



Care & Share Newsletter

January 2017

Local Services, Local Support.

Happy New Year!



Cindy Feist
Executive Director

January, the month of new beginnings and cherished memories, beckons. Outside the temperature drops and the days seem so long, giving us the time to sit quiet and reflect. It allows us the time to remember those most dear to us, near and far. Looking at 2016, we can breathe a sigh of relief for making it through the tough times and pat ourselves on the back for all the accomplishments that we made. This is the month to dream, to look forward to the year ahead and our journey within.

Whatever your journey may be in 2017, the staff at Women Supporting Women wish you and your family a very Happy, Healthy, and Safe New Year.

And now let us welcome the New Year

Full of things that have never been.

Rainer Maria Rilke

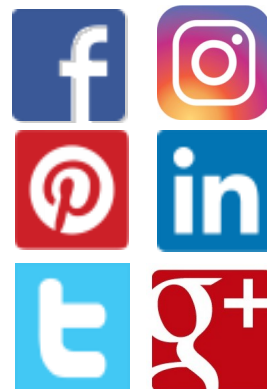
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SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

SALISBURY	POCOMOKE	OCEAN CITY	CAMBRIDGE
January 5 - 6:30 pm Thursday	January 19 - 5:30 pm Thursday	January 18 - 1 pm Wednesday	January 24 - 6:30 pm Tuesday
1320 Belmont Ave 410-548-7880	Pocomoke Com. Cntr 410-548-7880	Atlantic Health Center	Christ Episc. Church 410-563-0946
Topic: Open	Topic: Open	Brandi Musselman, MD, Gynecologist Women's Health Issues	Topic: Open
Facilitator: Kyle Beebe	Facilitator: Virginia Schneider	Facilitator: Cindy Elliott, RN, Nurse Nav. Bev Ward, RN Breast Care	Facilitator: Sue Todd

FOLLOW US:



SURVIVOR STORY

New Normal? What's That?



MOVING FORWARD AFTER BREAST CANCER

by Nancy Stordahl

Nancy, with Sophie and Elsie, her two special cancer eyewitnesses and secret keepers.

It's been more than six years since my breast cancer diagnosis, so it's time to start taking stock of things, or so I've been told. I'm supposed to be making good progress on picking up the pieces. I'm supposed to start putting cancer behind me and find my *new normal*, whatever that means. Society seems to be nudging – no, more like pushing – me to hurry up. Be done. Put it behind me. Move on. Forget about it. Get back to the way things were. The trouble is, it's not that simple, or even possible. I will never be done with cancer. And guess what? I don't even want to be.

Maybe you're reading this and think-ing who in her right mind would not want to be done with cancer? But the way I see it is this would be like eras-ing parts of my life. It

would be like denying I have brown eyes, graduated from Madelia High School, have three siblings, taught second grade, am a happily married woman, and have three amazing kids. I don't erase those parts of my life. Breast cancer is now part of who I am. How would I erase that, even if I could?

I'm reminded every day when I look in the mirror that I'm much altered physically. Then there are the emotional scars, which aren't as obvious, but still are there. And, yes, I miss my breasts. Sometimes it seems I'm not supposed to think or say this, much less write about such a thing. After all, I'm alive. Shouldn't this be enough? Well, yes, but I still miss them.

As for me, I haven't figured out how anything cancer related can have any kind of normalcy to it, new or otherwise.

A Weird Kind of Normal

In a way, having a mastectomy has almost become some weird kind of normal. But it's not normal. Then there is the reconstruction. Sometimes this process is made to sound easy, almost normal-like. Again, it's not. Reconstruction is no "free boob job." And though reconstructed breasts may turn out lovely, they are still reconstructed. They are still stand-ins for the real deal, a salvage job, or a cosmetic fix, at best. When I'm fully clothed, no one can tell by looking at me that I'm not the same as before. But I can tell. I know. And if a woman chooses not to do reconstruction, she might be looked upon with skepticism, perhaps even made to feel she must explain her reasons for opting out and making the "radical" choice she did. None of this is in any way normal-like, easy, or easily forgotten.

In addition to the physical and emotional scars left by a breast cancer diagnosis, there are the nasty, long-term and lingering side effects that are too numerous to list. And let's not forget the most awful lingering "side effect" of all – living the rest of your life know-ing cancer can reappear any time down the road. So it's not really even possible to file away your cancer experience as "finished." Cancer is never that tidy. Cancer is never over.

