

A magazine for women affected by cancer

Brighter

LIVE. LEARN. SHINE.

The Power of Touch

How the Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation is using skincare expertise to transform lives

From Survivor to Warrior

How to surround yourself with understanding support

HAIR LOSS:

Part one of a three-part series

Crush your New Year's Nutrition Resolutions

Reporting Symptoms is *Not* Complaining

Jacket-Of-All-Trades

This season's oversized jacket trend

NEW YEAR,

NEW MINDSET

3 ways to emotionally reset



Live. Learn. Shine.

Happy New Year!

Years ago, I had arranged for a young neighborhood girl to stay with my two small boys as I ran a couple errands. We were in the process of having some construction done in our home and had built a relationship with the contractors. As a result, I hadn't thought through the fact that this young lady and my two boys would be left in the house with a stranger. When the realization hit me, I reached out to her mother to tell her the situation and ask if she would prefer I reschedule. After a good conversation, she commented something so profound I have never forgotten it.

She said to me, "Helen, I learned long ago that I can not change my children's circumstances. They are going to be faced with things I'd rather them not." She continued, "What I can do is pray for their character so that they grow and respond well to the trials they will inevitably face in life leaving them stronger and better people."

As I sat down to write this letter, I reviewed my letter to our readers from last January. 2023 held so many hopes, dreams and goals. Gratefully, many of them have become victories, but the year was not without its challenges, friends in recurrence, surgeries, setbacks. As a result of each experience however, our team is closer and more hopeful than ever, and Brighter Magazine is a larger and stronger organization.

I hope our winter issue delivers some feelings of hope and possibly a bit of excitement. We are standing at the precipice of an unknown adventure. The dawning of the next 12 months. Undoubtedly there will be situations both good and bad, expected and unexpected that come our way. Each one will bring the opportunity for growth and development. Let's practice hope, positivity, and flexibility as we navigate uncharted waters of another year. The challenges will continue to come but so will the victories! When they do find ways to celebrate!

Next year, when we look back at 2024, may we all see that we have grown and responded in ways that leave us stronger and better people who have used our challenges to help prepare and support those coming behind us.

With gratitude,

Helen Steele Bowles

Helen Bowles
Founder and Publisher



Brighter MAGAZINE

EVENTS | HONORABLE MENTIONS | MEMORIES

BRIGHTER CELEBRATES LIFE AND THE RELEASE OF OUR 10TH ISSUE



Brighter Magazine's Founder, Helen Bowles, and Editor-in-Chief, Erin Schreyer, traveled to Johnson City, Tennessee to celebrate the release of our fall issue featuring Katie Fleenor. Approximately 55 people including Leslie Moorelock, our wonderful connection with Ballad Health, gathered at the darling event space that had been generously donated by Knob Creek Meadows. Flowers by Tammy provided beautiful discounted arrangements for the tables and BBQ from Southern Craft was enjoyed by all.

This event was a special one for Katie as she had just finished reconstruction surgery just a few weeks earlier. The event also marked Brighter's tenth issue release and our distribution to 48 states and 7 countries.

"When I started Brighter Magazine, I could only wrap my head around the idea of creating one issue and then evaluating. The response has been so wonderful. It's incredibly humbling to think that we have a platform that reaches so many women across the nation and even the globe! Last week we received our first subscription from India! With this issue, our pages are one step closer to reflecting more of the women we serve," Helen said. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve this incredibly courageous demographic of women and there is absolutely no way I could do it without the amazing team of women, volunteers and donors who have given this mission life."

WELCOME TO OUR 2024 AMBASSADORS!

We are pleased to introduce the 2024 Brighter Ambassadors. These women are survivors working closely with the cancer community and using their platforms to share their experiences and better the lives of other survivors.

We are honored to have these women embody Brighter's mission. They will also provide valuable content to our readers through product reviews, words of encouragement, personal experiences, and informational posts.

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Brittany Turner
Natasha Parker
Amy Zicarelli
Jennifer Cabrera
Tina Bradshaw

Mona Dave
Claudia Mendez
Katie Fleenor
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Brighter

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Are you or is someone you know a writer, photographer, blogger, web designer or podcaster? Do you work with cancer survivors and have knowledge and wisdom to share with our readers? We would love to hear from you. Brighter magazine is always looking for people to help us with our mission. If you are interested in lending your talents and giftedness, please reach out to us today at contact@brightermagazine.org.

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Information in *Brighter* magazine is to provide you with encouragement, awareness and education. The articles reflect the opinions of the authors and are not to take the place of professional medical advice. There may be a variety of perspectives on the subjects covered in *Brighter*. Tips, treatment and advice that is found helpful for some may vary based on the person. All of us at *Brighter* suggest that you talk to your medical team before making any changes to your lifestyle or daily living.



Donate today to provide support to women in need.

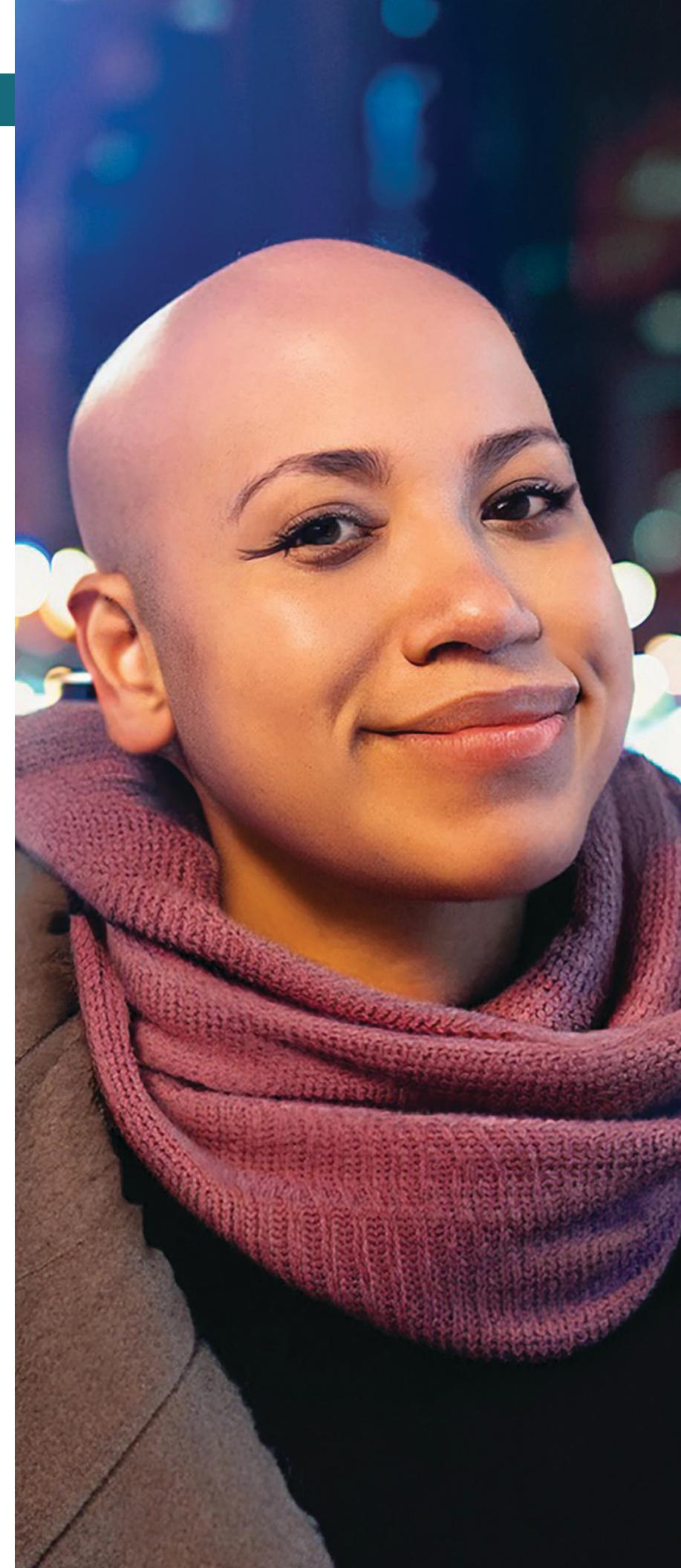


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Opening up with Half Pigeon Pose

Written By: Michelle Stravitz
CEO and Co-founder, 2Unstoppable

On a yoga retreat last summer, I was asked to share my favorite yoga pose. It only took a moment to realize that, for me, it's Half-Pigeon pose.

In Half Pigeon pose, or Ardha Kapotasana, we bend one knee in front of the body so that the calf is perpendicular to the front, short end of the mat. With that, we form a number seven with the bent leg in front, and the other leg stretched straight behind. Then, when we are ready, we fold over the front leg with arms outstretched on the floor. This folding enables us to stretch the hips and leg muscles while also lengthening and strengthening the spine.

Half Pigeon is well recognized as a great hip opener, and the hip chakra is where our emotions reside. At the same time, Half Pigeon Pose also stimulates the heart chakra, or anahata. You may have heard about the seven chakras, the seven wheels of energy in the body – starting at the head and continuing down to the base of the spine. These two chakras are key to the importance and benefits of pigeon in my life. But ... more on this later. First, a little on the physical manifestation of pigeon.

If our hips or muscles are tight, or even if we're already flexible but working to open up even further, Half Pigeon involves some struggle against tight muscles. At the same time, it is a position of surrender,



“The more the muscles soften and stretch, the more you can surrender and relax in the pose”

as we fold forward and allow gravity to pull us down closer to the ground or mat. What's more, in order to find the stretch, you must breathe and relax the body down – and the more the muscles soften and stretch, the more you can surrender and relax in the pose. It's a two-way dynamic.

Eight years after my own cancer diagnosis, I understand the concept of struggle and surrender all too well. Hearing some version of “you have cancer” immediately puts us into warrior mode, so necessary as we prepare for the battle with cancer. At the same time, my cancer diagnosis also taught me acceptance. While I struggled to understand how cancer had invaded my body, I ultimately had to surrender to the existence of it. That doesn't mean surrendering to the cancer (just the opposite ... I fought hard and underwent difficult treatments to rid my body of it!) Rather, I had to surrender to the fact that I had cancer. Like it or not, I will always be someone with a cancer diagnosis in my history. Pigeon Pose helps me to experience life through the mat – living with both surrender and struggle, learning to balance and enable these two seemingly contradictory experiences at the same time – so critical to coping with cancer.

And yet, this seeming dialectic of struggle and surrender, fight and accept, is just one aspect that I appreciate about Pigeon Pose.

Because Pigeon Pose opens up the hip chakra and stimulates the heart chakra while simultaneously lengthening the spine, the pose also helps me to access my emotions while also enabling me – literally and figuratively – to stand upright and strong.

When faced with a cancer diagnosis, many of us are in for the fight of our lives – and we may have to shut down our emotions for a time in order to cope with the fight. Eventually, our emotions catch up with us, and we must find ways to deal with them. Anxiety and depression are highly prevalent among cancer survivors, and moving our bodies can help us address some of these emotional challenges. For me, Half Pigeon is one form of mind-body work that helps me accomplish this. On many occasions, as I settle into the pose, I find myself teary-eyed, or even sobbing, as Half-Pigeon opens up the channels to my emotions. As I mentioned earlier, Half Pigeon helps us open up the hip chakra and stimulate the heart chakra.

When spinning properly, each chakra allows Qi energy to flow through the body. If these wheels of energy become blocked by stress, anxiety or emotional upheaval, your well-being can suffer, both physically and mentally.

When the heart chakra is in healthy alignment you will feel surrounded by love, compassion, and joy and connected to the world around you. You will feel open to all experiences in life, and it will feel like challenges, especially in relationships, flow through you and are resolved with ease. An open heart chakra allows us to see all of the beauty and love around us, and truly connect to ourselves, our loved ones, and the natural world. This chakra also helps direct love back to ourselves to truly be able to love and accept ourselves and our bodies. For those of us that have had major changes to our bodies as a result of cancer treatment, this is so important.

