April 2022, Issue 13

Dallas YACS-A-LOT

Newsletter

Issue number 13 of this newsletter. Good thing I'm not supernatural. Besides, the next Friday the 13th falls next month. Unless the bad luck associated with 13 is like Beetlejuice, wherein three mentions sparks it. Which brings up the question of who does this luck affect: the writer or the reader? Can there be bad luck on AYA Week? Something to ponder as you read this.

Anyway, this month we're talking about asking for help. Because we're cancer patients and if you've never needed help, I'm calling your bluff. You've joined a support group, which is, by definition, made for people who need some form of assistance. It is difficult, though, admitting that you need help, regardless of why you need it.

Even with the slow dismantling of toxic dogmas (e.g. taking on something difficult alone equals strength), it's difficult to shed ideas we grew up with. It's been said many times before, but it always bears repeating: asking for help is itself a sign of strength. Knowing that the weight of cancer (or anything for that matter) has the potential to shatter your mental health is of critical importance in every cancer patient's journey. Be it asking for rides to and from treatment, asking if it's okay to vent to someone—I do want to point out that sometimes people aren't in a space to handle this, and that's okay; so long as both sides respect each other, nothing is lost by simply asking—, or admitting that you're struggling to breathe when it feels like oxygen is becoming scarce, these reasons are why this group exists.

These sentiments still apply post-treatment. For me, it's admitting that I've been spreading myself thin lately and asking for help when I need it. It's asking my doctor for a note to take that mental health day. It's asking for help with the newsletter every so often. I've had to
acknowledge the changes I've gone through with cancer. The Sam that exists post-surgeries, post-radiation, and post-chemo can't handle the same weight that he could pre-cancer. And that's okay. I've gained a depth of empathy through the journey as a trade-off. If I convince myself otherwise, which I am want to do, I have a therapist to help me put things into perspective. Yet another reason I advocate that everyone should have a therapist.

Enough ramblings from me. This has been your monthly insight into and from the mind of Samuel Snow. Onto the news, including the happenings of AYA Week.

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**DALLAS YACS CALENDAR**

**April 2nd, Saturday, 3:00 pm** — Equine Assisted Learning Experience

**April 5th, Tuesday, 6:30 pm** — Life on Pause Podcast Meet-and-Greet

**April 6th, Wednesday, 6:00 pm** — A Night at the Arboretum

**April 19th, Tuesday, 6:30 pm** — Life on Pause Podcast Recording

**April 23rd, Saturday, 9:00 am** — Hike & Picnic w/ Jay & Maritza, Cedar Ridge Preserve

**April 26th, Tuesday, 7:00 pm** — April Virtual Support Group
HIKE WITH JAY & MARITZA!

APRIL 23, 2022
LOCATION: CEDAR RIDGE PRESERVE
Time: 9:00 AM
SEND IT FOUNDATION
www.senditfoundation.org | info@senditfoundation.org | senditfoundation
The Send It Foundation is hosting a hike on April 23rd from 9am-noon with a picnic included afterward. Two of our committee members, Jay & Maritza, will be leading this hike. The address for this hike is 7171 Mountain Creek Pkwy, Dallas, TX 75249. If you're interested in attending or would like some more information, please email caroline@senditfoundation.org.

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**ALEX'S MEDITATION MOMENT**

We kick off April by celebrating Adolescent and Young Adult Awareness Week. For our program, this has become a special week during which we acknowledge the unique challenges that young adult cancer survivors face each day and focus on how the helping community we’ve built can be the wings to lift you up and carry you through those challenges.

I want to introduce this month’s meditation by continuing the image of supportive wings. The purpose of meditation is to bring an awareness to our mind and body as if we were an observer of what is happening in the given moment. Imagine that awareness as a beautiful bird with two wings—mindfulness and heartfulness. Mindfulness calls us to stay in the present moment with a nonjudgmental approach, inviting curiosity, patience, and care. Heartfulness asks us to turn toward ourselves with loving presence and to respond in ways that align with our values. This awakens purpose, warmth, and energy.

When we are stressed, fearful of failing, confused, or lonely, we can get tangled in self-doubt and even start to believe painful stories we tell ourselves. We react by curling up our wings and can’t fly at a time when we need to access healing the most. We can work to unfurl those wings by making room for vulnerability during painful times and responding with courage to love ourselves the same way we bring love to others. We can hold ourselves in compassion, just as hold each other in generous compassion during our support groups and activities.

The RAIN meditation outlines steps to lean into this practice, and by
revisiting the steps again and again, we build trust in ourselves and resiliency to keep working to fly fully.

Sitting quietly, close your eyes and take a few full breaths. Bring to mind a current situation in which you feel stuck, one that elicits a difficult reaction, such as anger or fear, shame or hopelessness. It may be a conflict with a family member, a chronic illness, a perceived failure at work, a conversation you now regret. Take some moments to enter the experience—visualizing the scene or situation, remembering the words spoken, sensing the most distressing moments.

**R—Recognize What Is Happening**

As you reflect on the situation, ask yourself, “What is happening inside me right now?” What sensations are you most aware of? What emotions? Is your mind filled with churning thoughts? Take a moment to become aware of whatever is predominant, or the overall emotional tone of the situation.

**A—Allow Life to Be Just as It Is**

Send a message to your heart to “let be” this entire experience. Find in yourself the willingness to pause and accept that in these moments, “what is...is.” You can experiment with mentally whispering words like “yes,” “I consent,” or “let be.” You might find yourself saying yes to a huge inner “no,” to a body and mind painfully contracted in resistance. You might be saying yes to the part of you that is saying, “I hate this!” That’s a natural part of the process. At this point in RAIN, you are simply noticing what is true and intending not to judge, push away, or control anything you find.