Cancer changes everything; it affects nearly every aspect of your life. It's not just a bump in the road. If there's one thing in life that definitely fits that game-changer cliché, cancer just might be it. Despite how things are often depicted in media, nothing about any of it is easy or easily forgotten. However, not forget-ting doesn't mean I'm stuck in Cancer Land or that I'm unable to move for-ward. I'm not, and I do. But I will do it in my own time and in my own way.

And then there's survivorship. This part of the cancer experience isn't easy either. In fact, it's damn hard due to a whole variety of reasons. If you're one of the "lucky" ones and able to finish up active cancer treatment, a whole other set of challenges awaits.

Once you land in this new and un-chartered territory, you are once again inundated with far too many outside pressures and expectations about how to do this part of cancer too. The advice on finding that elusive *new normal* starts rolling in. It's sometimes helpful, but often not. Some embrace the new normal concept. Others resist. As for me, I haven't figured out how anything cancer related can have any kind of normalcy to it, new or otherwise. Noth-ing about cancer is normal. Nothing about survivorship is either; I'm still tiptoeing through it.

The “Gift” of Cancer

After a certain amount of time passes in your post-diagnosis life, society tells you you’re supposed to have learned some things and morphed into a new and improved version of your former self. This feels like one more “cancer obligation” you’re supposed to fulfill. Cancer does not miraculously make you a better person, or a worse one for that matter.

And here’s the real stunner for me. There is pressure out there to view your cancer experience as a positive thing, perhaps even to consider it to be some-thing you are grateful to have gone through. Some go so far as to call cancer the best thing that ever happened to them, a gift even. Do you hear the fingernails on the chalkboard yet?

Calling cancer a gift or an opportunity for personal enlightenment makes a nice feature story in a magazine, but it’s not reality, at least it’s not my reality.

Calling cancer a gift or an opportunity for personal enlightenment makes a nice feature story in a magazine, but it’s not reality, at least it’s not my reality. Plus, it can be downright insulting to those with a stage IV diagnosis. Maybe it is just all semantics, but words matter. A lot. I will never be calling cancer a gift. People are gifts. Life is a gift. Cancer is not. This doesn’t mean I’m bitter, negative, or ungrateful. Mostly, it means I’m a person who lives in reality.

If looking at cancer as a gift works for some people, more power to them. I mean that. But as for me, this kind of thinking is unfathomable. Cancer was not, is not, and never will be a gift for me and my family. Despite the illusion created by pink ribbon culture, breast cancer is still a horrible, too often deadly disease, and nothing about it is pretty, pink, or gift-like. Period.

Moving Forward

No one should feel pressured to accomplish profound things following a cancer diagnosis. No matter what your cancer stage, trying to reclaim and maintain your life and sanity will be profound enough. Trust me. You don’t necessarily need to throw out all your old ways and drive yourself nuts in the process. Make changes and improvements in your lifestyle choices, yes, but don’t go crazy worrying about every little thing you do or don’t do. Eat as healthy as you can, for sure. Exercise, yes, but don’t beat yourself up trying to run marathons or climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, unless, of course, you want to.

And you’re not obligated to write a blog or a book, mentor others, walk or run in races, deck yourself out in pink, start a foundation, or whatever it is you think you’re supposed to do now. You don’t have to do any of that stuff. Just getting back to living your life is a huge deal, and more than enough to figure out. No matter what stage cancer you were diagnosed with or where you are in treatment, figuring out your life post-diagnosis will keep you plenty busy. And there is only one way for you to do it – your way. Don’t allow anyone to tell you anything different.

Ditch the pressures and expectations. Who needs them? I wish someone had given me this little piece of advice at the start of my cancer maze. Maybe I had to figure it out for myself. Maybe we all do, but, by sharing, perhaps we can save each other some time and minimize some of the frustration.

For a lot of reasons, cancer will never be over for me. I’m moving forward, still slowly at times, but that is OK. In my mind, anyway, moving forward is different from moving on. Moving on seems to imply you should leave the past tucked neatly behind you. I prefer to think of myself as moving forward while taking my cancer experience with me. I move forward a changed person, but still the same.

Maybe this really just means I was flawed and not finished evolving before cancer, and I am flawed and not finished evolving today. I was just me. I am still just me. I will always be just me. And this is enough.