Further, the hips are often referred to as the body's emotional junk drawer, and the hip region is connected to the sacral chakra, where we access creativity and relate to our own emotions. Understanding the mind-body connection is key here - people with trauma or other mental health conditions often experience physical symptoms as well. A blocked sacral chakra can lead to emotional instability as well as reductions in pleasure. When the hips are tight and contracted, it's possible that sacral energy that's not expressed remains stuck. The hip is one of the largest and most unique joints in the human body, responsible for bearing weight, stabilizing the core, and moving the upper leg. The tighter your hips, the less mobility your body has. Now extend these concepts to our psychological flexibility and mobility, and it makes sense why the sacral chakra, at the core of our body, is so important to our physical and emotional well-being.

So, by engaging me in both struggle and surrender, while simultaneously opening me up to access, relate to, and release emotions, Half Pigeon Pose is my favorite yoga pose. I love to do it every single day, helping to ensure my physical and emotional well-being. Through yoga and other forms of exercise, I continuously move myself – and others – toward a better outcome. 



It's Time to Move! *How to get Started...*

Written By: Megan DeBleck, PT, DPT, MHA, CLT
Center Manager/Physical Therapist at Select Medical

"This is it! 2024 is the year I get in shape." How many times have you said something similar? Whether it's about getting healthier, losing weight, finding happiness, or something else, most of us have expressed the sentiment. January is often a time for new beginnings, resolutions and goals, and exercise plays a crucial role in these fresh objectives for various reasons. For a cancer survivor, exercise may be essential, but it can also feel challenging and exhausting.

Exercise programs can range from high to low intensity, with or without equipment. They can be done at the gym, studio, or home. For people with cancer, exercise may vary depending on your stage of diagnosis and may require modifications. Activity levels may not change much if you've recently been diagnosed. However, throughout your treatment journey, it may be necessary to reduce the intensity of exercise. You may need to modify exercises due to pain, fatigue, or other treatment-related issues. Returning to exercise can also take different forms when transitioning to survivorship, whether you are gradually returning to the previous routine or establishing a new activity or definition of normal.

One of the incredible things about exercise as a cancer survivor, no matter the stage, is that it offers many benefits. Exercise can help patients better tolerate treatments like surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation. It's also been shown to reduce the risk of recurrence for many types of cancer by as much as 40-45%. Developing a

regular exercise routine is as simple as defining your understanding of fitness and setting a schedule. It may be scary to think about starting a new routine, but remember it is okay to start small. Baby steps are key to building strength and endurance, and you should move at your own pace.

There are a variety of exercise professionals available to help you establish an exercise routine. A personal trainer's role is to guide you through exercise, but they cannot diagnose or treat an injury. So, a personal trainer may focus on strengthening your muscles or cardiovascular system. Rehabilitation clinicians, like a physical or occupational therapist, may include these while also focusing on balance, gait, or range of motion. If you struggle with consistent routines due to pain, limited motion, or fatigue, specialized cancer rehabilitation clinicians can help you create a personalized plan. Scan the QR code or visit <https://www.revitalcancerrehab.com/> to find one near you. So, what are you waiting for? It's time to get moving and exercise!



So, what are you waiting for?
Scan the QR code to find a
location near you!

Find Your Joy

New Year, New Mindset

3 Ways to Emotionally Reset

Written By: Mirchelle Louis,
CEO, Cancer Support Community North Texas, MSSW/LCSW
Photography By: Matthew Osborne

Ringing in the New Year can be exciting. If you're a cancer patient, however, it may bring on an entirely different set of emotions. New Year's resolutions aren't quite as uplifting if you're not certain what your future holds or if you aren't sure you'll be healthy enough to run that marathon you've set your sights on running. Similarly, if the holidays with friends and family taxed you both emotionally and physically, you may be lacking that typical, start-of-the-year "get up and go" you once had.

And...that's all ok. You're not the same as you were.

The good news: While we can't control our futures, what we can control is our mindset, our boundaries with family and friends, and our emotional health heading into the New Year. The key is being realistic and measured with a healthy dose of optimism and grace, knowing life is certainly going to throw you the unexpected.

So, what are the ways we can retake control and shift our mindset from one of setting and achieving "concrete" resolutions to one of simple, little wins?

First, instead of focusing on the imposing entirety of 2024, focus on January. What can you look forward to and what small thing might you accomplish in January that will fill you with pride? Perhaps it's a paint-by-number, a visit from an out-of-town friend, or just walking around the block twice a week. Or maybe it's binge-watching an entire season of Gilmore Girls. Success here is recognizing the small wins that add up across a day or a month. And if you really want to feel the shine, create a sticker chart that you fill with stars as you take on and achieve little things throughout January – and each month!

Second, acknowledge the "what ifs" that you need to process, and let the "what ifs" that you can't process, go. What if I can't get to my son's graduation? What if I can't drive myself to my appointments? What if I can't take care of my aging parents? For cancer patients, what ifs can consume us if we're not careful. So instead of ignoring the elephants in the room, process and acknowledge those fears, like the fear that "I may not be around for next Christmas." Stuffing those feelings down will result in anxiety and dampen the high spots in the New Year...and it won't prevent what happens next. The reality is that there's a ton of good, positive stuff to grab onto now, so take your what ifs head on then enjoy the present.

Third, and most importantly, find the joy in each day. The stress of the holidays and New Year is easy to get caught up in, unless we're intentional about not letting it. Layer onto that the ever-present uncertainty around a cancer diagnosis – the chance of recurrence, the next scan, side effects, the impact on your job and family. While you can't affect much of the stress and uncertainty, you can make the choice to be present today. Go to kids' and grandkids' events, eat the ice cream, buy the fancy purse. Savor bite-sized pieces of life.

Finding joy also includes setting healthy boundaries with family and friends. The holidays are notorious for pushing us to our emotional limits. Perhaps this year, begin with the firm boundary that you'll only spend time with people who bring you joy and positivity. Or you commit to focusing on your emotional health over everything else – that self-care is your priority.

The bottom line is that when you get a cancer diagnosis, everything's up for grabs. You simply don't know with certainty if you'll be here for the next holiday, the next milestone or what will happen next. So, this New Year, rather than setting ambitious goals that are unrealistic, consider a shift in mindset that focuses on small, important steps and little wins. In my view, the New Year is the opportune time to emotionally reset and focus on what's right in front of you. (B)



Overcoming the Odds

Written By: Karla Mans Giroux,
Co-Director, Radical Remission Project, Radical Remission Survivor/Thriver,
and Nationally Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coach

In 2014, the book *Radical Remission: Surviving Cancer Against All Odds*, by Kelly A. Turner, PhD, was published summarizing research into what the medical field terms “spontaneous remissions” and what Dr. Turner calls Radical Remissions. The research outlined powerful lifestyle changes that had a significant impact on late stage cancer patients, and the book quickly became a *New York Times* Bestseller. In 2020 her next book was released, *Radical Hope*, including updated supporting research and new inspiring stories of hope.

My Cancer Story

My own story began before the radical remission book was published. I was diagnosed with hormone receptor positive breast cancer (stage 3b) in late 2003 at the age of 37. I took a conventional approach to treatment and then got back to raising my 5- and 2-year-old sons and building my career.

In late 2014, eleven years after my original diagnosis, I received a stage 4 diagnosis. Cancer had metastasized to my bones. This time I did everything in my power to overcome cancer because I knew my life depended on it. Without knowing it, I started to implement the healing factors that I later found in the book, *Radical Remission*. As I read the list of healing factors detailed there, it affirmed the work I had been doing. It also led me to delve deeper into some factors and explore new ones.

What is a Radical Remission?

A radical remission is a statistically unlikely remission in which the person either:

1. Heals from cancer without conventional treatment;
2. First tries conventional treatments, which do not lead to remission, so they then try alternative treatments, which do lead to remission; or
3. Uses a combination of conventional and alternative treatments at the same time in order to outlive a dire prognosis (e.g., less than 25 percent five-year survival rate).

Dr. Turner and the Radical Remission Project are not against conventional cancer treatment in any way; rather, Dr. Turner believes that we have something important to learn from people who manage to heal without conventional medicine or after that medicine has failed, or by using a combination of conventional and alternative modalities.

The Research

The books are based on Dr. Turner’s 10+ years of research across 10 different countries, starting with her PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research involved analyzing over 1,500 cases of radical remissions and looking for commonalities in their path to healing. This led to her dissertation, a peer-reviewed scientific journal article, the *NY Times* bestselling book, the docuseries and, the follow-up book, *Radical Hope*.

The research uncovered 75 different healing factors, 10 of which were common among ALL research subjects. In other words, not all of the radical remission survivors used all 75 factors, but they all used these 10 factors.

What are the 10 Healing Factors?

1. Radically changing your diet
2. Taking control of your health / empowering yourself
3. Following your intuition
4. Using herbs and supplements
5. Releasing suppressed emotions
6. Increasing positive emotions
7. Embracing social support
8. Deepening your spiritual connection
9. Having strong reasons for living
10. Exercise and movement

There is no order of importance with one factor more beneficial than another. The priority of the factors is specific to each individual and where they feel they most need to make changes to their lifestyle and emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Please keep in mind that the 10 healing factors that Dr. Turner uncovered in her research are a hypothesis only. There is no guarantee or promise that following these 10 factors will help heal your cancer or other ailment. However, separate scientific studies have shown that these healing factors can significantly strengthen your immune system – and that’s always a good idea when you’re either facing or trying to prevent cancer or another disease.

Applying these 10 factors into your own life cannot hurt you and will strengthen your immune system. The only factor that should be practiced under the guidance of a health professional in order to ensure safety is “Taking herbs and supplements”.

My Story Continues.

I have utilized an integrative approach to healing my metastatic breast cancer (MBC) by combining conventional hormone blocking medicines and holistic lifestyle changes. I have also partnered with an integrative oncologist who supports my holistic lifestyle choices. This has led me to 7 years of stable metastatic disease (since 2016). I continue to live this new healthy and holistic lifestyle with the complete and total belief that I will indeed achieve my goal of reaching 101 years old, healthy, and sane!

How You can Learn More.

Many people find inspiration in reading the books and hope they have not found elsewhere, however, as one virtual workshop participant said, “Reading the book is one thing, but being with a group of others with a diagnosis has been much more helpful.”

The Radical Remission Project has certified over 120 coaches worldwide to teach and coach individuals on the benefits of the 10 healing factors. You can find workshops (virtual and in-person) as well as coaches to assist you in learning and applying the factors to your own life. We also offer a self-paced online course for those who need flexibility. Find a workshop or coach at www.RadicalRemission.com.



Strength and Stamina

More Mindset than Muscle

Written By: Shari Zimmerman
Breast Cancer Survivor

For me, strength and stamina are a mindset comprised of sheer grit, determination and perseverance. I keep my thoughts focused by reminding myself with my mantras: always forward... don't quit... say you can.... life is tough, but so am I.

In January 2023, I was doing well; I was an endurance runner who was feeling very fit at 70-years-old. And then, I received the news of a breast cancer reoccurrence. But first, let me share my back story. In 2003, at 51, I was diagnosed with Stage 0 breast cancer. A mastectomy and reconstruction followed, and I was told that I didn't need additional treatment beyond that. I was determined to get cancer and everything to do with it in the rear-view mirror as fast as possible. I did not want the title of "survivor." I just wanted to move on, and put it all behind me. I wanted to forget it all. What followed cancer

was a hysterectomy and bladder lift, as well as a host of other health issues. At that time, I had never been an athlete of any sort. I worked full time as a high school art teacher and spent my free time with my husband and three children. I wasn't overweight, but to put it bluntly, I was most definitely out of shape physically.

