

Sharsheret's 3rd Annual UNSeder

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Presented by:



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Sharsheret's 3rd Annual UNSeder

Melissa Rosen:

Welcome to Sharsheret's third annual UNSeder. An inspiring time to help us prepare, help center us for the upcoming Passover holiday. For those of you who are new to Sharsheret, we have been providing telehealth services to breast and ovarian cancer communities for 20 years now. And in addition to many formal programs to help women and their families navigate different aspects of the cancer experience, our clinical social workers are available for one-on-one support. As always, our support services are 100% confidential and 100% free.

Melissa Rosen:

I'll be your moderator today. My name is Melissa Rosen and I serve as the Director of Training and Education at Sharsheret. But so many of my wonderful colleagues work to create this innovative program and are joining us today. You know, although it was the start of the pandemic that led us to create the UNSeder. The focus today, two years later, is really about celebrating Passover while living alongside cancer, whether currently or years ago. Today's program is filled with several great features and includes topics such as matzah and the art of transformation, how food can be nourishing in so many ways, how Passover traditions can inspire us during our cancer experience. We'll also hear some inspirational stories and some beautiful Passover music. So today we have chosen to focus on matzah, the good, the bad, and the unpalatable. If we're being honest, that is what it is.

Melissa Rosen:

I know, I know there are some small subset of people that actually enjoy matzah. I hear some people actually eat it year round, but for most of us, the matzah is dry. It's a dry tasteless cracker that we eat to remember the Exodus from Egypt. The thing about matzah though, is that with the addition of just a few ingredients, it can actually taste good. It transforms. It transforms from a bland, crunchy square or circle into a delicious dessert when combined with chocolate, butter and sugar. Or with a little sauce, some shredded cheese and fresh basil, it becomes a pretty darn good matzahngna. It is amazing to me what we can make from something we really don't want. I'm a vegetarian, which means that I can't just cook chicken, a potato and a green vegetable. Almost everything I eat during Passover includes matzah. I make matzahngna. I make matzakopita, which is a Greek spinach pie.

Melissa Rosen:

I make matzaroni and cheese, matzah pizza, matzah bourekas, and so much more. It isn't always easy to remember though, but we can add things to the cancer experience too. Things that might make it more palatable. I want to be clear though. I am not saying that cancer is a gift. I've heard some people say that and it simply does not resonate with me as a cancer's survivor. Cancer is not the gift. That being said, when we add other ingredients to the cancer experience, it can soften it or transform it into something little better than it is. Certainly not as good as matzah pizza or caramel matzah crack, but better than the experience of cancer without additional ingredients. When we add support from our loved ones and our friends, we're reminded of our important place in this world. When we recognize our own strength, both emotional and physical, and add that strength to our cancer experience we remember all that we are capable of.

Melissa Rosen:

When we add the innovations of healthcare, we remember how important gratitude can be, even during the most difficult of times. You may have other things, other ingredients that you've added to your own experiences. As I said, they certainly don't make cancer delicious, but they

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go a long way to make the cancer experience palatable. I hope that sharing some of my thoughts has given us a different way to think about our cancer experience. Hopefully one that will offer comfort and inspiration. Okay, now you are in for a real treat. I am so very excited to welcome Cantor Jacquie Marx, to share some musical inspiration as Passover approaches. Cantor Jacquie is the interim spiritual leader at the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge Tennessee. That's the city with a long musical tradition. She is an H-U-C-J-I-R ordained cancer, excuse me, Cantor.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

Both.

