral to specialist hospital
References

• Psychological factors in postoperative adjustment to stoma surgery – Craig White (RCS 1997; 79)
• Papers by Robert Maunder, University of Toronto
• Counselling and Reflexive Research in Healthcare – Gillian Thomas (Pergamon)
• Psychiatry, psychotherapy and gastroenterology-bringing it all together – Julian Stern (Blackwell)
• Why Love Matters – Sue Gerhardt (Routledge)
• The Brooklyn Follies – Paul Auster (Faber & Faber)