This month, Taylor Roth opens the newsletter with fire and laundry detergent.

I like to listen to the radio when I make breakfast; something about Korva Coleman reading headlines just wakes me up I guess. Anyway, they had a firefighter talking about the Nova Scotia fires. He said that fire-fighting practices from the 80s and 90s actually made the problem worse.

Back in the day, the dominant approach to fighting wildfires was essentially zero-tolerance; all fires were immediately extinguished, regardless of size or danger. This may seem like a sensible approach. Fire is destructive and should never be allowed to burn. However, not allowing small fires to burn means that kindling or whatever in forests isn’t removed, and big ugly fires develop with much more fury and destruction.

I think this has parallels in my life, as well as the lives of so many cancer survivors. We don’t allow ourselves to feel any negative emotion because ANGER/SADNESS ARE ALWAYS BAD. As a result, when we do allow ourselves to feel uncomfortable feelings, these feelings can overwhelm or even paralyze us. Like in my own life, today I had a meltdown because I couldn’t reach laundry detergent from my chair. Suddenly, I was crying about my inability to walk, my friends with cancer, and my cat throwing up on the rug. Even in the moment, I was fully aware that my reaction was waaaay out of proportion to the situation. But I couldn’t help it. I realized I’d been ignoring my small fires, only to have everything come up in a massive conflagration.

The point is: it’s okay to feel negative sometimes, and maybe even good for us. I have no idea what the “right balance” of fire is, but I do know it can’t be ignored.
Hello Friends! Have you ever heard of the phrase, “transformative power of adventure?” No? Well, let me tell you about First Descents (FD). First Descents is a nonprofit organization with a mission that “provides life-changing outdoor adventures for young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions.”

In June, I had the great fortune of being selected to participate in a FD adventure of whitewater kayaking in Hood River, OR. For six blissful and utopian days, I was surrounded by breathtaking mountains, cool weather, and hands down the most delicious professional chef prepared meals I’ve ever had. Here’s a link to the FD e-book cookbook to take a peek of the yummy meals. The Wi-Fi in the mountains was spotty which was excellent because I was able to truly disconnect. It was such a wonderful gift that allowed me to be present and connect with 14 wonderful YACS. My only goal for the whole week was to stay in my kayak upright. Spoiler alert: I wiped out on a class II+ rapid.

I had an epic time kayaking down the magnificent and wild Klickitat River. It was my first time ever attempting kayaking! The FD guides along with the outfitters, Wet Planet, were absolutely amazing and possessed the vastest amount of patience I’ve seen. The outfitters provided all the gear we needed for the week. Even with all the preparedness, y’all, I was pure chaos! I kept spinning in circles as if I was performing a solo in Swan Lake and I loved every minute of it. FD carefully plans every detail of these adventures with so much thoughtfulness that they also organized to have a photographer join us on the river and captured the adventure.

The best part about FD adventure is that the trip is completely free!
The only cost you may incur would be the transportation to and from the adventure location. The Rutledge Foundation in conjunction with First Descents have scholarships opportunities available that you may be eligible for to help ease this cost. These amazing trips are also offered to oncology healthcare workers and 1 of your caregivers. If kayaking is not your thing, FD has other adventure offerings like rock climbing and surfing. Connect with Alex if you would like more information on how to sign up for a First Descents adventure.

There was so much discovery for me being on the river. It brought forth the realization that as much as I would LOVE to be in control in my day to day, the vastness of the river quickly humbled me to let me know that I had no control. This was the very same scenario I faced during my cancer journey and that made me doubt myself. The moment I accepted not having control and trusted my own abilities to kayak. I began to really appreciate the beautiful scenery. I unclenched my jaw and belted out a glorious Taylor Swift medley with my rowdy bunch crew. We have all faced a significant life challenge at such a young age and we have all gotten back in our kayaks and kept paddling forward.
Call For More Newsletter Committee
**Members**

We need one to two more members to help put this growing and changing publication together. The committee is still in its infancy and finding its feet. We're looking for members that can stick around long-term. Quite simply, the more people we have, the simpler it becomes to put the newsletter together. Ideally, you'd have one section a month and/or come up with some new ideas.