Melissa Rosen:

Both, that's right. Wow. That was some slip, ordained Cantor and will receive s'mikhah or rabbinical ordination this year from the Pluralistic Rabbinical Seminary. And as she already mentioned, she is a cancer survivor herself. Cantor, the screen is yours to share a wonderful version of Eliyahu HaNavi and the lyrics will be on the screen for you to follow along.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

All right. So, as we know, as we have heard in our stories, Elijah the prophet, is a harbinger of Mashiach, of Messiah. And whether you believe in a critical moment of Messiah's arrival or not, each of us has the power to bring about and keep perfection or perfectly imperfect contentment to our world. As this setting by Rabbi Max Chaiken tells us... We have the Hebrew in front of us, but we also have English, so the Hebrew will be our refrain and you all know the Hebrew, but here it is. Oh, how beautiful is this? And we have English verses. So I will slowly do... We like to work our way after Habdala, slowly into... (Singing)

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

I'm going to ask Melissa to stay unmuted. So you can be the response to my call, in the third verse. So let's try the refrain together. (Singing) Third verse is call and response. (Singing)

Melissa Rosen:

I don't see the lyrics.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

I know. Where do they... Do we have one more slide?

Melissa Rosen:

I think that was it. That was the only slide.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

Oops. No.

Melissa Rosen:

That was it.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

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Oh. Okay. Since, the... Okay, third verse, call and response. (Singing)

Melissa Rosen:

Oh my goodness, Cantor. Oh, that's funny. That looks like a box of matzah.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

It does. This publication is available from transcontinental music. And this and other wonderful songs, some traditional, some far afield, are in this lovely anthology. And it comes with a CD. So, there you go.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you so much. That was incredibly beautiful. I loved the melody and it is a very apt perspective for today's world. I can't wait for the next song. Perhaps if you need a call back for the next song, we can find someone who isn't tone deaf to do it, but it was fun.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

No, actually I think a lot, I won't say everyone knows the next song, but I will say that it's... I don't think we need any, probably no call and response, but I love it. Go, Melissa. Thank you so much, because I only called on you like this because you and I did this together when we had our meeting. So, great!

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you. Okay. Thank you. And we'll have you back in a few minutes, but next I want to introduce to you Rabbi Reni Dickman. Rabbi Dickman splits her time between directing Chicago's Board of Rabbis and serving on the local Jewish Federation's educational staff. Reni will be sharing her own unexpected story. And as a rabbi, of course, she will draw some connections between her story and the upcoming holiday. Welcome to our program.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

Thank you. Thank you so much for inviting me to share my story with everyone. I wasn't thinking about the date, but this happens to be my dad's birthday of blessed memory. That makes this even more special for me to share my story. I will just preface this by saying that I'm not a cancer survivor. I have not had the experience of hearing that diagnosis, but I do have the BRCA gene mutation. That is what my story's about. I'm going to read, because I wrote it out. My paternal grandmother's name was Faye Dickman and I am alive because she had breast cancer. Allow me to explain. When my grandmother was 50 years old, she developed breast cancer and it was 1964, 65. And we were nowhere near where we are now with cancer treatments and her diagnosis proved to be a fatal one.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

My father was 22 years old at the time and had just graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign. When my grandmother was in the hospital, she knew that she was very sick and that she would not live to see her son, her only child get married and raise a family of his own. But that is what she wanted most for him, that he would find a nice Jewish girl to share his life. She told this to her roommate in the hospital whose name was Beverly Yellen. As the story goes, Beverly asked my grandmother how tall her son was. And my grandmother told her that he was 5'3". Beverly had a daughter, but Beverly thought that her daughter was too tall for my

dad, but she told my grandmother that her daughter had a very nice sorority sister who would be the right height for my dad.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

Again, it was 1964 or five, so we'll cut them some slack. Beverly promised my grandmother that when Beverly got out of the hospital, she would introduce my father to her daughter's short sorority sister. I'm sure you can guess who that was. Lucky for me, my mom is only 5'1". My grandmother died and never met my mom, but God bless Beverly Yellen who followed through on her promise to my grandmother. My parents were married on August 6th, 1967. And there is quite possibly another reason why I am alive because of my grandmother's breast cancer. And that is, because she had breast cancer, my father eventually did genetic testing and discovered that he had both BRCA gene mutations, as do I, though my sister has neither. I did my own genetic testing after the birth of our second child, which we had planned to be our last one.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

