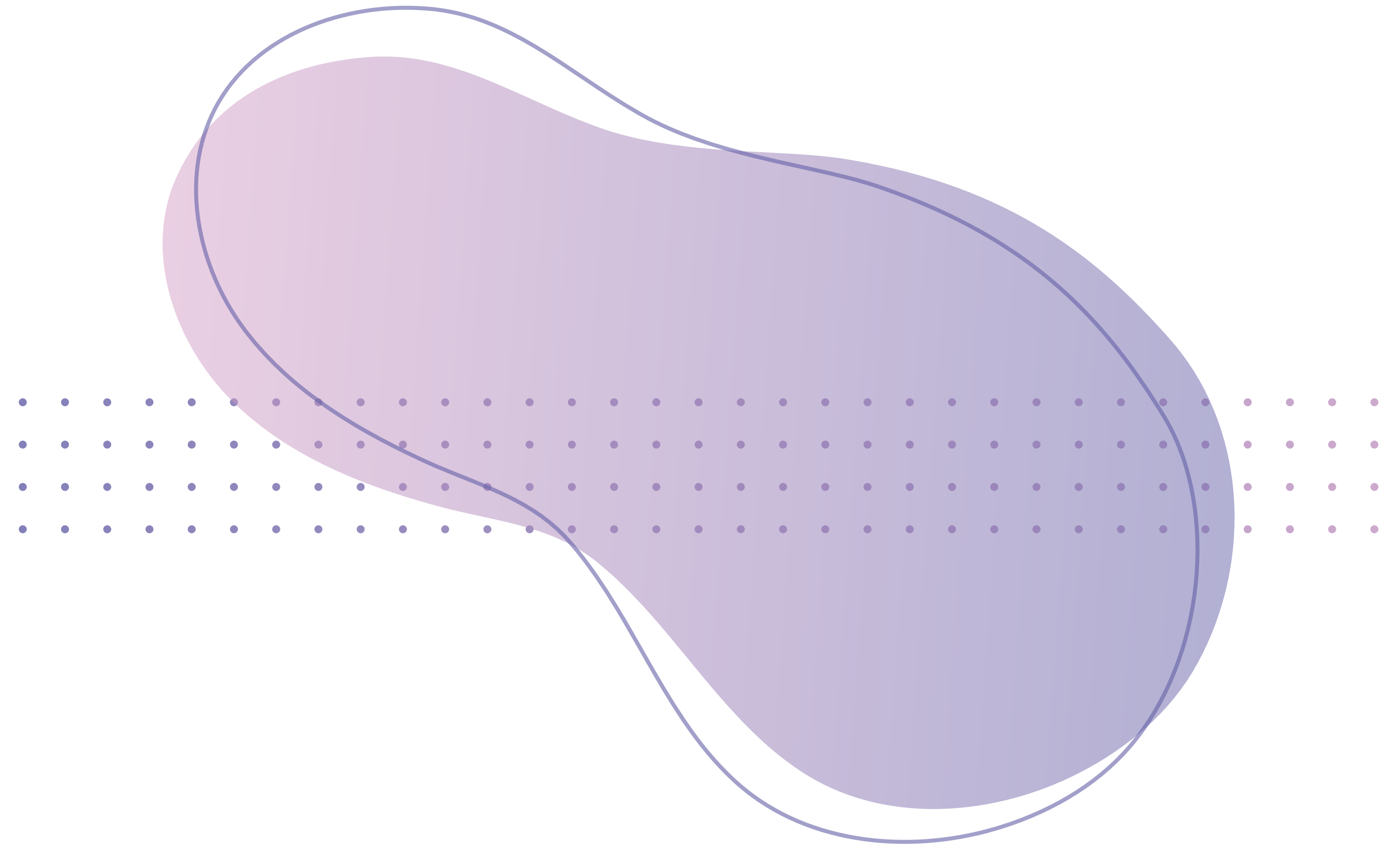

A CLL EMPOWERMENT GUIDE

Adaptive Coping





Your CLL diagnosis may bring about changes and challenges in your life. **Coping** refers to one's attempts to deal with and adjust to difficulties while trying to keep their well-being.

There are many different ways of coping, known as coping strategies.
Three broad types of coping strategies include:

*trying to change
how we think about*

*trying to change
how we feel about*

*trying to find
solutions for*

OUR DIFFICULTIES

Some examples of each type of coping are shown below.

