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Letter from the Editors

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A Letter From The Editors

Throughout this year, Woman to Woman has celebrated the **past**, **present**, and **future** of our program. To mark our 20th-anniversary milestone, you've helped us look back on our inspiring beginnings and show gratitude for where we are right now.

Now, you're helping us build a stronger future. We asked women to share their wisdom and hopes for the next 20 years of Woman to Woman. We're so pleased to share "time capsule" entries from patients, volunteers and staff.

You'll see quotes from our community throughout the newsletter, and a special Q&A session spotlighting a wide range of responses in the "roundtable" at the end.

Thanks to new research and technology, there is a bright future ahead for patients with gynecologic and ovarian cancers. In a special feature, we recognize Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month and explore advancements that are radically improving treatment options for the next generation of patients with Dr. Stephanie Blank.

We can't wait for the year ahead, because we get to share it with you – our dazzling, intelligent, strong and generous readers. You won't want to miss what we have in store for 2024 and beyond. Happy reading.

- Jilian Levinson and Rachel Justus, Woman to Woman Program Managers



"Love your body in all of its imperfections. It will live through one of the most life-affecting transformations and you will appreciate the miracle that it is."

- Tricia Clarke

Treating the Whole Patient: A Conversation with Dr. Tamara Kalir

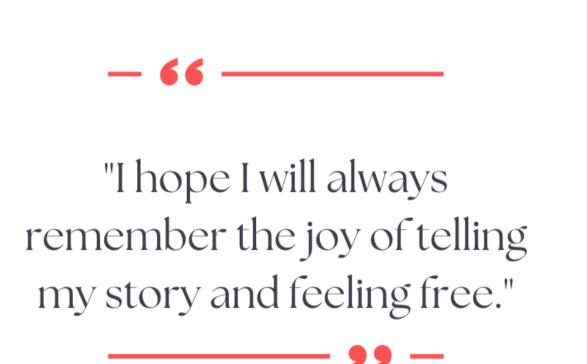
Twenty years ago, Dr. Tamara Kalir, now the Director of the Division of Gynecologic Pathology at Mount Sinai, was a newly appointed course director. When she needed to identify patients who may be willing to share their stories with students in an OB/GYN

pathophysiology course, she turned to Woman to Woman. "It turned out to be one of the most memorable things I have ever done," she said. Right away, everyone Dr. Kalir spoke to was enthusiastic about the idea of promoting cancer awareness. For the class's 50-minute session, each volunteer would share a brief talk on an aspect of her experience as a patient and a cancer survivor. The students rated the session as a course highlight, and it's continued ever since. "For students, getting to hear the 'human' side of the cancer



journey after their informational lecture, makes this topic more meaningful and memorable, and inspires them in their journey to becoming caring physicians," Dr. Kalir explained. According to Dr. Kalir, this human element of medical care is a crucial part of preserving patients' inner peace and happiness. "Currently, the majority of our practice is not 'wholistic' healthcare," Dr. Kalir said. Her "whole patient" mindset is aligned with much of Woman to Woman's programming, which educates patients on everything from **nutrition** to **flower arranging** to **oral wellness**. Approaching health with a "mind, body and soul" perspective takes time, but it's worth it.

Woman to Woman has served patients and survivors from all walks of life. And with every year, Dr. Kalir said, the network of support grows stronger. "Until cancer is eradicated, the medical community will continue to need the specific compassionate caring that only someone who has 'walked the walk,' can give," she said. "I hope that Woman to Woman will continue to go strong and expand its horizons such that all people with gynecologic cancers can have the kind of support that only Woman to Woman can give."



– Amanda Fitzpatrick

Why I Give Back A conversation with Marie Sanford and Audrey Carlson



Dr. Marie Sanford was no stranger to Mount Sinai when she was diagnosed with cancer at age 34. She had spent plenty of time at the hospital during medical school and her residency. But then, she said, she was "sitting in the bed, instead of standing next to it." "There's a unique perspective to be on both sides of the fence," Marie said. Going through cancer treatments was overwhelming,

even though Marie had a better sense of what was going on than many of her fellow patients. When Marie was diagnosed, her

perspective was unique. She didn't know many other patients who were young women with lots of questions about their future fertility, or members of the LGBTQ community, or navigating a diagnosis while also being a medical professional.

Marie became involved with Woman to Woman when she was invited to speak to students in Dr. Kalir's gynecologic pathology class. "I used to start by saying, 'Years ago, I was sitting where you guys were sitting,' because I used to take classes in that same room," she recalled. Years later, Marie still gives her time and expertise, whether it's in a classroom or Woman to Woman's LGBTQ support group, in case anyone needs to speak with someone with her unique background. "It's important, on an individual level, to be able to make those connections," she said.

