Extant health behaviors and uptake of standardized vs tailored health messages among cancer survivors enrolled in the FRESH START trial: a comparison of fighting-spirits vs fatalists.

OBJECTIVE: Cancer coping styles have been associated with several cancer-related outcomes. We examined whether baseline lifestyle behaviors differed between cancer survivors with fatalistic vs fighting-spirit coping styles, and whether there was differential response to two diet-exercise mailed-print interventions, one standardized and another individually tailored.

METHODS: Baseline differences by coping style are presented for 628 breast and prostate cancer survivors who participated in the FRESH START trial, along with multivariable analyses on rates of uptake by coping style and arm assignment for those completing the 2-year trial.

RESULTS: At baseline, several differences were observed between fighting-spirits and fatalists, with the former significantly more likely to be white, younger, leaner, more-educated and at risk for depression, and less likely to consume 5+ fruits and vegetables (F&V)/day (p-values<0.05). Improvements in physical activity were observed, with fighting-spirits exhibiting the greatest gains from baseline to Year-1, regardless of intervention type; but by Year-2, these
differences diminished as fatalists gained ground. Moreover, fatalists who received standardized intervention material also charted steady improvements in F&V intake over the study period; by Year-2, 58.1% of fatalists achieved the 5-a-day goal vs 44.6% of fighting-spirits (p-value<0.05).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Lifestyle behaviors and health message uptake differs by cancer coping style. Although tailored interventions appear most effective and minimize differential uptake, standardized interventions also can improve behaviors, though fighting-spirits may require additional boosters to maintain change.

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