I remember the day that I received the results of my genetic testing. My newborn baby was still sleeping in the co-sleeper next to our bed. I looked at him and cried, wondering if I had passed these mutations onto my child. For me, the decision to remove my ovaries was not a difficult one. That surgery was nearly seven years ago. The decision to have a double mastectomy took me a lot longer. For many years, the idea felt too radical, too dramatic and possibly traumatic. I felt okay having mammograms and MRIs every six months. I felt confident that if I did develop breast cancer, we would catch it early. But as I settled into the midlife chapter of my life, something shifted. First, I had a couple of biopsies that were quite painful. And then a friend was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

Cousins were diagnosed with different kinds of cancer. And it hit home that cancer could, of course invade my body too. I should have known that. My father had cancer at ages 35, 55 and died at age 71 of a disease similar to breast cancer. And I have a cousin who had breast cancer in her early thirties. The pandemic also underscored the reality that none of us is immune from serious and terrifying illness. Then I started to ask myself, when is a good time for a double mastectomy? Never, but when is a good time for cancer, also never. I have two children ages 11 and nine. So when in the world would I do this? And when would I not be too scared to do it? Eventually it set in that there would never be a good time and I would never not be scared.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

I just needed to schedule it. Take the time off of work, ask my husband to take some time off, sign my kids up for camp and ask our incredible community of family and friends for help. And I did that last June. I'm someone who closes her eyes for blood tests. If my kids need a shot, I ask my husband to take them. I don't do blood. I don't even watch medical TV shows. I'm very much like my dad in that way. But I did it. The anticipation was horrible. The first week after the surgery was really hard. I could barely move without pain. But it wasn't excruciating, like I thought it might be.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

I am half done. I will have another surgery to complete the reconstruction this June. Which was a whole other set of decisions, which I imagine some of you on this call could relate to. Every time I mention to someone that I was going to have this surgery, literally without exception, every single person told me they knew someone who had breast cancer, someone who had

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also had a prophylactic mastectomy or someone with a BRCA gene mutation who was also weighing their options.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

Literally without exception, breast cancers started to feel like an epidemic. I wish the option of a mastectomy had been available for my grandmother. I wish I could tell her about my choices. I also hope that one day people will say, can you believe what women used to do? They actually used to amputate their breasts. During this process of deciding and through the surgery and recovery, I prayed a lot. I prayed that my children would have a mother in their teen years, in their twenties and thirties, and for as long as humanly possible.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

My mom kept in touch with Beverly Yellen until Beverly passed away. My sister's middle name honors my grandmother. My older son looks exactly like my dad. And I just want to end this part by saying may the memory of my grandmother Faye Dickman and my father Marvin Dickman and Beverly Yellen, be for a blessing. And to tie it into Passover and matzah, which I also find to be unpalatable, this experience was really only palatable because our family and friends stepped up in ways beyond any expectation I could have ever have had. I was so touched by all the people that helped our family and made meals for us and sent flowers and called. I will say, I had a wonderful experience with the doctors and the nurses, all of whom helped us. I'll end with this piece of Torah, about the afikomen. At the end of the Seder when we hide it and the idea is that the afikomen represents the bread of affliction, but also the bread of redemption and hope for the future.

Rabbi Reni Dickman:

And we hide it. And then who do we send to go find it? We send our children, because redemption in this world is hidden. We have yet to find it, but we still have hope that it will be found. So we send our younger generations to go find it and reveal it for us. I pray that in future generations, easier options will be available to all of us. I hope you have a joyful Passover.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you so much Reni for sharing that story. It's such an important story. It really is. Everybody needs to be aware of their family's health history and the impact that might have on them. And you're right, I hope that our future generations have an easier time. Certainly a world without cancer, would be a world that felt like redemption. Okay. Now, my amazing colleague, Jessica Jablon, Sharsheret's Valley Outreach Program Coordinator, will be sharing some thoughts on how food can nurture us in surprising ways.