*Nancy Stordahl is a breast cancer survivor, former educator, and now a freelance writer and blogger at NancysPoint.com, where she shares candidly about all aspects of her cancer experience, pink ribbon culture, grief, survivorship, pets, and more. She is also the author of *Getting Past the Fear: A Guide to Help You Mentally Prepare for Chemo-therapy*, as well as *Cancer Was Not a Gift & It Didn’t Make Me a Better Person: A memoir about cancer as I know it*, from which this article was adapted.*

Emotions and Cancer

by Kristin Kilbourn, PhD, MPH

Individuals who engage in social activities and stay connected with family and friends tend to experience less distress.

A diagnosis of cancer can create a great deal of disruption in your life. You may experience multiple stressors, such as interruption of life tasks and goals, treatment side effects, financial difficulties, work- and family-related disruptions, changes in social networks, and uncertainty about the future. It is estimated that approximately one-third to one-half of all people diagnosed with cancer experience high levels of distress during their illness, and some may develop depression and anxiety disorders. Early identification of depression and anxiety is important so that you may receive timely treatment and minimize the potential long-term complications.

If you experience significant emotional or physical distress that does not improve over time, you may benefit from psychosocial intervention. Counseling provides a safe environment for you and your family to express your feelings without being judged or feeling as though you're burdening others with your problems. You can attend therapy sessions on a regular basis or as needed. Many cancer survivors benefit from just a few visits, during which they can express their fears, concerns, and negative emotions and review adaptive coping techniques.

Psychosocial interventions can also help you manage some of the adverse side effects of cancer treatment, including pain, cancer-related fatigue, and cognitive challenges associated with treatment, such as chemo brain. Structured group interventions can assist with your psychosocial adjustment because they allow you to connect with others who have had similar experiences.

You can also do a number of things on your own to improve or maintain your emotional health while undergoing cancer treatment, including managing daily stressors, utilizing adaptive coping techniques, connecting with friends and family, re-evaluating your goals and priorities, and engaging in positive health behaviors.

Stress Management

Managing stress is an important component of good self-care because chronic stress can have a negative impact on physical and emotional well-being. Some activities that can alleviate or decrease the negative effects of stress include deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, imagery exercises, yoga, Tai Chi, walking and other forms of exercise, prayer or meditation, crafts and artistic endeavors, listening to soothing music, and regular engagement in pleasurable activities.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies play an important role in maintaining and improving your emotional and physical health. To determine the appropriate adaptive coping response for a situation, you need to first identify the controllable versus uncontrollable aspects of the stressor and then determine which coping response will be the most effective.

◆ Problem-focused coping works best when you are dealing with a stressor that is controllable and changeable, such as determining where you should go for your cancer treatment. Some adaptive problem-focused coping strategies include seeking information, decision-making, setting goals, and asking for help.

◆ Emotion-focused coping works well for stressors that are uncontrollable, such as the diagnosis of cancer. Examples of emotion-focused coping strategies include reframing your thoughts, exercising, journaling, and acceptance.

Your Social Support Network

Individuals who engage in social activities and stay connected with family and friends tend to experience less distress. Social support is an important component of stress management and good mental health because it serves as a buffer for stressful life events, provides an outlet to talk about your feelings and emotions, and keeps you engaged in activities that serve as a diversion from your cancer experience.

Positive Benefits

While the experience of going through cancer treatment is typified as negative, many cancer survivors ascribe some positive benefits to the experience. When confronted with your own mortality, you may re-evaluate what is most important to you and emerge with a greater appreciation of life. For many, this can be a time of productive inner growth.

A Healthy Lifestyle

Maintaining good nutrition while undergoing cancer treatment can have a positive impact on both your physical and emotional health. Staying physically active can also help to decrease some of the side effects of cancer treatment. It's important to talk to your medical providers about dietary and exercise recommendations. Additionally, sleep is often disrupted during treatment, and you may find that you need to try out different strategies to improve your sleep.



Dr. Kristin Kilbourn is an associate professor in the department of Psychology at the University of Colorado Denver. She is a member of the University of Colorado Comprehensive Cancer Center and an adjunct faculty member in the departments of Internal Medicine and Psychiatry on the University of Colorado Denver Medical Campus.

This article was published in Coping® with Cancer magazine, November/December 2016.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Healthy Eating During Treatment

If you're recovering from surgery, receiving chemotherapy or radiation, or having other breast cancer treatment, your main focus is on getting rid of the cancer. Eating well will help you stay strong by giving your body the nutrients it needs.