In 2009, I decided to do a 180-degree turn and start exercising with the goal to somehow transform my fitness and get my health under control. I tried gym workouts and hated that; walking on a treadmill wasn't for me either. All the videos and books I bought about exercise were hardly watched or read. Then, I started running. The process and progress were very slow. But, in time and over the last 14 years, I have managed to become an endurance runner, taking part in 5K and 10K events, half marathons and, at 66, my first and only marathon.

Attitude is Everything

Fast forward to February 2023, when I felt a tiny 'grain of sand' on my breast. I was quickly diagnosed with a recurrence of breast cancer on the same mastectomy side. This time, although small, it was Stage 1 with an oncotype score to warrant chemotherapy, radiation and Tamoxifen. The stamina and strength I had gained through running was being tested but would help me get through. When my treatments started, I focused on using the tools I had acquired as an athlete to weather this chaotic storm. Chemotherapy wrought all sorts of havoc on my fit running body. Not only did I experience the 'usual' chemo issues, but I had three ER trips, ankle surgery, a thumb fracture, and the loss of all my hair, eyelashes, eyebrows etc. Honestly, those were uphill battles with lots of tears and emotions. As soon as I would get through the effects of one infusion or radiation session, I needed every bit of my grit and determination to buoy myself. Each treatment brought a heavy burden, and it was necessary to rebuild my stamina and strength to face the next one. It seemed like a never-ending cycle of treatments.

That said, no matter how rough this rollercoaster ride of treatments was, I reminded myself daily to keep the finish line in sight. I mentally resolved to maintain any shred of fitness to improve my stamina and strength and allow me to cross that line and move beyond. I used

a variety of things in my toolbox to keep me motivated, especially when I just didn't seem to have anything left in the tank. To count down each infusion, I made a countdown board with a slab of wood and colored popsicle sticks. My most important motivational tools are: a necklace with a "don't quit" charm that was gifted to me and a fitness tracker watch to count my steps. This endurance long distance runner even counted the steps to the mailbox! It's 100 steps there and 100 steps back. Some days, that was all I could manage, and that's ok. I would just set another step goal for the next day and try again. I've always reminded myself to "listen to my body." I've also used meditation, yoga, and music to calm, motivate and keep me focused on my priorities for the day. Importantly, I highly benefited from counseling to process my thoughts and emotions while always keeping the main goal of completing chemotherapy and radiation in the forefront. Even now after starting Tamoxifen, I continue to remind myself: don't quit. Giving up is not an option. Life is tough, but so am I, and so are you. Your mindset matters. (B)

be the  difference foundation.
Raising Hope. Targeting Ovarian Cancer.

BE THE DIFFERENCE FOUNDATION INVITES YOU TO

RUNWAY FOR HOPE

LUNCHEON & FASHION SHOW
Benefiting Mary Crowley Cancer Research

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29TH, 11:30 AM
ROYAL OAKS COUNTRY CLUB
7915 GREENVILLE AVE., DALLAS, TX 75231

Join us for Check-in and Raffle beginning at 11:00 am
Doors open for seating at 11:15 am - Individual Tickets \$150/each
We will begin the program promptly at 11:30 am
Complimentary Valet Parking

Purchase Tickets or Donate at www.Bethedifferencefoundation.org/rfh2024



SCAN ME

Service with a Style

Written By: Gabriela Gaona
Brighter Intern

Your style through and beyond cancer treatment may be another change to expect, but don't let it discourage you! There are some great services available that can help you find options to accommodate your needs. From on-trend styles with soft fabrics, elastic waistbands, button closures and even accessories, you can make choices that consider treatment, accessibility and comfort. Fortunately, with today's technology it's easy to press a button and have these fashionable pieces shipped straight to your door. How will you know which of these services work best for you? Wonder no longer, because Brighter is here to provide you with a comprehensive list of styling services across the nation!

1) *Stitch-Fix*

COST: \$20 styling fee + cost of items kept

SHIPPING: Free

SIZING: XS-3X, plus sizes, petite sizes, maternity wear

SPECIAL OFFER: 25% discount if you keep all the items in your fix.

Not just for women, but men and children as well. Stitch-Fix starts their process with a style quiz, which gives the algorithm information about your personal style, aesthetic, and budget. Based on this information, a stylist chooses five pieces to send you in your "Fix." When you receive your Fix, you pick which items to keep, and send the rest back in packaging conveniently provided by the company. Stitch-fix also has an option for you to write a note to your stylist. It's the perfect place to share with your stylist about your need for comfy clothes for treatment, or to request beanies or scarves for headcovering following chemotherapy.



STITCH FIX



2) *Wantable*

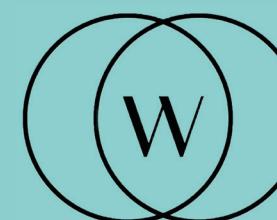
COST: \$20 styling fee + cost of items kept

SHIPPING: Free

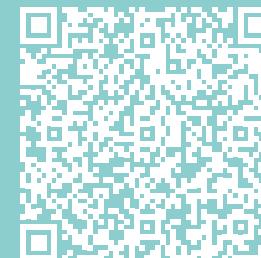
SIZING: XS-3X, 0 - 24

SPECIAL OFFER: 20% off if you buy five or more pieces.

Wantable is geared specifically towards women. Like many online services, the company starts out with a survey about your proportions and size, as well as style inclinations. A Wantable stylist then picks seven items and ships them directly to you. When you receive your "Edit" you have five days to try on and return any items you do not wish to keep. Wantable has three staple style packages based on your needs. You can choose from a "Style" or Everyday Wear Edit, an "Active" or Activewear Edit, or a "Sleep & Body" Edit, which provides pajamas and lingerie. In addition to the three main Edits, Wantable also has themed packages, such as "Road Trip," "Hot Mama Summer" and "Patio Parties," which are great options if you're looking to update your closet for a specific type of event. Wantable, like Stitch-Fix also has a section for you to leave notes to your stylist about specific items you may want sent in your Edit, such as adjustable layers for optimal comfort during your treatment process.



wishi



3) *Wishi*

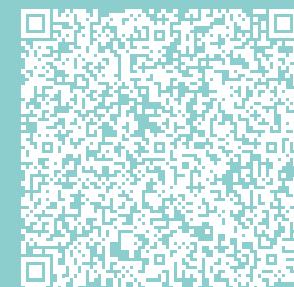
COST: Depends on the styling plan (\$40 - \$550)

SHIPPING: N/A

SIZING: XS - XL

SPECIAL OFFER: None

Wishi pairs you with a personal stylist who provides you with shoppable "Style Boards." The styling service has three styling plans: the Mini, the Major, and the Lux. Every Wishi plan includes a preliminary Mood Board, at least two shoppable Style Boards, and at least one revision per board. When you purchase the Major, Wishi stylists work with items already in your closet in order to maximize your style possibilities. Unlike other styling services, Wishi lets you place an order for any of the items in your Style Boards, so you shop directly from top fashion sites instead of from a third party. Because Wishi starts by pairing you with a stylist, the first order of action is to talk to your stylist about what you need and what items you are looking for. Your stylist can then add stylish and adaptable pieces to your board for you to peruse and consider.



4) *Daily Look*

COST: \$40 styling fee + cost of items kept

SHIPPING: Free

SIZING: 0-24, XS - 3X

SPECIAL OFFER: Refer a friend and get a \$25 credit

Daily Look's process begins with a style questionnaire, so they can understand your lifestyle, price range, and aesthetic. Your DL stylist then selects up to twelve hand picked pieces to send to you. Because Daily Look's questionnaire asks about your lifestyle, you have the opportunity to let your stylist know about any adaptable clothing you might need and your stylist can then present you with different options. Daily Look also provides customers with a preview, so there are no surprises when it comes to your DL box. When you see your preview, you have the option to decline certain pieces, which your stylist can then replace with something new. Once you receive your pieces, you have 30 days to return any pieces you didn't enjoy. Daily Look prides itself on its convenience and stress-free styling, so they make sure to ship your DL box 1-3 business days after you approve your order.

DAILYLOOK



Dia & Co



6) Short Story

COST: \$25 styling fee + cost of items kept

SHIPPING: Free

SIZING: 00 - 20 p

SPECIAL OFFER: Refer a friend and get a \$25 credit for you and your friend.

Short Story is a styling service directed specifically at petite women, or women 5'4" and under. Short Story starts your styling experience with a Style Quiz, which informs them about your style, budget, and size. A Short Story stylist then picks your chosen number of pieces and ships them to you at your chosen frequency. The company has a woman-led team that focuses on dressing real women and giving them accessible fashion options. Short Story is tailored to you - you pick the number of pieces you receive, how often you receive them, and what kind of pieces you receive. You can make specific requests to your stylist, explaining your comfort and needs.

Styling yourself while going through treatment may be easier and more convenient than you imagined. You don't have to set aside time from your busy and tiring schedule; there's no longer a necessity to go to stores, try on clothes and search for the perfect pieces. Online styling services provide an opportunity for you to receive comfortable, cute, and adaptable pieces that work for you and your needs. From soft and stylish dresses for nights out, to comfortable leisure wear for nights in, online styling services offer fantastic options no matter your size, age, or stage of treatment. (B)

5) Dia & Co

COST: \$20 styling fee + cost of items kept

SHIPPING: Free

SIZING: 10-32

SPECIAL OFFER: 15% off your first Style Box

This company specifically services plus-sized women. Dia & Co was founded on the principle of providing plus-sized women the opportunity to express their individuality through their clothing. Dia & Co has different options for your personalized styling experience: with this styling service, you can either select one of their many themed boxes or take their personalized styling quiz to schedule your customized boxes. One unique characteristic of Dia & Co is their website's "Daily Steal" button, which showcases a specific sale item from the company's wide ranging catalog. Dia & Co has a five-day return and payment period. However, this timeframe can be easily extended by simply emailing their team. Dia & Co provides lots of adaptable options, and if you choose to schedule your uniquely styled box, you can request specific pieces from your stylist.

short
story



Crush Your New Year's Nutrition Resolutions

*Written By: Brittany DeLaurentis, MPH, RD, CSO, LD
Registered Dietitian/Health Coach*

4 Tips to Stick to Your Goals All Year Long

With a new year, new intentions are often set to begin the year well. However, life (or treatment) can quickly get in the way and knock us off track. When it comes to goal-setting for your nutrition, here are some tips to keep you focused and to transform those intentions into realities.

1. Set Specific Goals: Rather than setting vague resolutions such as "eat healthy", try being very specific about what you want to do, such as "I will eat more vegetables with my dinner meals". This will keep you more focused on what you are aiming to do, and it makes it much easier to track progress.

2. Focus on Gradual Changes: Instead of deciding to completely transform your lifestyle overnight, focus on small changes you can accomplish and then build upon that. For example, make it a goal to opt for whole grains over refined grains, or eat one piece of fresh fruit as a daily snack. This makes overall change more sustainable and will also prevent burnout.

3. Listen to Your Body: Learning to tap into what your body is telling you will transform your ability to meet and stick to your health goals. Your body does a great job of communicating when you are hungry and full, if you just learn how to listen. A great way to do this is to minimize distractions and eat mindfully, while savoring each and every bite while paying attention to how you feel.

4. Seek out Support: Having the right support all around you is key, not only for making health changes, but also for keeping them consistent. Think about people in your life who will be able to provide you with ongoing encouragement and accountability while you are working on your resolutions. If you would like to build your support system even further, online communities are also a great option.