Jessica Jablon:

Thanks, Melissa. And thank you Reni for sharing your story and to Jackie, for the beautiful music, to help make our program so impactful and inspiring. When as a staff, we started talking about this Passover UNSeder program, we couldn't help but talk about the food that we eat during the holiday because a lot of Passover is about food, right? So as we continued to talk about our favorite recipes, it became clear that there are two types of food that we eat during Passover. The actual Passover meal, which fills us up physically, and the food that we eat as part of the Seder, which feeds us spiritually. During Passover, we're reminded that food isn't only about eating and nourishment, but it also represents different parts of the experience. For example, at the seder, the salt water is emblematic of the salty tears Jews shed in their slavery.

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Jessica Jablon:

The eggs represents spring and the circle of life. The maror or the bitter herbs, exemplify the bitterness of slavery. And the haroset, symbolizes the mortar and brick used by the slaves who built the storehouses or Egyptian pyramids. And of course, today we're talking most about matzah, the unloved bread. It reminds us of what the Jews ate while fleeing Egypt, but it also symbolizes redemption and freedom and can serve as a reminder to be humble and to not forget the past. We started to think about how we can find meaning in different things. Already, some of us celebrate Passover using traditions or customs that are unique to your family or heritage. And as we continue to look for deeper meaning and connections to enhance our experience, we look for those deeper meanings and to enhance not only our experiences, but those of our loved ones.

Jessica Jablon:

When I think about Passover, it's the incredible smells throughout my grandparents house that hit your senses when you walked through the door. You know, the brisket and the roast chicken and the matzo ball soup and the apple and potato kugels. It's the laughter we shared as I hung out with my cousins and as we searched for the afikomen. Now it's about, now it's about... Sorry, I'm realizing that, I should be the spotlighted person here. Okay. Now, it's about watching my daughter read the four questions and hang out with her cousins and then them searching for the afikomen. I think about my mom making me matzah bread for breakfast or bringing matzah sandwiches to school in my lunch, and now doing the same for my kids. It's about passing on these traditions and bringing in new ways to celebrate or observe the holiday that make it more meaningful to you.

Jessica Jablon:

In light of this, we wanted to ask you to participate in a chat waterfall. So what I'm going to ask you to do is type in your favorite Passover food or custom into the chat, but don't hit return just yet. We'll give everybody a minute to type something in, and then we'll all hit return at once. And then we'll see a waterfall of Passover memories, fill the chat. Please take a minute to put in your favorite Passover food or custom now and in just a few seconds, I'm going to count to three and we'll all hit return at the same time, after I say three, and then we'll see our little chat waterfall. Okay. Ready? Okay. One, two, three. Oh, wow. That was so cool. Okay, my colleague, Rachel is going to read off the responses in the chat [crosstalk 00:26:39]

Rachel Teicher:

That was so fun to see happen. I love that. Well, hi everyone, I'm Rachel. So first thing I saw and related to immediately matzah candy, love it. Then I see a hard boiled egg with onion and salt water, all mixed together. That actually sounds pretty delicious. Setting the table. Matzah with salt and butter and a cup of coffee. See, a matzah lover out there. That doesn't sound too bad either. Mandle bread. Matzah brei, my favorite. Chocolate Macaroons from NYT. My most favorite dessert recipe. Sounds great. Oh, and another one who loves shmurah matzah. Okay, that's definitely, I think even far and more few in between. We have some matzo ball soup. Two things, matzah farfel, milk and sugar and stuffed chicken breasts.