THINKING **FEELING** **SOLUTION**

Taking a more realistic view of the situation

Changing priorities

Finding meaning

Revisiting life values

Talking to closed ones to get emotional support

Engaging in a hobby to experience joy and distract yourself

Hugging or being intimate to experience a soothing connection

Writing a diary to release emotional tension

Seeking expert information

Weighing up alternatives and making decisions

Adhering to treatment

Contacting health care professionals to address an emerging issue

Every person uses their own mix of coping strategies, based on their personality, what they have found useful in the past and the issues they are facing. For instance, one might find it helpful to discuss a lot with family members, while someone else might find relief by enjoying their favorite hobby or participating in a group activity.

As coping with CLL entails many different stages, different strategies may be better suited at different times. For example, one may need to spend more time alone after receiving the diagnosis, but may wish to connect more with others as time goes by.

The important thing to remember is that, for the most part, there is no such thing as "right or wrong" when referring to coping. What works well for one might not be helpful for another. However, by finding and developing what works for you, you may feel more in control of your disease and your life.

FACING IT OR KEEPING IT UNDER THE RUG

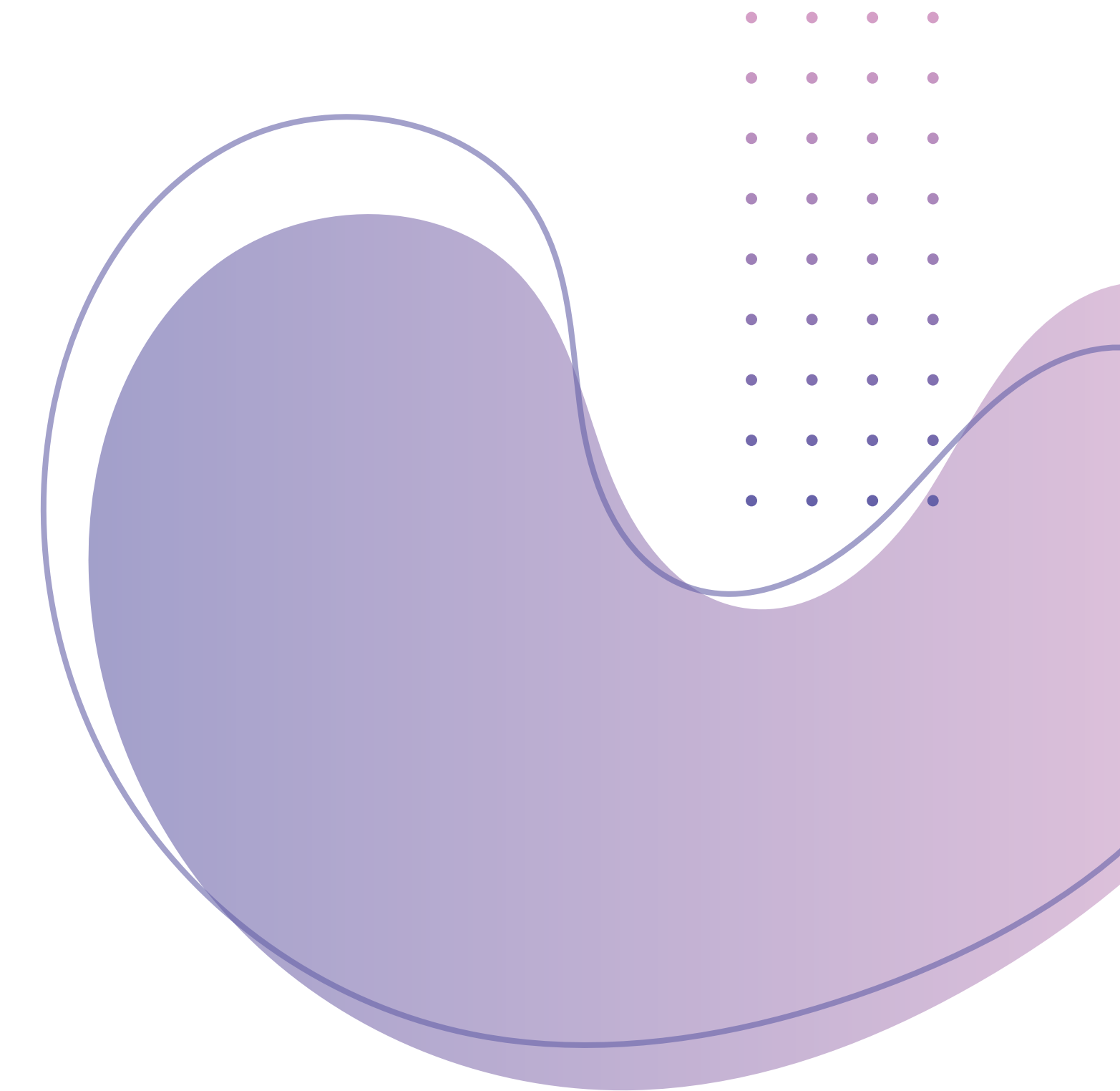
After diagnosis, some people want to learn as much as they can about CLL. They ask many questions about CLL and treatment choices, and want to have a clear picture of what lies ahead. This might indeed make someone feel in charge of the situation.