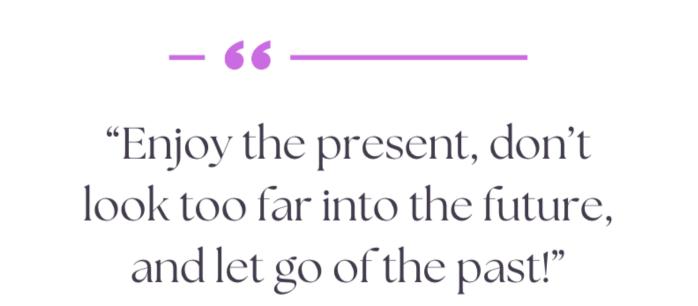
Audrey Carlson is one of the newest members of the Woman to Woman community. "I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer last January, had my surgery, and finished up with my last chemo on April first of this year," she said. The first thing she did after being given the all-clear: begin volunteering as a mentor. "I was thrown into a world that I didn't expect. Nobody does," Audrey said.



Audrey only worried until she met her mentor,

Bonni Braverman. Then, Audrey said, she knew everything would be okay, even as she was waiting to learn more about her diagnosis. "Bonni was lovely, she listened, and she walked me through what to expect," Audrey remembered. "I didn't know anyone who had gone through ovarian cancer until I encountered Woman to Woman, and it put my mind at ease." She was especially comforted by the immediate sense of community she felt. "The operative words are, 'You never feel alone," she said.

Right away, Audrey was able to identify ways she could give back to Woman to Woman, citing her background with the Hartford Happiness Club, and her expertise in optimism and positive psychology as unique contributions. "Not everyone has a level of optimism, or faith, or trust that they're really going to be okay," she said. That's why she was so eager to be a mentor, and remind newly-diagnosed patients that cancer, while scary, was just one facet of their lives. "There's a whole lot more to women beyond their diagnosis," she said.





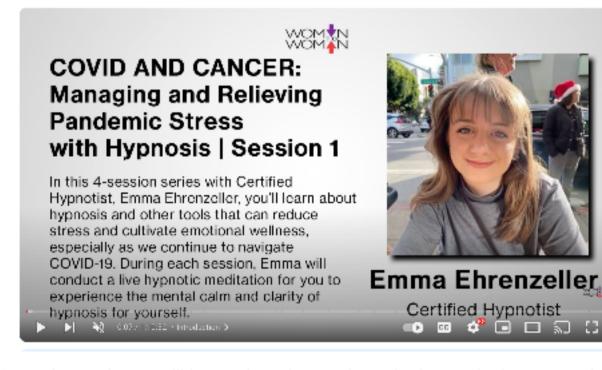
Don't Miss It: Our Events Calendar

Our monthly events calendar is now online, making it easier than ever to attend a virtual class, join a support group or book club, and get involved with our community. Join us today in a community journey of learning, healing, celebration, and connection.

Bookmark our calendar and stay up-to-date on Woman to Woman events.

Must-See TV Highlights From Our Video Library

We're proud to report that during the last two years, our video library has grown to encompass over 50 videos. That's a lot of content to choose from, so today, we're sharing three "must-see" titles. These special selections will educate and empower, whether you're a longtime fan of the video library or looking for somewhere to get started.



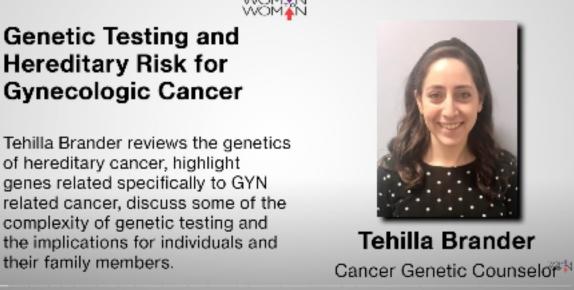
In this 4-session series, you'll learn about hypnosis and other tools that can reduce stress and cultivate emotional wellness. Watch here.



We're proud to highlight some of the Spanish-language content in our video library. Sabrina Oliveros gives an overview of cervical cancer (Educación Sobre El Cáncer de Cuello Uterion) in this video, and Maria Schiavone, MD, discusses both cervical and uterine cancer (Cáncer De Utero y Cuello Uterino) in this video.