Rachel Teicher:

Ooh, sounds good. Kugels. Matzah brei, again. Mom's haroset. And yes, I know. No matter what, when you make family recipes, if they don't make it, it doesn't always taste the same. Chocolate covered matzah. Fried matzah. Gluten free with sour cream and apple sauce. Hard

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boiled eggs and salt water, again. Sponge cake, oh, specifically her mother's sponge cake. Always her daughter's birthday cake. I can share that. I get a Pesach birthday very often.

Rachel Teicher:

Your mother's chremsel. I hope I said that right. Making 80 pounds of homemade haroset with the Chabad Rabbi's wife for 10 hours, with five different types of apples, to feed all of the DU students that wanted to see what Passover was about. That is really cool. Wow. Okay. So many apples. Passover fruit slices, wonderful. So many good things in here. Thank you for sharing everybody.

Melissa Rosen:

That is amazing. Thank you so much, everyone for sharing your favorite Passover foods. And I'm actually excited to share that later today, you will all receive a cookbook that we assembled on all the creative ways... Well, probably not all. I'm sure you could all add to it. But on many of the creative ways you can transform matzah into something delicious. That's our gift to you. I'm excited now to share a video from a Sharsheret caller Julie. She's a nurse, an adventurer and a breast cancer survivor.

Melissa Rosen:

She was diagnosed with cancer at just 32 years old. Actually at the beginning of the COVID pandemic. And she successfully navigated the rigors of treatment, COVID restrictions and hair loss. During her treatment, she was inspired to pursue a dream of hers, which is living in Europe. She was actually going to be with us live today until she realized that her flight is actually right now. She is on her way to Germany to serve as a nurse, but she was able to record a short encouragement session for all of us prior to her grand adventure.

Melissa Rosen:

One, disclaimer she forgot to mention in the video is this, "please keep in mind..." And this is a quote. "... that the suggestions I make in the video are things that worked for me. They might not be applicable in your situation and that's okay. I just want to encourage you. Whether you're a breast cancer warrior, survivor, thriver or someone who just loves one, look for the ways to live your best life in spite of this cancer curve ball. I..." And then she put parenthetically, "and the team at Sharsheret, are cheering for you." Okay, so we're going to get that video up.

Julie:

We're here to talk to you today about how we can make our cancer journey a little bit more bearable. It certainly can be a tumultuous ride. So I put together three ideas on how we can make this easier. I first encountered Sharsheret when I was initially diagnosed and they've been with me along the way. When they asked me to speak, they asked me to speak correlated to Passover as we're in the season. And we get tired of matzah and I think some people are going to talk about how we can make matzah more interesting and fun. So I'm going to talk about how we can make the cancer journey a little bit more tasteful. My first kind of tip, if you will, is preparation. So just like prior to Passover, you do a really thorough deep clean, I think preparing as much as you can for different aspects of your journey was certainly a tactic that was very beneficial to me.

Julie:

I think there's different ways we can prepare. For instance, the day before I knew I was going to have a chemo session, I would deep clean my house. I would set up bills, anything that was outstanding, that needed to be done in my world, we were going to take care of it at that time. Also there was the practical, but also the mental preparation. I knew I wasn't going to be able to eat food the same way. So we would have a big family dinner. My dad would come down and we'd check out a new restaurant in the area or make a nice home cooked meal of something that I enjoyed because I knew that I wasn't going to be able to taste it the same way for the next 10 days or so. I tried to preempt things because I knew a tough time was coming.

Julie:

Prior to all of my chemo sessions, my dad and I had this joke about John Belushi's speech in Animal House. And I would watch that. It was just a little bit of comedic relief to have that enthusiasm as you're going into something that you really don't want to do and it is really miserable. I would try to... Set yourself up to whatever that next challenge is. If it's your next chemo, it's your next radiation, if you prepare, it takes at least a little bit of that edge off that you don't have to think about and you can come concentrate that little energy that you do have on feeling better and getting better. The next thing I would, I would kind of tie to preparing is getting in the right frame of mind.