If interested, email us [here](#).

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**Dallas YACS Calendar**

- **Saturday, August 19:** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
  Pickle Ball at Chicken N Pickle

- **Tuesday, August 29:** 6 - 7 p.m.  
  YACS Yoga at the Cancer Center

- **Tuesday, August 29:** 7 - 8:30 p.m.  
  Support Group In-Person

- **Wednesday, August 30:** 7 - 8:30 p.m.  
  Support Group on Zoom

- **Saturday, September 23:** 7:30 p.m.  
  YACS Night at the FC Dallas Game! Join us for a fun night at Toyota Stadium cheering on our MLS home team from the all-you-can-eat seats. Tickets are limited.
Please sign up ASAP. You are welcome to bring a guest.

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**We Want to Support Your Partner, Too**

We encourage your spouses and partners to get connected with us by submitting their contact information on our [YACS Spouses and Partners Contact Form](#).

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**Knowing the Group! Featuring Fernando Ibarra**
Fernando Ibarra was diagnosed with High Grade Bladder Cancer in 2020. The diagnosis occurred as COVID-19 had reared its ugly head across the world. He had COVID four times during treatment, which really took a toll on his mental health. But, he says it has allowed him to live his life to the full extent. He takes risks, and puts himself outside of comfortable situations.
His cancer diagnosis has taught him to enjoy the good things, and he always tries to keep a positive outlook on things.

Fernando is 24 years old and is brand new to Dallas. We look forward to getting to know him at social events, and support group meetings. Welcome to Dallas, Fernando!

**We need more submissions!**

We are expanding the Get to Know the Group section and need more submissions! We want to know about you, your partner/spouse, and even your steadfast pets who are a big part of your support team. Complete the [survey](#) to be featured in future newsletters.

**What Dallas YACS Means to Me:**
**Featuring Brandie Meyer**

*In a special bonus section of "Get to Know the Group" Brandie Meyer reflects on what the Dallas YACS means to her. This group is important to everyone in*
their own special way. Thank you, Brandie, for being willing to share your thoughts on Dallas YACS.

During recent radiation treatments, I have had time (728 minutes to be exact) to reflect on a variety of things. One of those has been the significance of this group. We often share the meaning to each of us as individuals, but lying on that table I thought about the collective community.

Community and support have a meaning I do not think we have explicitly addressed as a group (or I missed it). I believe a community can carry things when individuals cannot. On days when an individual doesn't have the self-compassion, strength, courage, or hope required for their unique journey, the community can bring those to carry the individual. I have experienced something similar in my spiritual community: during times when my faith was rocky, the faith of others kept me moving until my own returned.

As a group, we can hold the space and support for each other, even when we can’t fully understand individual circumstances. As Alex reminds us, we don’t need to compare our experiences to be fully present and provide the grace and collective support I hold dear in this community. I am grateful to each of you for this. I hope when each of us stumbles, which we will, we can let ourselves be carried by this powerful chosen family.

Taylor's Comedic Turf

How do cats in Texas greet each other?

Find out at the end of the newsletter...

Alex's Meditation Moment
I’ve been in the habit of nostalgically rereading our past newsletters, and I am struck by how much we’ve been through the last two plus years. This publication is a record of our ability to go through pain and overwhelm and choose to triumph. Each month, there’s a new feature from one of you highlighting how you’ve employed the power of choice to enhance your life in the unimaginably toughest of times. Photos from our events capture your choice to engage in this supportive community, and even Taylor’s joke corner invites a choice to laugh. Regardless of what we experience throughout our lifetime, we are only as broken and damaged as we choose to be. Yes, we can and will be flooded by emotions. Yes, we can and need to give into darkness at times. AND we always have another chance to move into the light. We always have another choice. We, and we alone, get to decide whether to stay defeated by the things that overwhelm our ability to cope or to make choices based on how we want to feel.