And here's a bonus tip: make sure to have fun with your resolutions and celebrate your successes! Here's to a happy and healthy new year! (B)

Share Worthy Recipes

Written by: Chef Anjani Vasson
Photography By: Erin Schreyer

This easy soup is perfect for these cooler months. It is simple and nourishing, and you can substitute the beans for what you have in your pantry. Include any seasonal vegetables you may have. This soup, like many others, may be great for you while going for treatment or even afterwards, to be shared with the family. This vegetarian minestrone soup offers several key benefits that make it a suitable choice for cancer patients:

Nutrient-Dense Ingredients:

Minestrone soup is typically loaded with a variety of vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, making it a nutrient-dense option. These ingredients provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, which are vital for supporting the immune system and overall health during treatment.

Hydration:

Maintaining proper hydration is important for cancer patients, as some treatments can cause dehydration. The broth in minestrone soup helps keep patients hydrated, while the vegetables provide additional water content.

Fiber-Rich:

The combination of vegetables and legumes in minestrone soup provides ample dietary fiber. This is beneficial for managing digestive issues that may arise during treatment and can help prevent constipation.

Easy to Digest:

Minestrone soup is typically easy to digest, which can be essential for patients who may experience gastrointestinal side effects from treatment.

Flavor and Variety:

The diverse array of vegetables and herbs used in minestrone soup can help enhance appetite, which may be diminished during treatment. The enticing flavors and aromas of the soup can make it a more enjoyable and satisfying meal.

Immune Support:

The vitamins and minerals found in the soup's ingredients, particularly vitamin C and antioxidants from vegetables, can help boost the immune system, which is essential for fighting off infections and supporting the body's recovery. 



Chef Anjani Vasson

Anjani focused her culinary skills in a health-supportive chef training from the Natural Gourmet Institute in New York (now bought by ICE culinary), followed by studies in Advanced Raw Food Chef training at the Matthew Kenney Culinary Academy. Anjani and her family live in Dallas, and she enjoys teaching people to cook and hosting plant-based dinner parties.

Rustic Roots Minestrone

Rustic Roots Minestrone

Yield: 6 servings

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 leek, chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2-3 celery stalks, chopped
2 teaspoon garlic, minced
2 zucchini, diced
2-3 Beefsteak tomatoes, seeded and diced
5-6 cups vegetable stock
1 cup canned white beans
3 sprigs fresh rosemary, chopped
2 slices country/sourdough bread, preferably stale, torn
1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
Salt/pepper to taste
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
2 tablespoons basil, chopped

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot and add the chopped onion, leek, carrot, and celery for a few minutes - cook until they are soft and translucent. Add the garlic and soften for one minute. Add zucchini and tomato and cook for an additional few minutes.
- 2) Add 4 cups vegetable stock, bring to boil, reduce heat to simmer, and cook partially covered, for 20 minutes.
3. Add white beans and their liquid to the soup pot along with the bread. Cook an additional few minutes until bread thickens soup.
4. Finish soup with 1 teaspoon vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Stir in parsley and basil.
- 5) Enjoy!

Customization: Minestrone soup can be easily customized to suit an individual's dietary needs and preferences. It can be adapted to meet specific dietary restrictions or taste preferences, making it a versatile option for survivors.

Remember that individual dietary needs can vary, so it's essential to consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian to determine the best dietary choices during treatment. Additionally, it's important to take any specific dietary restrictions or recommendations from medical professionals into account.



Using Skincare Expertise and the Power of Touch to Transform Lives

Written By: Erin Schreyer
Photography By: Natura Bissé

A cancer diagnosis often elicits a flurry of emotions. Once treatment begins, those feelings are frequently compounded by additional side effects – physical, mental and emotional. This is both normal and unsurprising due to the plethora of changes, most of which are frustrating, as they adversely affect typical routines and preferences.

Women who are often soothed by being together with others, reaping the benefits of both community and touch, can find themselves at a deficit for what they need most: physical contact. Because patients and their loved ones may be hesitant to draw near, there may be a larger than typical void of hugs, hand-holding, and skin stimulation. Once thought to be for the protection of a cancer survivor, there is now an increasing volume of evidence that suggests physical touch is, in fact, healing in more ways than one.

A recent study by researchers at the University of Miami revealed that consensual skin-to-skin contact supports physical, mental and emotional health. Tiffany Field, Ph.D., who has been studying the effects of human touch for decades, further states that when combined with conventional medical care, massage therapy can help bring relief to conditions such as anxiety and depression, pain and headaches. Specific to cancer survivors, she observed that massage may also enhance the immune function. “We were surprised by the increased natural killer cells (the frontline of our immune system) that ward off bacterial, viral, and cancer cells,” she stated.

According to Dr. Field, the positive effects of massage therapy derive from the movement of the skin and the stimulation of pressure receptor cells under the skin. When the skin moves, it increases activity in the body’s parasympathetic nervous system, specifically triggering the vagal nerves. This stimulation benefits digestion, immunity and heart function and can improve cognitive alertness as well as lower the body’s stress response. Heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol (the hormone released during stress and pain) decrease, while oxytocin (a hormone released during moments of human connection associated with feelings of empathy and trust) simultaneously increases.

A 2021 article written by Nicole K. McNichols in Psychology Today underscored many of the same points above, citing additional research on the topic of touch. As well, Dr. McNichols stated that PET scans have shown the brain quiets in response to stress when a person’s hand is held. The effect is greatest when the hand being held is that of a loved one, but it still works even if it’s just a stranger. On the flip side, touch deprivation is correlated with negative health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and immune system disorders.



Ricardo Fisas

NATURA BISSÉ FOUNDATION

“My Skin has never felt or looked so good.”

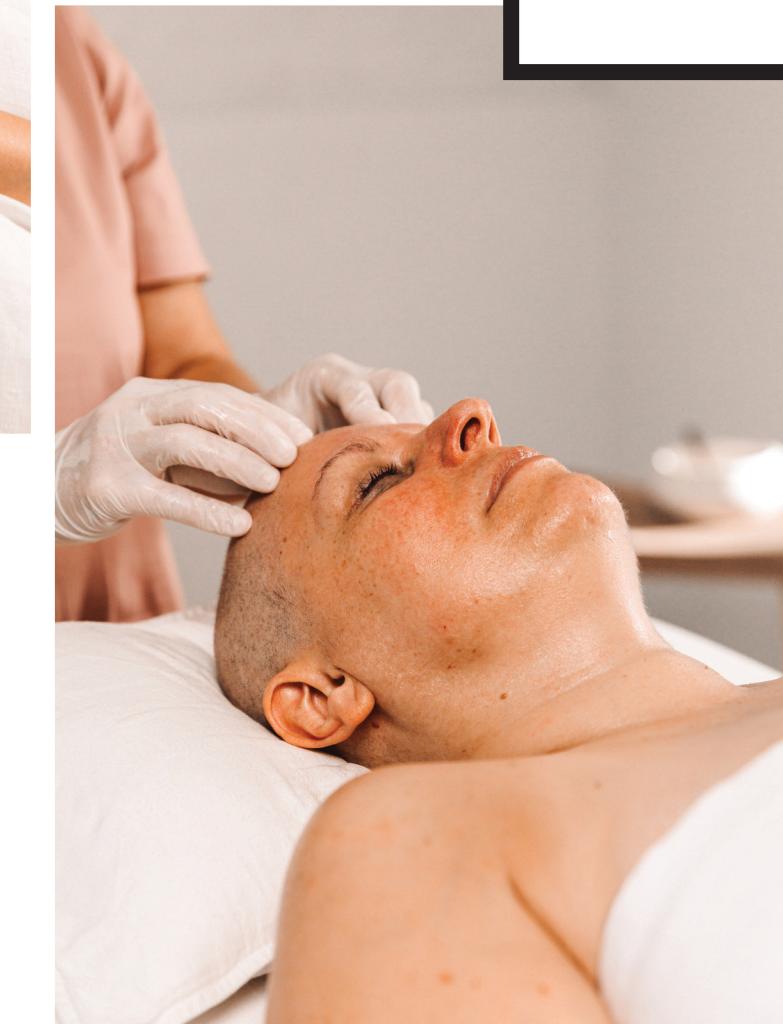
Every day, licensed aestheticians and massage therapists can testify to the reality of this research as they witness the positive after-effects on their relaxed, renewed and refreshed clients. Not only do these professionals soothe skin, but they activate the body and often rejuvenate the soul, particularly for those who have experienced the trauma and stress of a cancer diagnosis. Amazingly, it's only been in recent years that these specialists have been encouraged or allowed to touch a survivor. Until their industries caught up to research, they avoided physically touching this population out of an abundance of caution, and they often turned away women who would have greatly benefited from their expertise. Thankfully, this outdated view is falling by the wayside and there's a hopeful emergence of evidence showing the value of skincare and contact within the oncological community. Natura Bissé, an international skincare company, is at the forefront of this charge with its Ricardo Fisas Foundation serving women with cancer through skin treatment and training.

Since its inception in 1979 in Barcelona, Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation has not only been a staple in world-renowned spas and celebrity aesthetics, but the company has been deeply committed to its purpose: to take care of people's skin as well as their sense of well-being at every stage of life. Their unique perspective that connects our largest organ to our overall health has led to awards and recognition around the globe. With a philosophy that blends innovation, pioneering technology, and active ingredients with the power of touch, the company realizes the impact of deep, emotional sensitivity and connection. “Touch is more than just physical contact. Touch is about listening, understanding, and empathizing,” their website emphasizes. It's the defining hallmark of their spa experiences and products.



Further leveraging that philosophy of connectedness, Ricardo Fisas and Gloria Vergés, the founders of Natura Bissé, created a private and independent foundation to launch two programs benefiting vulnerable people: the Oncology Skin Care Program and Project Difference, which supports teachers and children with learning differences. Natura Bissé funds the Foundation with 0.7% of its total annual revenue, and in 2013 they created a collection of hotel charitable amenities to help fund its initiatives. In 2020, the Oncology Skin Care Program launched in the United States, and this year it will begin fully rolling out services and education now that pandemic concerns have subsided.

Capitalizing on ingredient awareness from strict European skincare standards, as well as Natura Bissé's access to the latest research and understanding of emulsions, active and healing elements and skin regeneration, the Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation generously



shares knowledge so others can benefit. With programs designed to equip and train aestheticians, massage therapists, salon professionals and consumers on the specific needs of oncology patients, they are addressing some of the most common ailments experienced by those who are in or have gone through cancer treatment. Skin sensitivity and irritation, dryness, acne, wound care and scarring often raise questions among survivors, yet many struggle to find solutions, much less comfort from an educated response or healing touch.

“Touch is more than just physical contact. Touch is about listening, understanding, and empathizing,”



Josanna Gaither, U.S. Executive Director of the Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation, has been part of the Natura Bissé organization for years and is also a trained aesthetician herself. “It just makes sense for us, because there are so many people experiencing cancer diagnoses, and we know that good skincare can make a difference,” she explained. “Skin issues are prolific among cancer patients, and learning how to care for skin helps them feel more comfortable and more confident in how they look. All of that only leads to their body healing in a better way. It's never been about us selling skincare. It's simply about us offering what we know to help others. We want to help improve lives.”

The Oncology Skin Care Program has a two-pronged approach: one is to deliver training to aestheticians, massage therapists, hair and nail salons, and the second is to deliver services to oncology patients through massage and skincare offered at hospital or spa locations. In both cases, the primary goal is education and to increase the awareness of helpful ingredients, necessary routines, healing practices and tips for skin resilience. The Foundation created a Skin Care Guide for oncological patients that addresses facial skin, scalp, hands and feet, scaring, blemishes, irritation and sun. They hope to broadly share the information with people as they are diagnosed and beyond, since skin side-effects often evolve. Notably, these recommendations are ingredient-based and brand agnostic. "We want to train people how to help," noted Gaither.