Julie:

Unfortunately cancer, breast cancer is the sorority that you never wanted to join. But here we are, whether you love someone with breast cancer, you're experiencing breast cancer or you have experienced breast cancer, it is a group of women and some men, that have all gone through the same thing. So sometimes when you don't feel like you have many choices, none of us asked for this, didn't want to be here, reminding yourself that sometimes the only choice that you do have is how your outlook is, can give you just that little bit of empowerment. I remember being so sick with chemo that lifting up a spoon was so difficult, that I realized I get to choose where my energy goes, because I don't have much of it. It made it all the more precious of how I did that. Now, did I have days that I was crying and having a pity party?

Julie:

Absolutely. But did I also choose to use the experience I was going through to choose that better outlook. To choose to be a part of my community and to connect with people that helped me feel better in a situation that really wasn't very fun to go through, but I really did have the best of a bad time. I would say my next tip is the importance of once you've prepared and once you've got yourself in a decent frame of mind, more days than not. We can go for that. We're not aiming for perfection, just that we're look looking for those small opportunities wherever they are. It's really important to stay connected. We have different family and community groups, some friend groups, that it's helpful to remember to give back.

Julie:

So I'm a single strong, independent woman, that having to ask anyone for help, was very difficult for me. I'm usually the one trying to be the helper, not the helpee. When I needed to rely on loved ones and people in my life, I felt like I was in a deficit. I started looking for ways to give back. It can be a small thing, like sharing a hot tip about using Mepilex on your on your drain site. Or checking out this doctor's office. Or using this pillow. Or whatever it is, you can do something that small or you can do what you can do when you are able to do it. For me, I've been very excited to work with Sharsheret to do what I can to give back because they've done

so much for me. Throughout the beginning my person was always checking in on me, making me aware of what was available.

Julie:

I think the, one of hardest things for me was losing my hair. When I was younger, I was the only person I knew with red hair. I hated it, because I was different. Everyone else had beautiful hair that was brown or blonde or anything like that, but no one had red hair and I hated it. But as I got older, that was me. That made me special. That made me unique and I saw it differently. So when I did lose my hair, it was quite traumatic for me. That was more difficult for me than some of the other things I experienced on my cancer journey. I didn't feel like a whole person.

Julie:

So when I found out that Sharsheret had BFF 2.0, and first I got my, I remember getting my little, my makeup care package. The stuff in it was so fantastic. I had awful like elephant skin from the chemo and it wasn't great, but it was an amazing skincare stuff that they sent and eyelash stuff. It was beneficial for my chemo skin, but it also started making me feel like a person. When I had lost my hair, I had bought all of these wigs. I bought a purple wig and a redhead wig. And one that was like raven black. There was all kinds that I tried, but none of them, they felt too itchy, they were heavy, they were hot. I didn't like them.

Julie:

I was frustrated because some women are beautiful bald women. I was not. I was very self-conscious and none of these wigs were working. When I found out that there was a wig program with Sharsheret, I was so excited because I was, all right, this is my last chance to feel like a person as I'm going through this. I remember the day that it showed up and I remember putting it on, because I'd watched so many wig videos, and for the first time in my life I had mermaid hair. It was just this beautiful flowing main. I felt like a person again. It was just such this impactful moment to help me get over the self-esteem hit that your body can take when you don't have hair and things are a little lopsided.

Julie:

And all of that, something that feels just a little bit normal or a little bit zazzy. When I plug in to the sorority of breast cancer thrivers, I try to let people know about Sharsheret, because there's so many available things. Whether you want some art therapy or you want to learn some recipes or the peer connection was great. I've known several women since I've been diagnosed that have also been diagnosed and they've been able to see a benefit. So some of it is word of mouth. Maybe that's what you can do. There's so many ways to give back that I think that when you're at that low point, maybe you're not ready. Maybe you are so tired from chemo that it's just not the right time, but you can still plan for what you'd like to do when that time comes. And hopefully that will give you a reason to make a difficult time a little bit more palatable.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you. I know you can't hear me, Julie, but thank you so much for sharing. So many of those ideas resonated with me. I am now excited to ask my colleague, who you briefly met, Rachel Teicher, who is our Support Program Coordinator to join me on screen. Rachel's going to share a few thoughts about how tradition can guide us.

