

Dallas YACS-A-LOT Newsletter



So, as we walk into 2024, there are a lot of ways we can look back at 2023. We can hold on to all the things that didn't go through as we planned. And by doing that (for some of us), this will cause us to beat ourselves up and make ourselves feel like we are inadequate; we are unworthy of the New Year that is before us. At the same time, there are some emotions that we cannot leave in 2023. Some thoughts we cannot leave in 2023 because we are not done processing...we are not done experiencing and dealing with those emotions and thoughts. And if no one ever told you, let me tell you that it is OK. It's OK to work on your own timeline to deal with 2023.

Some thoughts that you had in 2023, you may *still* have in 2033. Some emotions that you experienced in 2023 may still be lingering in 2024. Everyone's journey is a little different. Thus, when we start comparing our 2023 to other people's 2023, we do ourselves a disservice. In the support group, we talk about this idea of apples and sandwiches. As one of the early Dallas YACS members informed me, "cancer isn't apples to apples...isn't even apples to oranges. So, you be an apple and I'll be a sandwich." It is a nice reminder that everyone's cancer story shouldn't be compared to other cancer stories. Every cancer story has its own value and worth...every cancer story should be looked at uniquely on its own exclusive merit. Are you open to this being true for your 2023?! Can it not be true for what 2024 may have in store for you? I think it's important that we take the time to acknowledge our own unique journey.

As we begin 2024, there can be some things you can say goodbye to. There are some things you can say thank you for. And there are gonna be some things that are still pending. The amount of thank yous, good-byes, and still pending will likely look different for everyone. That is not a bad thing. There is room for everyone's story. I would encourage you to make room for your story...I highly recommend you embrace your story. Thus, if you've never embraced your story, my hope is that 2024 is the beginning of you embracing your story. And if you don't embrace your story completely by the beginning of 2024, I hope you will at least consider giving it a try. I welcome you to 2024...I look forward to seeing you at the different Dallas YAC events that we do...I look forward to seeing you at the small groups when you are able and when it's accessible for you. And until all those things happen, I encourage you to embrace all of you, because *all* of you matters to Dallas-YACS.

Announcements

Be Part of the YACS Directory

This is a completely voluntary survey to gather contact info to share with group members. You do not have to answer all questions, and can quit any time. We'd love to know you better!

<https://forms.gle/RChQQwh6UhwP8kfr7>

Directory: Dallas YAC Directory

Call For 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](#).

The Elephants and Tea Magazine Launch is Almost Here!

Caregivers are welcome to join and can register via the QR code below.



January 20, 2024

Daytime Activities

12:00pm - Welcome Lunch

1:00pm - Healing Through Writing Workshop

3:15 - Art Workshop

Evening Activity

6:00pm - Storytelling Soiree (the main event!)

***Come to one workshop
or join us for all!***



SCAN TO REGISTER



That's a Wrap!



December 2023 with YACS was one for the books! Friends and family gathered in their finest and most festive holiday attire to enjoy karaoke, bowling, food, and most importantly, time together. Thank you Bowl & Barrel for having us, and thank you YACS for a fantastic end to the year!



Taylor's Comedic Turf

We made a New Year's resolution to stop procrastinating on the newsletter, but we are going to wait until next year to start!

**Biggest thanks to our OG
Committee Members!**



After four years serving on our planning committee, these fine folks will step down from their roles. We thank Rachel Walker, Jay Carter, Roberto Cowan, Maritza Figy, and the late, great Sam Snow for their dedication- YACS is what it is today because of their contributions!

Drumroll please...

Welcome to our 2024 Planning Committee Members!



Ramsey Breaux (left)



Mollie Ripple and Katy Yost



Daniel Weinstein and Melissa Irek

Thanks in advance for the time, effort, and energy you will bring to our program and our events in the year ahead!



Elgrie Hurd (and his soccer-loving-son and honorary committee member, James Robert)



Valerie Cano

Dallas YACS Calendar

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, January 20th - Elephants and Tea Magazine Launch. Patient and caregivers must register to attend: <https://elephantsandtea.com/event-registrations/dallas-magazine-release-registration/>

Tuesday, January 30th, 6- 7pm - YACs Yoga at the Cancer Center

Tuesday, January 30th, 7- 8:30pm - In-Person Support Group at the Cancer Center

January Birthdays:
Katy Yost 1/13

Alex's Meditation Moment

The turning of a calendar year welcomes an opportunity to reflect and consider changes we'd like to make for ourselves. A natural transition can occur when one thing ends and another begins- it signals a fresh start. I also love thinking about how everyone in the world experiences the new year on the same day, and the sense of community that stems from that is hope-filled. Yet when we set resolutions to make big sweeping changes, we end up with big *expectation hangovers*. This well-coined phrase describes the disappointment and/or grief that comes up when a desired outcome about an event, situation, or relationship isn't met yet. Something didn't turn out the way you planned, or maybe everything you expected happened, but you don't feel the way you thought you would. Life also can throw a wicked curveball, and the members of this club know that better than anyone.

When our realities don't match our expectations, we can suffer the hang-over like symptoms- a sense of regret, a headache from all the swirling thoughts, lack of motivation, decreased creativity and productivity, and a sense of depression. To save ourselves from that added suffering and to kick off the year with a sense of acceptance, we can focus on the process over the outcomes. A process helps us find the sweet spot between the effort we put in and the patience needed to identify growth through the small changes to our habits. Let's start by tuning in to what mattered last year to set an intention for the year ahead.

Sit up tall, gently close your eyes, and begin to slow down your breathing. Take 5 slow, deep breaths, in and out through your nose as you begin to settle your mind.