In June of 2021, Sam opened the newsletter with a quote from his favorite author, John Steinbeck, in East of Eden: "But the Hebrew word, the word timshel- 'Thou mayest'- that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. For if ‘Thou mayest’-it is also true that ‘Thou mayest not.’ Don’t you see?” My favorite line of this book follows soon after and reads, “But I have a new love for the glittering instrument, the human soul. It is a lovely and unique thing in the universe. It is always attacked and never destroyed- because ‘thou mayest.'"

It turns out life- the longest distance between birth and death- is a pretty resilient thing. We just have to let it be. Each day, each hour, each minute, we are blessed with new opportunities to change and to chase our dreams, and what could be more beautiful than that? This month, in lieu of a script, I bring you choices you can make to keep mindfulness going every day.

- Bring awareness to your breath and body when you wake up in the morning, take a few conscious breaths and practice half-smiling before getting out of bed.
- From time to time during the day, bring awareness to your body posture, what your body is doing and how you make transitions between body movements.
- Bring awareness to your breathing at various times of the day. Choose to
take a few conscious breaths, following the breath all the way in and all the way out.

- Use natural mindfulness triggers during the day to bring your attention back to the present moment: when your phone buzzes, when you pass through doorways, when you stop at traffic lights, when a sound comes into your awareness. Use these moments to take a breath and to come into body sensation, feeling your feet on the ground.

- When you eat or drink, bring awareness to the process of stopping, tasting, sensing and nourishing yourself.

- Choose to eat one or two lunches per week in silence. Use this time to eat slowly and be with yourself. Bring awareness to body sensations as you go about your day, feeling the touch of air on your skin, the parts of the body in contact with the ground, the movement of your limbs as you walk.

- Notice when you are rushing or hurrying. Bring awareness to your state of mind, emotions, and body sensations in these moments. Notice if tension is arising. See if there is a possibility of choosing a different stance. Whenever possible, just do one thing at a time. Enjoy the present moment!

- When you find yourself waiting or standing in life for something, use these moments as valuable opportunities to stop and tune into your experience. If you are feeling impatient in these moments, bring awareness to that.

- Bring awareness to the arising of tension in your body during the day, or check periodically for tension in your most vulnerable spots. Use these as barometers to your stress levels and if possible, breathe into these spots, and ease the tension by letting it go.

- Continue to choose daily activities that you can conduct consciously with mindful attention: brushing your teeth, doing the washing up, getting dressed. Pay full attention to what you are doing and when the mind wanders bring it back.

- Bring awareness to patterns of communication: talking and listening as well as periods of silence and notice your states of mind during these activities.

- Try to be more present during the moments of your life: feeling the breeze on your skin as you walk, noticing the small flower that is growing out of the crack in the wall, the call of the wild geese flying overhead as they start their long journey home.

- Pay attention to your walk to the car – breathe in the air, feel the cold or
Can you open to and accept these environmental conditions and body sensations rather than resisting them? Listen to the sounds. Can you walk without feeling rushed? What happens when you slow down? While your car is warming up, sit quietly and consciously make the transition from work to home – take a moment to simply be – enjoy it for a moment.

While driving, notice if you are rushing. What does it feel like? What could you do about it?

Remember you’ve got more control than you might imagine.

Choose to drive without music/podcasts/etc and be with yourself.

When you pull into the driveway of your home, take a minute to orient yourself to being with your family and entering your home.

Practice tuning your mind toward a more positive frame: reflect on everything you feel grateful for today; reflect upon the positive moments and what has gone well.

At the end of the workday, try retracing today’s activities acknowledging, and congratulating yourself for what you’ve accomplished and then make a list for tomorrow. You’ve done enough for today!

Before falling asleep at night, bring awareness to your breathing and your body sensations for at least five whole breaths, all the way in and all the way out.

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**Prompt of the Month**

Explore the concept of acceptance and how it has influenced your cancer experience. Reflect on the things you have accepted and what you are still working on accepting. How has this impacted your sense of peace and well-being?

If you’d like your response featured in next month’s newsletter, simply include it in an email to the group at dallasyacsalot@gmail.com.
"Meowdy!"

Feedback?

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

That's it! You've reached the end of our newsletter. Until next time...