Rachel Teicher:

Hi everyone, again. I feel like my message is really just a lot of piggybacking off of all the other wonderful messages we've heard today so far. But we would be remiss if we didn't talk about tradition when it came to any Jewish holiday, right? So, I think that the first I thought of was how religion has so many rules, or things that are set in stone, things that are taught to us as laws and things that are important, as part of the religion. That's what makes the religion what it is and that's great and wonderful. The reason why I like tradition is because they're moldable, pliable, adaptable, changeable, customizable, all those things, and really are meant to be made our own or our family's own or with friends there's... Traditions can just, they are what they are.

Rachel Teicher:

They can be changed. They can be added to. I feel like in a lot of ways, a cancer experience is a very similar type concept. Where just like religion, there are certain things that are, they're just concrete. They are. There's the unfortunate, tough things of, okay, we have to go to the doctor and you have to get treatment and you have to take certain medications. There's certain things that are almost rules, right, that have to be followed in order to help you get better. Then there's also pieces that can be done, that are part of what you make your cancer experience. Again, what Julie was saying, everyone feels differently. Everyone reacts differently. Everyone's experience is truly different. I think that the word traditions, while often is considered a happy or making memories or happy things, associated with family or friends or whatever it is that you think about immediately when it comes to traditions for holidays, but traditions are also there to set order and help us with preparations and contemplating different things and helping you focus on certain things.

Rachel Teicher:

And that everyone who's going through a cancer experience or any tough time, really in general, like this pandemic we've all been dealing with for the last few years, and just any difficult life experience, can also have tradition added to it. If that can make it more meaningful or helpful for you. Again, similar to what Julie shared for her, what she had done that worked for her. Again, for everybody that might be different. At the same time, I also think the social worker in me and something that I always make it a point to share with everyone that I speak with at Sharsheret, is the importance of finding happiness, finding good within the bad.

Rachel Teicher:

That's where the general understanding of traditions and happiness and thinking of those pieces of tradition, I feel are so important in these tough times because the truth is just like everybody has their own family traditions for holidays. Everyone's cancer experience is different. And there's no right or wrong way to feel. And there's no right or wrong way to react. However, you are feeling is that right way. Not only that, it's important to remember that you deserve to have every other piece of happiness and good in your life that was there before and will hopefully be after. Anything you enjoy, anything that makes you happy, because cancer isn't you. Cancer is an experience you're dealing with. An unfortunate one. One that like Julie said, no one ever wants to have to be a part of, but it should be a part of your life and not all of your life.

Rachel Teicher:

While that might be easier said than done of course, many days, it's something that everyone deserves to have and do the things they love and think about the things they love. So, trying to focus on pulling the good from bad, just like making yummy matzah things out of a plain piece of cardboardish type food. It's about finding something that can put a smile on your face, bring joy

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to you, create traditions that can help you get through something that is really tough. Part of that is knowing that...

Rachel Teicher:

Myself, for any of you who know me, who are on the screen, but not just myself, all of my colleagues on the clinical team, we are here for you and here to help you find what your traditions might be or what can be helpful to put a smile on your face, because everyone deserves to have that. Whether it be during the holidays or just in your everyday life. Remember that you are allowed to make this your own and you are allowed, although it sounds funny to put the word happiness and cancer together, to have those moments and put them together and enjoy them.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you so much. It made me think about the new traditions that I'm creating now that I'm past my active treatment to celebrate health. And that's actually pretty exciting. Okay. Cantor Jacquie, I'm excited to welcome you back to sing one more song. An appropriate song for a sorority of women who have joined us today. You're going to be singing Miriam's song. And the lyrics for you to follow along are going to be on the screen any second.