The training for service professionals is an intensive learning process, including 20 hours of education on cancer diagnoses, side effects, cosmetic chemistry and skin benefits, setting up a treatment room to better accommodate someone with cancer, as well as hands-on training with a survivor. "The hands-on portion is so important, because for many people, it may be the first time they've heard personal stories or seen scars and treatment effects, or even a woman with her wig removed," Gaither expressed. "Because it's different from what they've seen in the past, we want to equip them with the interaction, so they can respond in the best way. Our goal is for survivors to be seen and to feel comfortable, and something as small as a wig stand helps them feel more welcomed and reassured." She also explained that the hands-on portion doesn't teach about using specific massage or products, but is more about performing scalp hydration on a bald head, lymph node massage adjustments and other oncological adaptations, including listening. "It can be quite emotional," she added.

Foundation leaders recognize the effects, not just on skin, but on the overall wellbeing of survivors. When meeting directly with cancer patients, they have seen confidence improve as women better understand their skin and are able to treat it effectively. Not only do they feel better equipped, but they walk away feeling more beautiful and cared for.

"The Oncology Skin Care program can contribute to improving the quality of life during the cancer journey by minimizing the potential side effects of medical treatments on one's skin. People who participated in the program highlight that looking better during the illness helps them feel better and stronger and improve their self-esteem. At the spa room they also find a safe space that allows them to disconnect and reconnect," added Joaquín Serra, Fisas' son-in-law and second-generation leader of Natura Bissé.

The Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation is located in Dallas, Texas and working on partnerships with major hospitals, as well as cosmetology schools and retailers. They also offer virtual consultations with a trained and certified aesthetician. All of the services are free to survivors, and there is a small fee for professionals. The hope is to grow the organization's programs across the United States, much like they have in their native country of Spain. There, they have made a difference in the lives of survivors for over a decade. One such person, Rosemarie Tucciarone shared, "During my recent cancer journey, it was truly amazing to experience what skincare products did for my physical and mental well-being. The Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation [helped] me not only look good, but feel better with their amazing recommendations that I used after surgery, during treatment and continue to use. I was never on a consistent skincare routine (I tried) but now I make the investment in myself every day. My skin has never felt or looked so good!"

Gaither reiterated that Natura Bissé and the Foundation understand the power of good skin. "If our skin is itchy or extra-sensitive, it makes all the difference in our mood, ability to concentrate and even sleep," she said. "If they can feel better, they can heal easier, and if it's combined with even a light touch or something as simple as a hand-hold, it maximizes the benefit." Gaither recounted story after story of cancer patients receiving hand massages and explaining how wonderful it felt because it was "the first time anyone has touched me since I was diagnosed." She explained that it's a more than common response for family members to keep a physical distance for fear of hurting the one they love. The Foundation is working to close this gap.

Our combined hope with this article is not just that readers and their caregivers would learn more about the importance of skincare, but that they might also recognize the need to offer a simple touch. Aestheticians have the opportunity to apply creams, and massage therapists can use lotions or oils while they knead stress away, but loved ones can also care for cancer patients by encouraging hand and feet hydration or even a gentle hug or stroke on the arm. Also remember that a listening ear is a touchpoint as well. Humans were made with the need, and cancer is isolating enough.

For more information on the Oncology Skin Care Guide, services or training, please contact info@ricardofisasfoundation.org. 

Winter Skin Care: Hydrate and Soothe

Written By: Jamie Hess
Esthetician and Makeup Artist

The crisp, long, winter days can be calmly beautiful, but that calmness rarely transfers to our skin. Instead, this season often ushers in drier air which can wreak havoc on our skin's ability to stay hydrated. As the humidity in the air lowers, the temperature outside begins to drop and the use of indoor heaters rise, skin can begin to feel dry, look dull and be extra sensitive. With the addition of a few nourishing products and tweaking a few habits, your skin will be hydrated and protected, and ready to combat the cold season ahead.



—Aveeno Calm and Restorative Skin Therapy - A Prebiotic Oat Concentrate is the star ingredient in this product line. Paired alongside Aloe and a Pro-vitamin B5 formula, every product in this line will soothe and calm inflammation as well as hydrate dry, sensitive skin. Oncodermatologists and Johnson & Johnson developed this product to help with one of the lesser known side effects of chemotherapy. Even though this was created for one of the most specific of skin sensitivities, it can be used by all skin types. Also, in addition to the body care products, this line also offers a complete array of facial skin care with the same wonderful ingredients!

—Aquaphor Healing Ointment - The humectants, Glycerin and Panthenol (Pro-vitamin B5) bind moisture in the outer most layer of the skin, while Petrolatum creates a semi-occlusive barrier allowing the skin to breathe, while protecting it from external irritants. Both preservative and fragrance free, this gentle, multi-use ointment can be used to heal and protect everything from dry lips to cracked hands and feet. *Before going to bed, apply to hands and feet, then slip them into cotton socks and gloves and awaken to soft, supple, moisturized skin.



—Bio-Oil - This multi-use product has had a cult following for over 30 years. Mineral oil, Vitamin E, Vitamin A, Sunflower Seed, Calendula, Lavender and Rosemary oil are just a few of the rich ingredients in this quick drying oil. Known for its healing benefits for stretch marks and scars, it can be used on the entire body, including the face, as it is moisturizing, hydrating and soothing.

Nothing sounds lovelier than a long, steamy, hot shower or bath on a cold day, but truly that's the last thing dry and/or sensitive skin needs. Hot water, often combined with a harsh soap, can aggravate the skin, stripping it of its natural moisture barrier. Instead, opt for a shorter shower or bath with warm water and use a balm or moisturizing cleanser instead. After the shower or bath and before the skin is completely dry, apply an oil (Bio-Oil) or moisturizer (Aveeno) to the skin. Application of these products while the skin is still damp means the skin will reap all the soothing and moisturizing benefits, keeping it supple, moisturized and healthy during the cooler months of the year. 



Lash Out in the Best Way

Find Your Best Mascara or Serum



Boost Confidence and Reclaim Your Life!

Maybelline Sky High Mascara / \$10-\$13
<https://www.maybelline.com>



L'oreal Paris Original Voluminous Mascara / \$9-\$11
<https://www.lorealparisusa.com>



Advanced Mineral Luxury Lash Mascara / \$50
<https://advancedmineralmakeup.com>



Written By: Harper Tagg
Brighter Intern

Makeup has the power to make us feel more confident in ourselves; to enhance and highlight our natural beauty, or to make our day feel just a little bit brighter. Often, mascara is the final touch to our makeup. However, cancer and chemotherapy can cause changes to hair and skin, flipping your makeup routine upside down. To combat this, we've compiled a list of our favorite mascaras. There are several ways to address eyelash thinning and mascara use during chemotherapy. Some women prefer to use false lashes, some opt for growth serums, and others choose to thicken what they've got with mascara. To give you options, we've made a guide to choosing the perfect mascara for you, along with our two cents on the best serums on the market.

Maybelline Sky High Mascara

First off, we have the **Maybelline Sky High Mascara**. This \$10-\$13 mascara increases lash volume and length and coats each lash with its flexible brush. The formula is washable, meaning that it will remove gently at the end of each day, reducing strain on sensitive lashes. Make sure that you get the non-waterproof formula; waterproof mascaras can be difficult to remove, further damaging lashes and potentially causing them to fall out.

L'oreal Paris Original Voluminous Mascara

Next, we'd like to introduce you to the **L'oreal Paris Original Voluminous Mascara**. This mascara, ranging in price from \$9-\$11, is a long-loved classic in the world of volumizing mascaras. Renowned for creating a more dramatic look, L'oreal's cult classic includes Panthenol and Ceramide-R to condition and protect lashes during day-to-day use. Again, this formula is washable, making it easy and gentle to remove after a long day.

Advanced Mineral Luxury Lash Mascara

Next up we have the **Advanced Mineral Luxury Lash Mascara**. This mascara is a bit more expensive at \$50, but it's well worth the price tag. Designed to last the entire day, it includes a smudge-proof and water resistant formula. Additionally, Luxury Lash's formula includes Vitamins A, C, & E, seaweed protein, and algae extracts to build up and strengthen lashes without clumping.

Blinc Cosmetics Amplified Tubing Mascara

Our next mascara is the **Blinc Cosmetics Amplified Tubing Mascara** for \$26. This mascara is a tubing mascara, meaning that instead of painting over the lashes it completely coats and forms tubes around each lash. This builds additional length and volume for a fuller look. Blinc's formula is removable with just warm water and gentle pressure, minimizing strain on lashes upon removal. Additionally, the formula is vegan and created specifically for sensitive eyes and lashes.

Thrive Causemetics Liquid Lash Extensions Mascara

Finally for mascaras, we would like to introduce you to **Thrive Causemetics' Liquid Lash Extensions Mascara**. This \$25 mascara is also a tubing mascara, providing similar benefits of fuller and longer lashes as the Blinc Cosmetics mascara. Likewise, the formula is easily removable with just warm water and gentle pressure, relieving lash strain. However, Thrive Causemetics' natural and vegan formula includes shea butter and castor seed oil to naturally condition lashes and increase growth throughout the day. The formula is dermatologist and ophthalmologist tested and approved for sensitive skin.

Pacifica Vegan Collagen Lash Serum and Clear Mascara Primer

Now we'd like to suggest two lash serums to take your mascara game to the next level, beginning with **Pacifica's Vegan Collagen Lash Serum and Clear Mascara Primer**. This \$14 lash serum is set apart due to its functionality, not just as a serum but also as a mascara primer. The vegan formula is used before mascara and sits for 60 seconds before mascara application. It amplifies mascara color and uses kaolin and plant wax to naturally strengthen lashes and create a base for mascara application. The serum also uses vegan collagen and vitamins B and E to condition lashes and stimulate growth.

Vegamour Gro Lash Serum

Next, the **Vegamour Gro Lash Serum** is a natural and vegan serum to stimulate lash growth. Although this serum is more expensive at \$72, it has fantastic and quickly visible results when used in a consistent routine. The serum revitalizes hair beginning at the root and strengthens lashes throughout. Additionally, Vegamour's formula increases and stimulates new hair growth throughout the lashes.

Although makeup is absolutely not necessary and is a personal choice, it can also help to boost confidence and reclaim your life. We hope this list provides valuable information and new options for you to consider, and if you have a product to add, message us on social media @brightermagazine or send a message to our Editor, so we can consider your recommendations next time! 

Blinc Cosmetics Amplified Tubing Mascara / \$26
<https://farsedakis.com>



Thrive Cosmetics Liquid Lash Extensions Mascara / \$25
<https://thrivecausemetics.com>



Pacifica Vegan Collagen Lash Serum and Clear Mascara Primer / \$14
<https://www.pacificabeauty.com>



Vegamour Gro Lash Serum / \$72
<https://vegamour.com>





Jacket-Of-All-Trades



Written By: Brittney Dorr
Fashion Consultant

Winter is in full swing, and you may not be feeling your best. Whether it's from indulgent holiday feasting, recovery from treatment or a procedure, or just one of those days, we've got you covered, literally! It's cold outside, and you want to look cute and stylish with minimal effort. An oversized jacket can be your jack-of-all-trades! Here's how...

There are many different types of oversized jackets, the key is to find the right style for you. A 'shacket' (shirt-like jacket) can be great for a more sporty look with a looser-fitting graphic tee, hoodie, or turtleneck. Shackets can also be a great added layer with a sweater dress and boots for a casual date night look.

The puffer jacket is not just for ski trips anymore! Use your oversized puffer with jeans and those cute booties you've been dying to wear. Throw your sneakers on with thick scrunched socks, leggings, and a ball cap to run errands. I love to wear my puffer with combat boots and a beanie to still look super stylish on a dirty hair day.

Looking for a more chic oversized jacket? I lean towards a trench coat or longer peacoat to wear with jeans and sweaters, leggings and hoodie for a casual on-the-go look, or a sleek dress with tall boots for a dressier evening occasion. Weather permitting, you can leave it open and tie the trench coat in the back giving you more shape around the waist, especially when wearing a bulkier sweater.