**I—Investigate with a Gentle, Curious Attention**

Bring an interested and kind attention to your experience. Some of the following questions may be helpful. Feel free to experiment with them, varying the sequence and content.

What is the worst part of this; what most wants my attention?
What is the most difficult/painful thing I am believing?

What emotions does this bring up (fear, anger, grief)?

Where in my body do I feel this strongest?

When I assume the facial expression and body posture that best reflect these feelings and emotions, what do I notice?

Are these feelings familiar, something I've experienced earlier in my life?

If the most vulnerable, hurting part of me could communicate, what would it express (words, feelings, images)?

How does this part want me to be with it?

What does this part most need (from me or from some larger source of love and wisdom)?

“Investigate” can feel like an invitation to fire up their cognitive skills—an analyzing the situation or themselves, identifying the many possible roots of their suffering. While mental exploration may enhance our understanding, opening to our embodied experience is the gateway to healing and freedom. Instead of thinking about what’s going on, keep bringing your attention to your body, directly contacting the felt sense and sensations of your most vulnerable place. Once you are fully present, listen for what this place truly needs to begin healing.

N—Nurture with Loving Presence

As you sense what is needed, what is your natural response? Calling on the most wise and compassionate part of your being, you might offer yourself a loving message or send a tender embrace inward. You might gently place your hand on your heart. You might visualize a young part of you surrounded in soft, luminous light. You might imagine someone you trust—a parent or pet, a teacher or spiritual figure—holding you with love. Feel free to experiment with ways of befriending your inner life—whether through words or touch, images
or energy. Discover what best allows you to feel nurturing, what best allows the part of you that is most vulnerable to feel loved, seen, and/or safe. Spend as much time as you need, offering care inwardly and letting it be received.

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**MERCH UPDATE**

We've got more merchandise coming soon. I'm hearing that, in our near future, we're going to have Fitness Fridays (which should be familiar if you've been with us for long enough), and our apparel will be available to order before that. The suspense just needs to be built up first.

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**We are here for you!**

Help us recognize your milestones! Do you have an appointment, scan, or cancer-versary coming up? Let us know so we can send you a note of support! Just follow the link below.

Share your milestone!

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**Knowing The Group! Feat. Jamie Matthews**
This is Jamie Matthews. Who, as you will soon see, provides some great comedy to our group. She was diagnosed with a tumor inside her spinal cord (pilocytic astrocytoma at t7-t8 inside cord) at 21. Here's what she had to share:

"The first thing about me is that I love animals. I have worked with exotic pets since I was 13. I have a bearded dragon named Dobby, and as many of you know he likes to join the group zoom calls! My dream is to have my own exotic pet rescue and outreach program, something I can’t wait to pursue.

"I love doing research, despite how hard it has been lately. Since my diagnosis and symptoms a few months before, I have had a lot of trouble doing the things I love, like research about new species. My stamina is low, and some days I can’t even take care of my own pets. I would love nothing more than to get back to my “old life” working in retail, but after 2 surgeries and minimal feeling in my right leg and foot, retail is officially out. All of the meds I’m on post-surgery for pain
make it even harder to go to school, study, or work.

"I would love it if you guys followed my Instagram @humorandatumor where I post about my journey and work on staying positive through this mess! (:"

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**I need more submissions!**

If you'd like to be featured in a future newsletter—and let's face the facts, if you're reading this, we want to feature you—then send us an email through [THIS LINK](#), bolded so you won't miss it.

As we receive your responses, they're added to our supply and we pull one per month for the newsletter.

**Have Some Feedback?**

If you have anything you'd like us to know that isn't covered in the survey or milestone link, tell us [here](#).

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**JAMIE'S JOKE JOINT**

What's this, you ask? A new person for our monthly comedic catharsis? Well, Roberto's busy tending to his spectacular mane of hair (inspired by *Ted Lasso*'s Danny Rojas, fun fact), so Jamie has kindly stepped up to provide the humor for us.

And now for Jamie's debut joke:

A snail goes to buy a car. The salesman is surprised when the snail picks out a fast, expensive sports car. He's even more surprised when the snail requires that a big red "S" be painted on both sides.
“Why would you want such a thing?” asked the salesman.
The snail replied, "I want people to say, 'Look at that S car go!"

A WILD RECIPE APPEARED!
(Thanks to Michelle Hamilton, an Oncology Dietitian with UTSW)

The cooking classes we've been hosting in the support group have been extremely successful. I highly recommend trying to grab a spot should we host anymore in the future. It's proof that taste does not need to be sacrificed for health.

Michelle sent this recipe our way, and if the muffins are anything like what has been made in the classes, I'm sure they will be delicious. Here's what our dietitian sent verbatim:

"Superhero Muffins – Run Fast. Eat Slow. (runfasteatslow.com) This is a healthy, nutritious option for an on-the-go breakfast. I freeze the leftovers and just reheat them in the microwave for 30-45 seconds. There are so many variations and modifications, so it can fit just about any diet! I also love that it sneaks in some vegetables with the carrots and zucchini."

PROMPT OF THE MONTH

You team up with a snail and a muffin to compete in a race. That's it. That's your prompt. Do with it as you please.

If you'd like your response featured in next month's newsletter, simply include it in an email to the group's email, dallasyacs@gmail.com.
That’s it! You’ve reached the end of our newsletter. Until next time...

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