Cantor Jacquie Marx:

I was lucky to hear the late great Debbie Friedman lead this at a women's seder about 20 years ago in New York City. And I kissed Debbie at that seder too. (Singing) If you have bells near you, or even car keys, I encourage you to pick them up and shake them. Tap your tables. (Singing)

Melissa Rosen:

That was amazing. What fantastic energy that you've brought to today's UNSeder. I'm personally so grateful. I am sure so many people on the screen are also grateful. Speaking of traditions, that song just brings back so many wonderful memories. So, thank you. Thank you. Speaking of thank you's, I want to thank each and every one of you for joining us today. I hope that as we get ready to usher and Passover, you have each found something meaningful from today's program to share and to inspire you over the holiday. Of course, I want to thank Cantor Jacquie, Rabbi Reni, Julie for adding music, stories and joy to our program. And my colleagues for sharing their experiences and insights, both during the program and behind the scenes. I just noticed that an evaluation survey link was placed in the chat box. Please take a moment.

Melissa Rosen:

It's three questions, three minutes it'll take you, tops. You can click it now and still hear the rest of the announcements. It will really help us as we plan future programs. Remember that Sharsheret is here for you and your loved ones, through one on one support and other programs, that have been designed to help you navigate. One of our programs, our Thriving Again Kit, actually includes information on preparing or celebrating Jewish holidays while dealing with cancer. If that is something you're interested in, you can order a free Thriving Again Kit. If you've already received the kit, but want that aspect of it, you can also request that. You can do so by reaching out to our clinical team. That information on that email address will be... Well it's right there on, in there. Okay. Two more things very quickly. I just want to let you know that after Passover, the first couple of weeks of May, we have two amazing webinars coming up.

Sharsheret's 3rd Annual UNSeder

Melissa Rosen:

We have a book club and the spouse of the author of the book, my husband said, you may want to marry me. Jonathan Rosenthal is going to be joining us. We also have a Sharsheret in the kitchen with a chef who calls herself the Cuban Ruben. So there'll be some spicy Cuban food, healthy Cuban food she'll be talking about. And as a final wish today, I hope that the stressors we all face no matter where they come from, pass over you, and you feel peace and contentment and joy this holiday and beyond. Thank you so much for being with us here today. Have a wonderful weekend. Bye.

About Sharsheret

Sharsheret, Hebrew for "chain", is a national non-profit organization, improves the lives of Jewish women and families living with or at increased genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer through personalized support and saves lives through educational outreach.

With four offices (California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), Sharsheret serves 150,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students, in all 50 states. Sharsheret creates a safe community for women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer and their families at every stage of life and at every stage of cancer - from before diagnosis, during treatment and into the survivorship years. While our expertise is focused on young women and Jewish families, more than 15% of those we serve are not Jewish. All Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.

As a premier organization for psychosocial support, Sharsheret's Executive Director chairs the Federal Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women, Sharsheret works closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and participates in psychosocial research studies and evaluations with major cancer centers, including Georgetown University Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Sharsheret is accredited by the Better Business Bureau and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for four consecutive years.

Sharsheret offers the following national programs:

The Link Program

- Peer Support Network, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences
- Embrace™, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer • Genetics for Life®, addressing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer
- Thriving Again®, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship plans for young breast cancer survivors • Busy Box®, for young parents facing breast cancer
- Best Face Forward®, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment
- Family Focus®, providing resources and support for caregivers and family members
- Ovarian Cancer Program, tailored resources and support for young Jewish women and families facing ovarian cancer • Sharsheret Supports™, developing local support groups and programs

Education and Outreach Programs

- Health Care Symposia, on issues unique to younger women facing breast cancer
- Sharsheret on Campus, outreach and education to students on campus
- Sharsheret Educational Resource Booklet Series, culturally-relevant publications for Jewish women and their families and healthcare Professionals

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