A classic camel, black, or navy-colored oversized jacket will never steer you wrong but don't be afraid to try a bold color worn with neutral colors, or try a patterned jacket with colors you like. Note: you don't always have to match the colors of your jacket with what you're wearing as long as the colors coordinate. Think of color blocking or colors that complement each other on the color wheel. Remember, style is a vibe and everyone has one! 



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Hair Hopes and Happenings

Before, During, and After Treatment

Written By: Jeanna Doyle

Licensed Cosmetologist and Trained Medical Aesthetic Provider



Keep moving forward with knowledge and confidence

Hair Loss

Part one of a three-part series

This is the first of a three-part series designed to provide you with practical information about your hair, including tips and tricks to help you navigate changes before, during and after treatment.

Hair loss is an unwelcome event. I encourage you to acknowledge your feelings, whatever they are, with the goal of learning some solutions so you can keep moving forward with knowledge and confidence.

These are ten of the most frequently asked questions about the first phase of hair loss:

When will I lose my hair?

Your oncology team can provide you with detailed information regarding the treatment plan and its potential impact on your hair. Today, many treatment protocols allow them to reasonably predict whether and when you might experience hair loss. Remember your medical team is here to support you, so don't hesitate to request the necessary information from them about any impact treatment may have on you. This will help you plan ahead to maintain your appearance and well-being throughout your treatment journey.

Should I cut my hair short?

Many women choose to experiment with shorter hairstyles before undergoing significant hair loss or opting to shave their heads. This decision serves a dual purpose: firstly, shorter hair can alleviate scalp pressure, particularly during the shedding phase when the scalp may become sensitive, as it places less weight on the crown of the head.

Secondly, managing shorter hair can be more convenient than dealing with the shedding of long hair. Once you receive information from your oncology team regarding the anticipated timing of hair loss, you can make an informed choice about whether to trim your hair in preparation for the shedding process.

When should I shave my head?

It's been my experience that for most women, the point at which managing hair loss becomes more stressful than the thought of going without it is when they consider shaving their heads. Many even find a sense of relief and freedom once it is done. On the other hand, there are those who prefer to be proactive and shave their heads right away. That said, you should confirm that your treatment protocol will indeed lead to hair loss before taking this step. Regardless of the timing, it's important to understand that hair loss due to treatment, even though it may not feel that way, is typically temporary.

A word of caution about shaving: Despite all of the images featuring women with perfectly shaved heads, it's advised to avoid shaving down to the scalp. Leave about a quarter of an inch of hair all over your head. Shaving too close can risk cuts, which in turn increases the risk of infection and can lead to ingrown hairs, especially for those planning to wear wigs or hats. To stay safe, keep it relatively short but not to the bare scalp.

To wig or not to wig?

Wigs can provide a sense of privacy and help you maintain a consistent appearance during your treatment. I recommend exploring wig options before the need arises, even if you're uncertain about wearing one. This initial shopping experience is cost-free and allows you to discover the range of choices available. Many individuals find comfort in having a wig selected just in case they decide to use it. It's important





Jeanna Doyle Ruhl

Licensed Cosmetologist and Trained Medical Aesthetic Provider

to remember that purchasing a wig doesn't commit you to wearing it all the time. However, having one ready in advance can offer peace of mind for special occasions like weddings or graduations, where you may prefer not to be photographed in a scarf or hat.

What will my insurance cover?

Most wig stores typically won't handle insurance claims on your behalf. You will need to pay for the wig upfront and then submit a reimbursement claim. For this reason, I recommend contacting your insurance provider before shopping for a wig to understand what is covered. Insurance companies classify wigs as "cranial prosthetics," so when discussing coverage, you need to use this same terminology. Keep in mind that this doesn't mean there are specialized cranial prosthetic stores; the product is essentially a wig in all aspects except when interacting with your insurance provider.

If your claim is initially denied, consider resubmitting it. Alternatively, you can explore the option of deducting the cranial prosthetic as a medical expense on your taxes. Consult with your tax preparer and be sure to retain your receipts for this purpose.

Where do I start wig shopping?

Before you start shopping for wigs, it's a good idea to seek recommendations. There are numerous wig forums on social media dedicated to women with conditions like cancer or alopecia, which is an autoimmune disorder causing hair loss. Once you've identified a store, it's advisable to give them a call and inquire about their experience in assisting individuals with medical hair loss. Some stores primarily cater to fashion wigs, and their products and policies will be focused on their target audience. Be sure to ask about the size of their inventory and their policies regarding trying on wigs. Keep in mind that some stores might have limited options and less flexible try-on policies, including charging a fee after trying on a certain number of wigs. Having a conversation with the store staff beforehand can provide valuable insights and help you determine if they're the right fit for your wig shopping needs.

What are my options if I don't wear a wig?

If a wig is not in your plans, you have lots of options for comfort and coverage. Hats are an increasingly popular choice and can provide coverage and protection with style and charm. You may opt to wear a hat and scarf combination to give you full head coverage, depending on the style of hat. Scarfs by themselves can make a great head cover, offering your look lots of color. There are also hat-scarf combos that have ruching on the sides made of ultra-soft cotton or bamboo. A quick look online will bring up many options; alternatively, you can often find these in a wig retailer near you.

A note about color: many women like to wear black, and while it goes with most everything, when factoring in fatigue and changes to your skin, you may not always wish to wear makeup. Finding a head covering that is flattering to your skin without makeup might help you to feel better, and all black may not be that best option. These items are relatively inexpensive so you can have fun with trying options.

What if I do cold caps but I still lose my hair?

Cold caps are specifically designed to help you preserve your hair during the course of your treatment. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using cold caps with your medical team. While the primary objective is to retain as much of your hair as possible throughout the treatment, it's worth noting that some women have reported experiencing hair loss despite using cold caps. In the event that you encounter such hair loss, my suggestion is to complete your treatment and evaluate the remaining hair before making any decisions about cutting or shaving it off.

Even if you experience significant hair loss with cold caps, it is generally advisable to complete your treatment before making any further decisions. Afterward, you can strategize regarding the amount of hair you still have. For instance, you might find that a partial wig or wig topper suffices if the hair loss is concentrated in a specific area, and this can be worn until your natural hair regrows. The remaining hair can also be artfully used as bangs or around the ears, either under hats or scarves to create the illusion of a full head of hair, or it can be incorporated into a full wig for certain occasions.

Ultimately, it's better to assess the situation and work with what you have before considering any drastic cuts, as this will leave you with more options and flexibility in managing your hair during and after treatment.

What can I do to look more like myself during treatment?

Hair loss can also include your brows and lashes, but not always at the same time as the hair on your head. The use of makeup can enhance the look of brows and give you the illusion of lashes. Wearing artificial lashes are not recommended during treatment; however with some eyeliner and a little shadow, you can bring balance to your appearance until your own lashes and brows return. The regrowth cycle for brows and lashes is approximately 60-90 days. A well-chosen pair of glasses



and lip stick can really help detract from thinning brows and lashes, and as a bonus, the glasses can help keep dust and debris out of your eyes and the lipstick will help with moisture.

When will my hair grow back?

Hair growth is influenced by a variety of factors, such as age, diet, seasonal changes, and genetic predisposition. Typically, hair regrows at a rate of about half an inch per month, equating to approximately six inches per year. Many women choose to forgo wearing wigs once they achieve sufficient scalp coverage. It's worth noting that hair grows at different rates due to three distinct phases: the growth phase, the resting phase, and the shedding phase. Therefore, it's advisable to continue trimming your hair until it reaches a desirable level of thickness before attempting to regain length. 

The next article of this series will address hairlessness and all the considerations that go with this sensitive time and appearance. Look for it in our next issue!

Special Contributor's Bio:

Jeanna Doyle Ruhl is a licensed cosmetologist and trained Medical Aesthetic Provider, with extensive training and certifications in the field of Oncology Skin Care and corrective makeup. Her publication, WigED, is the first beauty book for women seeking guidance on wig selection. Jeanna is the founder of Ruhl Beauty, a business dedicated to empowering women affected by appearance-altering illness or injury. Jeanna's latest passion is her newfound role as the project manager for the Ricardo Fisas Natura Bissé Foundation where her focus is on launching their pioneering Oncology Skin Care Education program for survivors, caregivers and professionals in the United States.

Paying It Forward

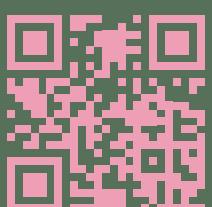
Written by: Cindy Trice
Chief Innovation Officer KickIt Pajamas and Survivor
Photography By: Jimmy White Photography



Left to Right - Founders - Parmelee Miller, Cindy Trice, Elizabeth Searcy and Anna Shuford

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KickIt Pajamas

Day one of hospitalization for chemotherapy was surreal. Most of us experience or imagine a hospital stay as something you are suddenly thrust into due to acute illness or injury. But this experience felt more like I was checking into a scary hotel. Although I was hosting an invasive cervical cancer tumor, I wasn't in pain and didn't feel sick.

With my mother in tow for support, I filled out the paperwork, slung my small bag of belongings over my shoulder, and followed the hospital volunteer to my room. Steeling myself for this journey, I scanned the drab, tan walls with bolted medical equipment, the IV pole that would hold my life-saving treatments, and the uncomfortable looking bed with the thin, open-backed hospital gown folded neatly on top.

I put my arms through the crisp sleeves and my mom helped me tie the back, but I could still feel air hitting my skin through the gaps. I immediately felt more vulnerable and scared than I'd been since the day of my diagnosis. The first few days, I suffered the indignities of the gown until my friend brought me the gift that would change everything. A pair of pjs.

Those pjs lifted my spirits in a way all the beautiful flowers I received never could. I felt dressed as I did laps around the nurse's station or when my boyfriend, now husband, would come visit. I could even see delight in my nurses' faces seeing their patient in those bright, beautiful pajamas.

The only downside was the pjs didn't have the correct functionality to make medical care easy. My nurses happily worked around this problem because they could see the benefit to me.

Studies show that what you wear while hospitalized matters. It matters for your comfort, mental wellbeing, and even how you are perceived and treated by others. So why hasn't the universal hospital gown been redesigned in over 100 years?

This experience is what planted the idea for the company I co-founded with three other women, KickIt Pajamas. We design and sell comfortable, stylish, and functional pajamas, clothing, and other accessories to support women during their cancer journey.

Every element of KickIt's apparel is designed to provide functionality and comfort for the patient, and convenience for their medical team. Our Hospital Pajamas and Gowns feature snaps from wrist through collar for easy port, IV and PICC line access and internal pockets to hold drains. All our pjs have an adjustable waistband for ultimate personal comfort and to accommodate surgical wounds. And, all products are made of luxurious fabrics for sensitive skin. **B**



From Survivor to Warrior

How to Surround Yourself with Understanding Support

Written By: Debbie Norris
Ovarian Cancer Survivor

“You must be so glad you can put this cancer thing behind you now!”
“Now you can get on with the rest of your life.” “It must feel so good to get back to your normal life.”

As a woman diagnosed with cancer, you’ve been through the ringer physically and mentally. Your body is still trying to figure out what just happened, and your brain . . . well, let’s just not even go there, right? Now all those wonderful, well-meaning co-workers, friends, family members and busy bodies want to congratulate you. If these people have never had a near death, life changing diagnosis they probably think you’re going to “bounce back” like you just had a cold. Unfortunately, you, like so many other survivors and thrivers before you, are finding out that the rest of your new journey through life is just beginning. Now it includes the doctor visits, maintenance treatments, follow up labs and tests, and new specialists as your body finds new issues left behind by the life saving treatments. You’re post diagnosis/post treatment life is just now starting. How do you find the supportive tribe, the friends and people who will help you through this part of the journey; what I call the “Warrior Stage.”