Others may shy away from information and wish to avoid anything relevant to their diagnosis. Keeping CLL out of mind for a certain period of time might be what some people need to face their diagnosis more gradually.

FINDING BALANCE

As times go by, you may find what works best for you. Finding the balance that works for you is really important in coping.

For instance, if you avoid thinking about CLL to the extent that you forget medical appointments you might be missing the opportunity to keep your condition in check, without meaning to. On the contrary, if you keep thinking about your disease and constantly monitoring yourself for new symptoms, you might miss the chance to enjoy other important things in your life.





FINDING MEANING

Trying to find meaning in life, is part of what makes us human. Certain life events, such as getting diagnosed with CLL, may bring about questions regarding what matters most in life and how you can fulfill whatever it is that you find meaningful.

Each person perceives different aspects of their lives as meaningful to them. For instance, one might find meaning in *their personal life story*, e.g., what they have achieved in their lives, what they will pass on to others and the impact they have on those around them.

Others might find meaning in *creativity* through work, hobbies or art. By doing such activities, one becomes fully immersed in the present and experiences enjoyment and fulfillment.

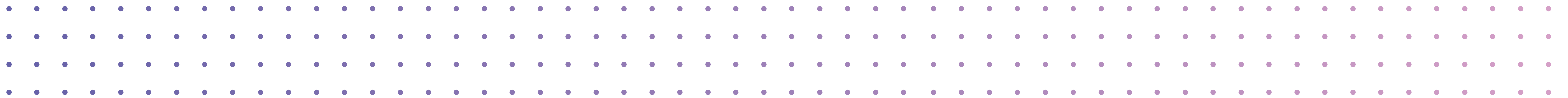
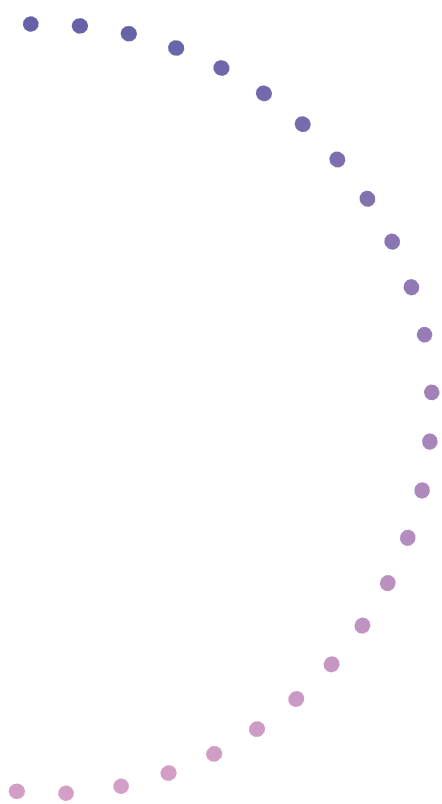


Connecting through love can be another source of meaning for many. For example, enjoying valuable relationships, spending time with pets, or offering to others may give one inner calm and great satisfaction.

Appreciating the beauty of life, e.g., listening to a musical piece, attending a theatrical play, enjoying a book, or nature watching, are all ways of connecting with life and can give you a sense of purpose.



Finally, some people find meaning in *their own stance* toward life's adversities. Feeling pride when one is able to remain patient, and feeling strong or resilient when one goes through a difficult moment, can provide meaning even in circumstances that are out of one's control.



Whatever sources of meaning are most important to you, the key message is that finding a sense of purpose is of great importance for your emotional well-being.



As you try to come up with what is important in life, you may start finding it easier to adjust to living with CLL and even experience mental growth and positive change (see section Psychological Effects of Illness).

This leaflet was created within the context of the patient empowerment program for patients with chronic hematological malignancies, which is designed and implemented by the Institute of Applied Biosciences at the Center for Research and Technology Hellas (INAB|CERTH) and approved by the Hellenic Society of Haematology (HSH) and the European Research Initiative on CLL (ERIC).

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