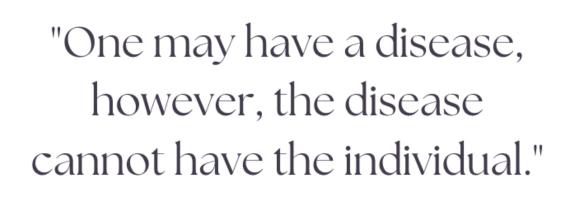
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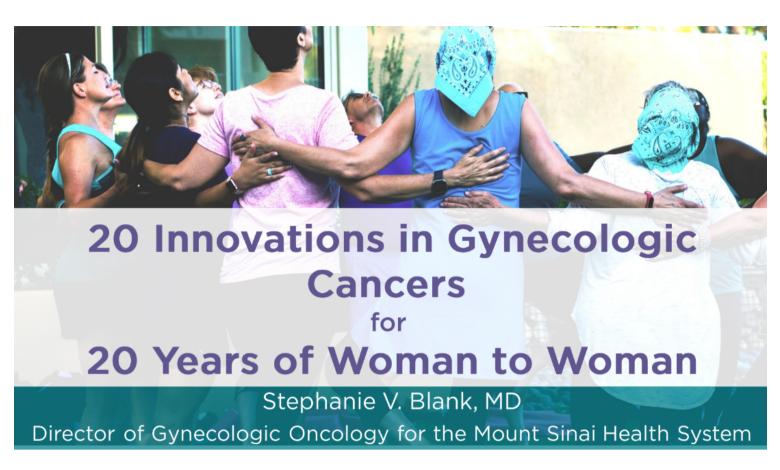
Tehilla Brander discusses the genetics of hereditary cancer, genes specific to GYN-related cancer, and the complexity of genetic testing in this session. Watch now.

The video library is made possible by a generous donor. If you would like to support Woman to Woman's resources, services and programs for future patients, please click here.



– Denee J Taylor

20 Innovations in 20 Years A conversation with Dr. Stephanie Blank



Throughout Woman to Woman's history, our incredible community has put in daily efforts to improve the care experience of patients with gynecologic cancer. We are immensely grateful for all the hardworking members of the medical community who are doing the same.

Dr. Stephanie Blank, Director of Gynecology Oncology for the Mount Sinai Health System, told us that she has admired the Woman to Woman program since she encountered it early in her career. "I first learned about Woman to Woman about 20 years ago, when I was first starting out," she said. At that time, Woman to Woman was centralized in one Mount Sinai location.

When Dr. Blank took part in the opening of a new clinical site downtown, she knew Woman to Woman had to come too. "It was such an amazing program, and having Woman to Woman downtown was a non-negotiable for me," she remembered. From the beginning,

she said, Woman to Woman's volunteers have worked hard to ensure patients get the most out of the program. "It's not something where people say, 'Sure, I'll just show up," Dr Blank emphasized. She pointed at the annual reunions and regular support groups as examples of the careful planning that is always happening behind the scenes. "The investment that mentors make in their mentees, and the amount of thought that goes into the process, are truly incredible to see," she said.



Dr. Blank also commended Woman to Woman for being a strong source of patient advocacy. Especially as care options have become more diverse over the years, patients have relied on resources like Woman to Woman to voice their wants and needs during a treatment journey. "A person with cancer should be involved in their treatment decisionmaking," Dr. Blank said. It's really important that both parties are determined in what treatment is next. And I think Woman to Woman can really help a lot with that." Dr. Blank spoke to us about some of the most important leaps forward from the past 20 years in gynecologic care. She shared a list of 20 wonderful innovations to be grateful for, which will set the tone for the decades to come. "The treatment of gynecologic cancer is so different than it was 20 years ago," Dr. Blank said. "People are living so much longer, and so much better. It's a different world now."

- 1. Minimally invasive surgery
- 2. Mirvetuximab

Molecular classification of endometrial cancer

4. Antibody drug conjugates

5. Recognition of survivorship issues and quality of life as important elements of cancer care

6. Frontline maintenance olaparib providing clinically meaningful overall survival benefit for patients with BRCA mutations and ovarian cancer

7. Your physicians: gynecologic

oncologists are now majority women, and recognition of burnout as an issue 8. Improved radiation techniques

9. Immunotherapy

10. Ovarian cancer incidence and deaths falling

11. HPV vaccine and WHO global strategy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem

Genomics

13. Shared decision making

14. Tubal hypothesis of ovarian cancer,

- risk reducing-and opportunistic
- salpingectomy
- 15. Enhanced recovery after surgery 16. Fertility
- preservation/oncofertility/preimplantation diagnostics
- 17. Decreased radicality of surgery
- Adaptive clinical trial design
- 19. Plethora of FDA approvals in
- gynecologic cancers

20. Extended care team for gynecologic oncology patients including innovative, supportive programs...such as Woman to Woman!