The Warrior Stage is the in between place. You are coming out of the fight. You feel like you have survived. You have earned your armor and rest period. During this period the follow-ups and maintenance start. The warriors are the ones who begin to wonder “will I ever get back to the old me?” “Is there anyone else who understands this is not over?”

YES!! There are other warriors out there. Warriors who are further along in their journey. Warriors who are new to the game, like you. And of course, there are those who may not be cancer warriors but understand that just because initial treatment is over – it’s not really over. You just need to know where to find these wonderful people. This new tribe.

To start with, talk with your spouse, children and any other family members or close friends who supported you in the Survivor/Fighter stage. Let them know what is actually happening with your body and health now. Let them know where you are mentally. Share with this part of your support team as much as you shared during treatment. Ask these loved ones to be your guards with other not-so-understanding members of the family.

It’s okay if some don’t want to be as involved now as they once were. Some people like the drama and showmanship of the treatment part of cancer. The “look how much I helped” stage of cancer support. The Warrior stage can tend to become monotonous, not just for us, but also for our caregivers and support system. They can get tired of our scanxiety; our fear with every lab, scan and doctor visit that this beast will show up again. So it’s okay if they drop out of the tribe. There will be others who will eventually come in to take their place. New individuals you haven’t even met yet.

Next, if you haven’t already, find a local group and/or a few online groups for your cancer. Locally attend workshops, walks, brunches and other activities to get to know others survivors, warriors and thrivers. It took me a year after my diagnosis to start reaching out and meeting other ovarian cancer survivors. In the beginning, I felt I didn’t need any other support but my mom, husband and a few good friends. Once I was done with treatment that changed. My mom’s experiences after her treatment was a bit different than mine.

I suffered from depression and had a lot of physical and health related issues. I also felt the need to share my story with everyone, especially once I found out how little the general public knows about ovarian cancer. I finally needed to connect with others who had been where I was. I started looking on Facebook for groups of women with ovarian cancer, and I found two. I joined them. I connected



to our local ovarian cancer alliance. I went to a survivor brunch. I connected to the national alliance and attended my very first ovarian cancer conference.

That first conference was amazing, empowering and comforting for me. One hundred and fifty other women who had been or were where I was! They understood! They didn’t ask why I was going to my room for a nap before dinner; they just reassured me they’d check on me to see if I wanted to join them. I received information on moving forward, new possible research and treatments, and to top it off, a program that was in place where I could share my personal story with local medical students!

I had found my Warrior Stage tribe, and so can you! Connecting may be the last thing on your mind right now, but let me tell you, it is the

best thing you can do right now. If you don’t feel up to seeing people in person, check out social media. Yes, sometimes the groups can be a bit much, but we all know we can skip the posts or only pop in when we feel the need for support. Many national organizations have conferences, and even some local organizations have conferences and workshops where you can learn and connect.

Embrace your Warrior self. Embrace your Warrior tribe. This tribe is far more valuable than your Survivor/Fighter tribe. The Warrior tribe is in it for the long haul. They’ve got your back, your front and everything in between. As far as how to answer those well-meaning individuals who don’t understand? I usually smile and say, “thank you, but cancer effects never end.” **(B)**

Cervical Cancer Awareness

Written By: Rachel Walsdorf and Jennifer Gill, MD, PhD

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness month, and the American Cancer Society estimates that nearly 14,000 new cases of cervical cancer will have been diagnosed in 2023. Additionally, up to one million women will have cervical dysplasia, or abnormal cervix cells at risk for becoming cervical cancer. While cervical cancer is most common in women between ages 35 to 44, it can occur in younger or older individuals as well. The good news is that screening, prevention, and treatment for cervical cancer has dramatically improved over the last several decades, leading to improved outcomes. Knowing your risks and when to get screened can make a dramatic difference in downstream outcomes and consequences.

What is cervical cancer?

The cervix connects the body of the uterus to the vagina. Cells lining the cervix can undergo changes to become abnormal, and, in some cases, may develop further into cervical cancer. The two main types of cervical cancer are squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) and adenocarcinoma (AC). 80-90% of cervical cancers are SCC, which develop from cells on the outer part of the cervix, known as the exocervix, that can be seen during a speculum exam. AC develops from cells within the inner part of your cervix, the endocervix, located closer to the uterus. These two types vary in their cells of origin but can both be diagnosed through appropriate testing by your healthcare provider.

What are risk factors for developing cervical cancer?

Although human papillomavirus (HPV) infections are common and rarely cause cancer, approximately 95% of



cervical cancers worldwide are caused by HPV infection. HPV is sexually transmitted and due to its high prevalence, most sexually active individuals have been exposed. The CDC estimates that at least 75% of reproductive-age adults have been infected with HPV. Fortunately, most people clear the infection without symptoms or issues. However, a subset of individuals with HPV will develop abnormal changes in their cervix (CIN, or "Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia") which can turn into cancer. Additional risk factors for cervical cancer include a weakened immune system (which makes it harder to clear HPV infections) and smoking.

HPV vaccines have been developed to prevent infection by nine types of HPV that can cause cancer and genital warts. These preventative vaccines are recommended at ages 9-26, with 12 being the most common age, although they can be administered later as well. Vaccines have been shown to be safe and effective in preventing precancerous infections from occurring and greatly reducing chances of developing cervical cancer. Talk with your physician for more information.

How is cervical cancer detected?

Cervical cancer screening is performed via Pap smear, and HPV testing is done by your primary care or OBGYN provider. Pap smears involve obtaining a swab of the cervix to identify any precancerous/ abnormal cells as well as cancerous cells. HPV testing is often done in conjunction with Pap smears to detect infection by HPV strains known to cause cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends having a Pap smear done every 3 years beginning at age 21 until you turn 30. From ages 30-65, you can either continue getting a Pap smear every 3 years, or get a Pap smear and HPV test together every 5 years. Remember, if you have a family history of cervical cancer or if risk factors apply to you, talk to your doctor about more frequent screening.

If your Pap smear reveals abnormal cells or you test positive for a high-risk HPV strain, additional testing or procedures may be performed. These include a colposcopy (observing the cervix through a magnifying scope) or a biopsy (removing a piece of tissue to be examined under the microscope). These additional tests help doctors determine whether cervical cancer is present and to what extent. In more advanced cases, imaging tests or additional biopsies may be needed to determine whether the cancer has spread to other places in the body.

What should I do if I think I might have cervical cancer?

Most people with precancerous or early-stage cervical cancer do not develop noticeable symptoms, which is why it is SO important to get screened. If you do obtain a positive result from a Pap smear or HPV test, your doctor will discuss with you whether the cells are precancerous or if they have developed into cervical cancer, and they will determine a plan going forward.

If you have symptoms such as abnormal vaginal bleeding, discharge, or pain with or without sex, you should see your doctor right away. Your doctor will likely perform a pelvic exam and a general physical. Afterwards, they may recommend that you undergo extra testing which may include a Pap smear or other tests described above. These symptoms may be due to other conditions, but catching cancer early increases the favorability of your prognosis, so do not delay seeing a health care provider!

How is cervical cancer treated?

Treatment options vary widely based on how early the cancer is caught and patient characteristics (including age, pregnancy status, fertility preferences, and other comorbidities). Managing early abnormal non-cancerous cells like cervical dysplasia can range from observation with close monitoring to excisional biopsies (through LEEP, cold knife cone, or laser cone) to ablation with cryotherapy or lasers. Additional surgery may be needed if the cancer is more involved. Radiation therapy is also a common treatment for early-stage cases and can decrease the chance of recurrence after surgery if needed. Radiation in combination with chemotherapy is usually used to treat higher stages of cancer with or without surgery. Like any cancer, your treatment plan is personalized to your case to give you the best outcome and quality of life.

Where can I find cervical cancer support groups?

Although cervical dysplasia and cervical cancer are relatively common, many women do not feel comfortable sharing their journey with the people around them. Know that you are not alone in your cervical cancer journey, and there are support groups that are available. The National Cervical Cancer Coalition and American Cancer Society have local, regional, and national support groups that you can find through their websites. Many major hospitals also have organized support groups for individuals in the area. Whether you want to meet in person or chat via Facebook groups, there are lots of ways to connect. Talking with others undergoing a similar experience can often make the journey a lot easier.

The best action you can take to protect yourself from cervical cancer is to make an appointment with a health care provider and get screened! Based on your age, risk factors, and HPV status, they can help determine how often you should be tested thereafter. While getting a gynecologic exam can sometimes feel intimidating, they are often quick with minimal, if any, discomfort. Also, consider discussing whether HPV vaccination might be a good choice for you. Lastly, know that you are not alone and by taking good care of your gynecologic health, you are investing in your future self and health!

Brighter Reads

Book Recommendations from the Brighter Team



Are you a survivor who likes to read? Read any great books lately that you'd like to share with other survivors that have been particularly helpful?

Contact us at livelearnshine@brightermagazine.org with your book suggestions and reviews.

Find Your People by Jennie Allen

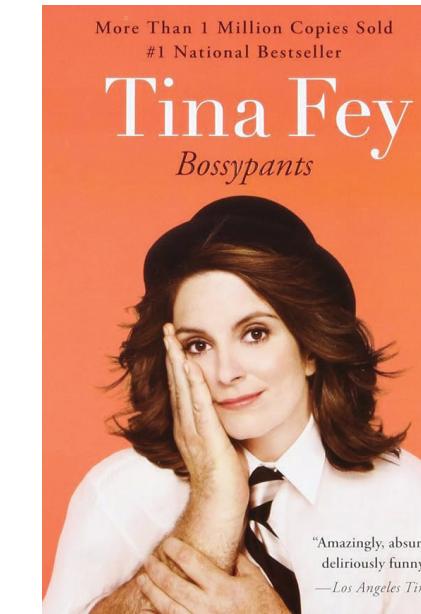
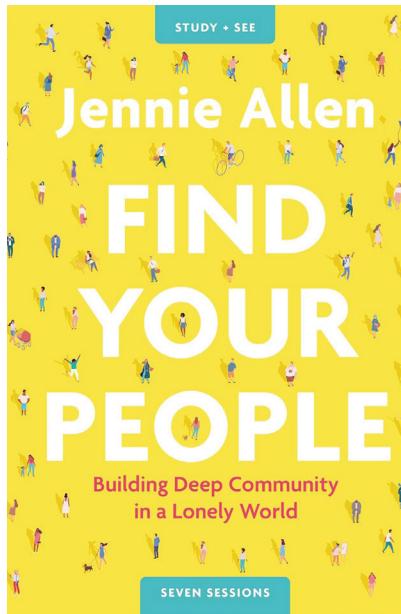
What do you do when your closest friends are scattered in different cities across the U.S. and you need to find your people locally? If you're one of The Breakfast Club girls (my childhood and lifelong besties), you start a virtual book club with this book.

It's a wonderful way for us to bridge the gap between the miles, and also to help us help each other find our village and community in our respective chosen home cities and states.

Finding genuine friends in adulthood is hard. We're in an incredibly busy season of life, and that makes it difficult to really nurture relationships when you meet someone who shares your values and interests. I'm looking forward to the wisdom this book holds as we all work with intention to find our people locally.

On its own, the book has received rave reviews. It's even better when you do it with a group of girlfriends.