You and your doctor can't predict exactly how your treatment will affect you. Your general health and weight before your diagnosis play a role. So do the type, amount, and length of treatment you are receiving. As you move through your treatment, listen to your body and respond to what it needs. You may continue to enjoy cooking and eating and have a normal appetite. Or you might have days when you don't feel like eating anything, days when you want to eat everything, and times when only some things taste good. It's best to have a flexible, healthy eating plan to help you deal with your body's changing needs and wants.

A healthy diet — one with a variety of foods that includes lots of fruits and vegetables and regular protein — gives you the reserves of nutrients you need to keep your strength up while you're being treated for breast cancer. These reserves also help rebuild your body's tissues and keep your immune system strong to help fight off infection. Plus, a healthy diet can help you manage treatment side effects. There is evidence that some cancer treatments actually work better in people who are eating enough calories and protein. While you're having breast cancer treatment, it's more important than ever that you eat a healthy diet.

BreastCancer.org

Old Fashioned Chicken Noodle Soup

Yield: Serves 4 (serving size: about 1 1/2 cups)

Ingredients

- 8 cups Chicken Stock or fat-free, lower-sodium chicken broth
- 2 (4-ounce) skinless, bone-in chicken thighs
- 1 (12-ounce) skinless, bone-in chicken breast half
- 2 cups diagonally sliced carrot
- 2 cups diagonally sliced celery
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 6 ounces uncooked medium egg noodles
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Celery leaves (optional)

Preparation

1. Combine the first 3 ingredients in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 20 minutes. Remove chicken from pan; let stand for 10 minutes. Remove chicken from bones; shred meat into bite-sized pieces. Discard bones.
2. Add carrot, celery, and onion to pan; cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Add noodles, and simmer 6 minutes. Add chicken, salt, and black pepper; cook for 2 minutes or until noodles are done. Garnish with celery leaves, if desired.

MEDICAL UPDATE

Genetics 101

THE GENETIC LINK

At least 10-15% of breast and ovarian cancers are directly related to the genes we inherit. This year alone, more than 25,000 women will be diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer due to mutations in one of several genes.

Learning more about the genetic links to breast and ovarian cancer empowers you to make better, more informed decisions about your health than women a generation ago could. Understanding your family health history helps you share more complete information with your health care provider. And understanding just a little about genes and cancer helps you understand the magnitude of your baseline lifetime risk.

WHAT IS A GENE MUTATION?

A mutation is a permanent alteration in a gene that makes one of your genes different from the same gene in most other people. Some mutations affect a single tiny bit of DNA, but others span multiple genes. What's most important to understand is that a mutation can impact your health in a lot of different ways. While, not all mutations are harmful, a gene that no longer makes a protein the body needs combined with other factors can lead to diseases like breast or ovarian cancer.

Mutations come in two variations: inherited and acquired. Inherited mutations are passed on from a parent and they're present in virtually all your cells from day one. Inherited mutations are why it's so important to understand your family history – inheriting a mutation linked to breast and ovarian cancer means you are at much higher risk for developing the disease in the future.

Mutations that occur because of overexposure to the sun or something going haywire during cell division are called acquired mutations. They can still lead to higher risks for disease, but they're not a predictable part of your family tree – you can't inherit them or pass them on.

As you take charge of your health, finding out about any inherited mutations that run in your family is one of the most proactive things you can do.

WHAT ARE GENES?

Genes are the bits of DNA that give our cells their marching orders. They make up who we are at our most basic cellular level. And the billions of cells we're born with play an incredibly important role in our health.

When it comes to our bodies, genes run the show, telling our cells how to create the various proteins that keep us going. It's a huge job, one that requires all our 20,000 to 25,000 genes working in harmony to give our bodies the orders that help keep us healthy.

We inherit each of our genes directly from our parents – two copies of every gene, one passed on from each of our parents. Most genes are exactly the same from person to person, but a small fraction – less than 1 percent of those thousands of genes – have slight differences. It might not sound like much, but it's those small DNA differences that give each of us (unless you're an identical twin) our unique set of physical features.

HOW DO GENES WORK?

Scientists are still decoding all the things that happen in our cells. At their most basic level, though, genes tell our bodies how to make specific molecules called proteins that, in turn, help define our physical traits, things like eye and hair color – and also our hidden hormones and enzymes.

Proteins – large and complex and found in every one of our cells – work incredibly hard, regulating most of what goes on in our cells and playing a critical role in our tissue and organs. For starters, proteins act as antibodies, fighting off viruses and bacteria. They direct the chemical reactions in our cells. They act like messengers, transmitting signals between cells, tissues and organs. They even provide the structure and support for our cells that, on a larger scale, give us the ability to move.