Physicians

Survivor

Advanced practice

providers

Nurses



 Treatment summaries Survivorship care plans · Screening programs for cancer recurrence Screening for new cancers

- Seminars for survivors Rehabilitation services
- Nutritional services Psychological support & psychiatric services
- Support groups and services · Formalized referrals to experts in cardiology, pulmonary
- services, sexual dysfunction, fertility counseling Financial support services · Physical activity programs

Physical Social workers therapists Nutritionists

Genetic

We Asked, We Listened A W2W time capsule

To showcase the range of perspectives in Woman to Woman, we asked our wonderful community members three questions. After collecting our favorite answers, we're sharing them here as a "time capsule" for future generations of readers.

20 years from now, what do you most hope to remember about Woman to Woman?

"I'll remember the strong women who struggled through cancer and thrived. I hope to still be mentoring!" – Janet Gole

"I'll always remember how this organization taught us to look at ways in which we could reach out and share encouragement."

Hildred Rochester

"I hope to remember the incredible relationships forged among volunteers." - Vivian Port

What lessons about life do you wish you could share with your younger self?

"Everyone goes through this particular journey differently, although we have a common denominator." – Denee J Taylor

"It's okay to lean on others, especially those who have experienced similar issues." – Shari Brasner

"Tell your story! No one is like you. Love your journey. Have fun. Cancer is NOT a death sentence." – Amanda Fitzpatrick What would you say to a Woman to Woman community member in 2043?

"When you wake up, ask yourself, 'Do I choose to make this a bad or good day?" Bonni Braverman

"Despite what you may be facing in this moment, breathe, walk, be patient with yourself. Extend grace to yourself. Hold space for yourself." - Tricia Clarke

"Personal connections can't be bought. Strong ones are a gift." – Shari Brasner

20 Years, 20 Reasons to Give

Since 2003, Woman to Woman has given gynecologic cancer patients and survivors a sense of community, strength and hope, for today and the journey ahead. Our program is completely funded by charitable donations. With that in mind, we present 20 reasons why you should consider donating to Woman to Woman in celebration of our anniversary:

Community

1. Since 2003, our team of survivor volunteers providing peer-to-peer mentoring and emotional support has grown from five to 37.

2. Last year, membership in our community rose from 769 to 886 women.

3. In 2022, we hosted 143 virtual support groups, attracting 2,141 attendees. We now have sub-groups for young people, Latinos, LGBTQIA+ individuals, longterm

survivors, and more.

5. The Woman to Woman model is now used in hospitals and community organizations

worldwide.

6. "This is by far the most uplifting program I've ever been a part of" says one patient.

Assistance

Woman to Woman by the numbers in 2022:

7. 249 grants totaling \$63,748 dispensed to 231 women in need.

8. \$10,400 in grants awarded to help 104 women pay for groceries.

9. \$15,240 in given out in grants covering transportation expenses.

10. \$15,682 provided in mental health grants.

11. 167 "pick-me-up" gifts distributed to patients.

12. 140 massages arranged for patients and caregivers. 13. One cancer survivor, Amanda Fitzpatrick, says, "The Woman to Woman

organization is

amazing. They've gone above and beyond for me."

Hope

14. Woman to Woman's motto is "You Are Not Alone!"

15. Newly diagnosed patients meet with our survivor volunteers in person and via telephone,

text, and email.

16. Our program has sponsored 22 live and virtual reunions for patients and

survivors. 17. Our video library has dozens of informational resources and is available to patients 24/7.

18. Our Facebook page provides a space for patients and survivors to connect.

19. "Within Woman to Woman, we find predecessors who are inspirations and encouragements, and we find peers with whom we share our current experiences," says cancer survivor and volunteer Sandra Wang.

20. Program co-founder Valerie Goldfein was a visionary leader who has changed hundreds

of lives. She passed away last November. Let's take this opportunity honor her inspirational legacy!

Our program has accomplished so much over the past 20 years. With your sustained partnership, we will accomplish even more in the next 20.

> Connect with us Learn more

Email us

Make a gift

Our mailing address is: The Mount Sinai Hospital One Gustave Levy Place Box 1252 NY, NY 10029

To make a gift to Woman to Woman, please click here.

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