-Rebecca Walden
Survivor and Board Member



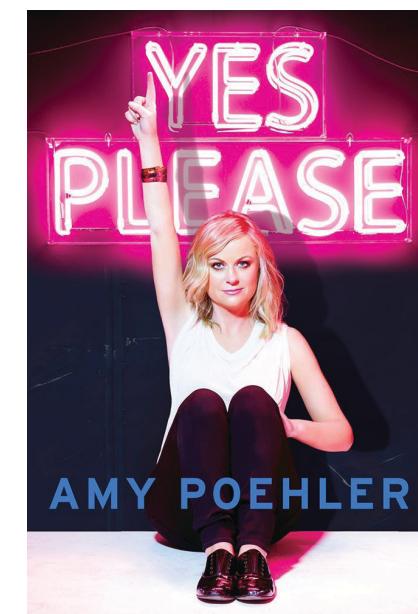
“Bossy Pants” by Tina Fey

Sometimes in life you just need to laugh. Whether as a result of something funny, relatable, a little off color or so inappropriate that you laugh as a result of your complete and total discomfort with what you were just exposed to. If you can relate to this feeling then either of these books are for you.

Amy Poehler and Tina Fey from Saturday Night Live are not only incredibly strong and impressive women but they are also hilariously funny! Not everything in their lives has always been that way however. In these two books the women walk you through their personal lives as well as life as a woman in the comedy world.

I can't promise either of these books are ones that you would want to listen to in the car with your kids but they are bound to make you laugh and help you disconnect from whatever ails you!

- Helen Bowles
Founder



“Yes Please” by Amy Poehler



Reporting Symptoms is *Not* Complaining

Tips for Talking About Symptoms

Written By: Wendy S. Harpham, MD, FACP

Retired internist, survivor, and author

Doctor visits are not social visits.

I hate complaining to my doctors. Focusing on my discomforts makes me feel worse about my situation. What if my doctors think I'm a whiner?

But here's the thing,

For me to receive good care, I must report symptoms. If I keep my symptoms a secret from my doctors, I might as well blindfold and handcuff them. Doctors who don't know about my symptoms can't make timely diagnosis or adjust my medications properly. Worst of all, I might suffer unnecessarily. That would upset everyone—and be miserable for me.

When I talk about symptoms, I'm not complaining. I'm reporting vital information.

When I was practicing medicine, some patients perplexed me. I'd ask, How are you doing? Predictably, they'd answer with a smile, Fine! You might think those non-complaining patients made my workday easier. In fact, caring for them was often more difficult and stressful.

Like pulling teeth, I'd probe further to be sure I wasn't missing something. Sometimes, their grin-and-bear-it approach prevented me from providing the kind of efficient, comprehensive care I strove for with every patient.

Once in a while, patients ended up in an emergency room or in-hospital for problems I might have treated successfully as an outpatient had I known about the symptoms while still mild. More often than I'd like, family members would inform me about patients' discomforts for which I had good therapies—and could have helped sooner.

As a young physician, patients who never complained bewildered me. You see, at each patient's first visit, I voiced my commitment and hope for the best possible outcome, explaining that I depend on you to report symptoms. Whenever I learned that patients had minimized or not mentioned symptoms, I'd urge them to be candid in the future, reminding them: Doctor visits are not social visits.

After I developed cancer, I gained a whole new appreciation for common challenges patients face when talking about symptoms. While dealing with my recurrences, I worried about distracting my

oncologist from my cancer. When in remission, I hesitated to report minor or odd symptoms, fearing my doctors would think of me as a whiner. Whatever was happening, I wanted to appear tough—as much to reassure myself that I could handle discomforts and challenges as to burnish a public persona defined by acceptance and hope.

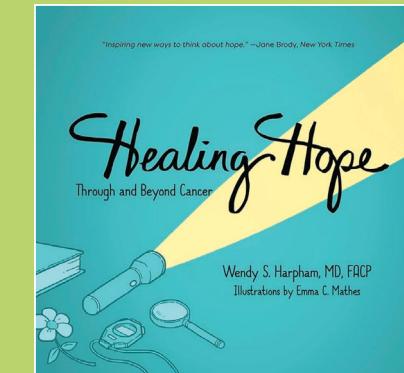
Co-survivors have shared with me how they sometimes didn't mention symptoms at visits because they assumed nothing could be done to help or because they didn't want to upset their loved ones who'd accompanied them. Another issue may be how society praises people who never complain—as if that's a virtue all patients should aspire to.

When the stakes are high, other factors may contribute to patients' hesitation to report symptoms. One time, I developed a fever while my blood counts were dangerously low from chemotherapy. Knowing the right thing to do, I began dialing my doctor's number. My finger hovered over the final digit as if blocked by a forcefield. I didn't want to wake my oncologist at midnight or call a friend to watch my children while my husband took me to the emergency room. I was sick of needlesticks, tests, and treatments. I wanted to avoid more doctor bills. Most of all, I did not want to put on a hospital gown and be sick again.

I overcame my hesitation quickly by focusing on my top priority: optimizing the outcome. For the sake of my family, and to help my physicians care for me, I completed the call. Ever since, I've fulfilled my obligation to report symptoms in a timely fashion—no matter how fearful, embarrassed, sad, or anxious I've felt while doing it.

The mantra that has helped me most is Reporting symptoms is not complaining. As a patient, I am committed to doing what I know to be the right thing, especially when tempted otherwise. The rewards of reporting symptoms are great. It keeps me from regret about missed opportunities for the best outcome. From now on, whatever happens, I will feel comforted by the knowledge that everyone—including me—did their best. 

For more information, check out the free *Pocket Guide to Talking About Side Effects of Cancer Treatment*.



How to Start Journaling

Written By: Gracie Little
Brighter Intern

Easier and More Beneficial Than You Think

From the moment you are diagnosed, through treatments and recovery, there's no doubt that cancer is an emotional rollercoaster. You might be struggling to handle all of these feelings, especially if you don't feel comfortable talking. Journaling is one of the best ways to gain a sense of control over your mental health in this uncertain time.

Even though the benefits to journaling are abundant, it can be difficult to figure out where you should actually start. That's why finding some starter prompts is the best way to kick off your journaling journey. Here are a few prompts to get your mind thinking:

How has cancer affected your outlook on life?
Who are you most grateful to have in your life right now?
What would you tell your pre-diagnosis self?

Write down everything that is causing you stress or anxiety at this moment.

I am most at peace when...

Gratitude journaling can be extremely helpful, especially if you are in the beginning or middle phases of your cancer journey. Practicing gratitude allows your mind to stop dwelling on the negatives, which can certainly seem abundant during times like these. However, if you start making a list of people, objects or anything else that has helped you throughout your diagnosis and treatment, you may find that your outlook on life shifts.

You also don't have to write for just yourself. For example, it never hurts to write to somebody you know, whether it's an old friend

you haven't talked to in a while or just a family member who has helped you organize your hospital visits. This way, you can put your journal entry in the form of a letter, card or email, revealing as much or as little as you want to. You don't even have to send the message, but it can help to act as though somebody would read your writing.

If you're finding it difficult to keep up with journaling as a habit, try to designate a time each day specifically for writing. The best times to journal are early in the morning, before you have any responsibilities or appointments, and at night before you go to bed, to clear your head of any anxieties that might keep you awake. At night, it can also be easier to avoid writer's block, since you can talk about the most notable parts of your day. Mornings and nights are good for journaling since you are least likely to feel pressured by time, but this obviously differs from person to person, so just find a time that works best for you and stick with it.

If you're more of a visual person, your journal can be less wordy and more of a scrapbook, with drawings, pictures, magazine clippings or just anything you find inspiring. It can also be a combination of visual and written aspects, making it even more fun to look back on in a few years.

If you can, try to find a quiet, serene space, whether it be in your backyard or the hospital garden, to ensure that you can focus all of your energy on self-reflection. If this isn't possible, just make sure you feel comfortable. The most important thing to remember when journaling is not to overthink it – just write whatever comes to your mind. There's no "right way" to journal, and that's the best part about it! 

ANYONE BORN WITH OVARIES IS AT RISK FOR OVARIAN CANCER

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Poetry for the Cancer Survivor

Written By: Katy Hutson
Breast Cancer Survivor and Author
Photography By: InterVarsity Press

Excerpt from Now I Lay Me Down to Fight by Katy Bowser Hutson. Taken from The Preface and Chapter 2, "Chemotherapy".

One of the worst days of my life followed one of the best weeks. I'd just completed a week at the Martha's Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing, courtesy of a scholarship from the Sustainable Arts Foundation for artists with young children. After a long stretch of homeschooling young children, writing music, and holding down the fort while my husband was on the road playing music, this week was an utter godsend: a week to rest, write, learn, and make plans for my next creative steps when I returned home. To drag out the trope, little did I know . . .

That evening, as I got ready for bed at a friend's house in Boston, I saw warning signs on my body: my breast was hot, swollen, puckered. Within a week I was in chemotherapy for a rare, aggressive cancer called inflammatory breast cancer.

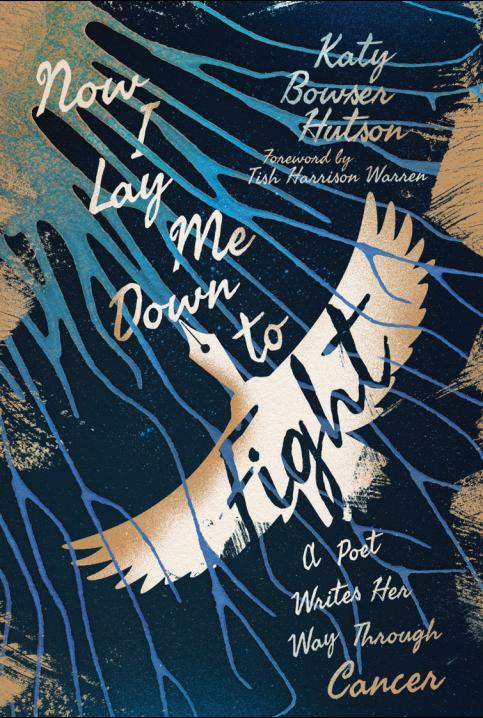
I felt an immediate awareness that there was no accident in the timing. The week of honing my writing skills had given me tools in my arsenal for this battle.

In his book *The Body Keeps the Score*, psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk notes that trauma is preverbal. There is a magic, a medicine to putting words to terrible things. I wrote through all of it: to face fear, to say it out loud, to pray, to fling it all away from me. I wrote most of the poems during cancer treatment. The essays, as well as one poem, are written with the benefit of hindsight, five years later. My hope is that my writings cross paths with someone who could use these words. Every cancer story is different. Maybe there are moments in here that resonate, that help. I hope so.



Cancer is an overgrowth, a kudzu:
Tangling and strangling legitimate life.
Chemo is a killing, a burning out:
Burning down to ashy carbon, indiscriminately.
But cancer, did you know that I am a poet?
My job is to cull through the chaos
with tweezers and magnifier.
I have wings
On shoulder blades and ankles
Just big enough for hovering me inches above the terrain,
Traversing without smothering my subject.
With pen and pocket and fingers and eyes
I cipher meaning
Siphoning liquid beauty that seeps from the edges
Into a tiny vial;
Taking pains with my pain: it fruits sweetly.
If in this year's ravaging I eke an ounce of beauty
It will outweigh all of your ashy remnant.
I can paste it on my footsoles
And stick me to the incinerated earth
Where I will wait for the rich loam
Tear soaked and fertile, to live.
That is what poets do, cancer.

*Taken from Now I Lay Me Down to Fight by Katy Bowser Hutson.
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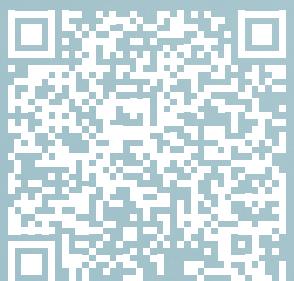
Good Morning Gorgeous - Mary J. Blige

(Recommended by reader: Natalie Grubbs)

The Comeback - Danny Gokey

Up! - Shania Twain

If you'd like to submit your idea for a future JAM list, go to www.brightermagazine.com or scan the QR code and submit your favorite songs.



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