Upcoming Events

Knitting Group
Salisbury Office
Jan. 4th, 6:30 pm

Pink Ribbon BINGO
Salisbury Moose Lodge
March 9th, 5 pm

WICOMICO COUNTY CHAPTER NEWS

1320 BELMONT AVENUE, SUITE 402
SALISBURY, MARYLAND 21804
410-548-7880

WICOMICO@WOMENSUPPORTINGWOMEN.ORG

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY, 9:00 - 4:00

FUN FACT:

In Sicily lasagna is served on New Year's Day, because any other noodle served is said to bring bad luck. It is also said that, lobster is a bad idea because they move backwards and could therefore lead to setbacks. Chicken is also discouraged because the bird scratches backwards, which could cause regret or dwelling on the past. Another theory warns against eating any winged fowl because good luck could fly away.



I know that many of you are very excited to put 2016 behind us and start fresh in 2017 and so are we! Leave anything negative in the past where it belongs and look forward with a positive attitude, an open mind and a smiling heart.

Two things we are continuously blessed with are the dedication and support of those around us and in our community. We would like to thank our board members, staff, volunteers and the businesses who help make us who we are and enable us to continue our mission. We are truly blessed and look forward to an even bigger and better 2017 with all of your continued help.

Pictured above l-r: Board members, Cindy Feist, Billy Sarbanes, Judy Herman, Penny Bradford, Cathy Townsend, Colleen Brewington and Julie McKamey.



Another big thank you to **Evo** for including us in their event "Black and Bling" and to **Peninsula Plastic Surgery, Cindy and Jocelyn Feist, and FurnitureLand** for submitting a designed tree to be bid on.

Wicomico County Chapter Staff Members

Cindy Feist
Executive Director

Emily Rantz
PR & Marketing Director

Natassia Feather
Office Manager

Sue Revelle
Mentoring Coordinator/Co-Founder

Mentoring Minute

I hope you all had a great holiday by enjoying traditions, good food, and valuable sharing with your families. Now it is time to start a new year with better nutritional choices to increase your immune system, maintain your weight, and keep yourself in good health. Please give me a call and we can discuss your individual needs. Take a look below as one-on-one will start soon and run from January – May.

CALL THE OFFICE TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT LASTING ONE HOUR ON MON., TUES., OR WED.

410-548-7880. IT WILL BE TAYLORED TO YOUR NEEDS

Funding for this program is provided by a grant from MAERDAF.

Sue Revelle - Mentoring Coordinator



Amy Schine from WinAway Farm presents a check in the amount of \$4711.00 to Emily and Cindy from their annual Dressage Horse Shore.

Ericka Iman presents \$1000.00 raised from her LuLaRoe fundraiser held at EVO in October.



The Salisbury Fire Department Local 4246 presents a check to WSW board member, Karri Todd, at a City Council meeting totaling \$1660.00 from their annual "pink t-shirt fundraiser".

Delmar Middle and High School raised a total of \$3276.00 at their annual Pink Field Hockey Game.



Tall Pines Harbor Campground held its annual "Whinnies for Ninnies" horse ride, raising a total of \$3,531.00 even though the trail ride was cancelled due to rain.

Robin Brasure of Bryan & Brittingham raised \$1500.00 during their annual "Breast Cancer Awareness Day" in October.





Bill Dowell from USSSA presents a donation of \$2500.00 to Cindy and Emily from the "Save Second Base" softball tournament that was held in October.

Gateway Subaru of Delmar, MD presents \$2180.00 raised in October during their "Walk for Health" event which benefitted WSW.



Pocomoke Elks Lodge No. 1624 presents a donation in the amount of \$1400.00.

DONOR THANKS

Individual

Roberta Winters
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Civic

Pocomoke Elks Lodge
Delmar Middle and Senior High
USSSA East

In Honor Of:

I'm opening a gym called "Resolutions." For the first two weeks it will have exercise equipment, then convert to a bar with yoga pants as the dress code.

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Joke of the Month

Dear Lord,

So far this year I've done well.

I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper, I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on I'm probably going to need a lot more help.

Amen



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1320 Belmont Avenue ♥ Suite 402
Salisbury, MD 21804

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Please contact the office if you are not reading
or if you no longer wish to receive our
newsletter. Thank you.

410-548-7880 or

Tassia@womensupportingwomen.org

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