- *Start by just taking notice of where you are at the moment – scanning your body and mind for information. Notice how you feel physically and mentally, and then begin to observe your thoughts in a neutral, non-judgmental way as they come and go.*
- *Now begin to re-play through the year in your mind, slowly, as if you were watching a movie reel of highs, lows, and big and small moments from your year.*
- *Move through the year month by month, recalling people, moments, emotions, activities, details, mistakes, highlights — all of it. Just play through these memories from the year little by little in your mind as they come to you and watch them like a recap of all that happened. Stay with each moment for a while before moving onto the next.*
- *When you reach the end of December, finish the movie reel of the year and notice how you feel.*
- *Now, begin to settle your attention on your biggest challenge from this year. In what ways did this experience, person, or situation challenge you? What would you have done differently, given the opportunity to repeat this experience? What did you learn from this experience, and what intention can you make for next year, with this lesson in mind?*
- *Now, begin to settle your attention on your favorite moment from the last year. Hold it at the center of your mind and take it in through all of your senses. Really replay this moment in your mind's eye. Try to take that feeling into all of your cells, with your entire mind and heart, and*

really feel that state you were in, when you were living through this favorite moment. Don't rush this part — recall how your body felt, what your mind state was, what your energy felt like. Recall any colors, images, and sensations. What did it smell like? Taste like?

- *As you bring your attention to this positive memory, identify what feelings this experience carried with it. Create the intention to integrate more of these feelings into the coming year in various ways. What do you need to do to actually experience more feelings like these in your life? What is in your control? Who can help set you up for success?*
- *Stay with it for another minute, and then slowly transition your mind back into the present moment by bringing your awareness back to your breath. Deep inhales and slow exhales.*
- *Take a moment before you open your eyes.*

Re-connecting with your highs and lows from the year is a great way to identify the types of feelings you want more of – or do not want – in your life.

Writing down your musings helps to re-enforce any learning that comes with reflection. Take five minutes or two hours to put your thoughts to paper on Sam's "Ring in the New Year" prompt below.

Prompt of the Month

Ring in the New Year

A new year brings a sense of promise – a fresh start, empty pages waiting to be written. Yet, when you're a young cancer patient or survivor, January 1st may elicit more worry than excitement. Common questions swirl: Will this year bring remission or relapse? How will treatment, side effects, or lingering impacts on dreams I've deferred shape my days? Can I trust making plans when cancer has shattered certainty?

Rather than repressing fears about the year ahead, use this prompt to envision finding hope even amidst uncertainty.

Start by acknowledging specific worries, griefs, and worst-case scenarios that plague you when envisioning life with cancer in the coming year. Name the doubts and frustrations you carry.

Then, connect with a deeper part of yourself – your courageous soul, resilient heart. From this wise place, write the story you wish 2024 could be. Detail the healing, strength, purpose, and restored joy you dare envision unfold despite all you can't control.

Close by listing simple, monthly intentions for self-care and celebration that could help guide you back to positivity when darkness looms. Small, gentle actions build toward the boldest possibility: thriving!

The future remains unwritten. But our words today bless the path ahead.

If you'd like your response featured in next month's newsletter, simply



Who's the brain behind these thought-provoking writing prompts?! **Dr. Samantha (Sam) Dean** is a metastatic melanoma survivor and former patient at UTSW. She graduated from the University of Missouri with a BA in English in 2012 and went straight into working with college students facing academic dismissal. She used her writing & speaking skills to mentor these students in asking questions, composing professional emails, using resources available to them, etc. Sam went on to receive an M.B.A. with a focus on both Sustainable Business and Marketing and then a Ph.D. in Public Policy & Political Economy. While working her way up in academia and getting all these fancy letters behind her name, Sam was doing freelance writing work. It wasn't until after her melanoma diagnosis in 2020 that she decided to use all these skills to cope. She started freeform writing about what it felt like trying to survive as a 30-year-old woman in a male-dominated world while literally trying to survive. Since going into remission in May 2021, Sam has quit working full-time in academic administration. She now owns a full-service marketing agency, has authored a guided journal for cancer patients and survivors, published a children's book, and teaches cancer survivors and teenagers how to express themselves through writing, whether via poetry, journaling, or creating a bomb resume to switch careers. When Sam isn't working (which is hard to imagine because she has too many jobs), you can find her snuggling with her dogs, spending time with her nephews, or reading what she will undoubtedly claim is the next Great American Novel.

Meet Sam at the Elephants and Tea magazine launch this month, and keep an eye out for details on the Writing through Cancer workshop she will be offering in the near future.

Cooking with Chris!



Happy New Year, Dallas YACS fam! We made it to 2024. Here's to blessings and prosperity- hope you guys ate your black-eyed peas! LOL! This month. I'm featuring a winter classic, pot roast. This recipe is very easy if you have a crock pot.

Ingredients

- Beef (chuck roast 3-6 lbs)
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 tsp salt

- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp black pepper

For the gravy:

- 1 cup chicken stock
- 2 cups beef stock
- 1 beef bouillon cube
- 1.5 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

For the veggies:

- 3 lbs baby potatoes
- 2 lbs whole carrots cut into halves or thirds
- 2 lbs celery cut into quarters

Directions

1. Pat roast completely dry. Combine seasoning ingredients and massage it onto all sides of the roast, followed by the flour.
2. Heat olive oil in a large pan over medium-high heat. Once the oil is shiny and heated, add the roast and sear on each side for 2-3 minutes, until a brown crust has developed. Decrease heat slightly if needed during cooking. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. Whisk together the gravy ingredients and add some of it to the skillet that you used to sear the roast. Use a silicone spatula to "clean" the bottom and sides of the skillet, this will give the gravy more flavor. Transfer it to the slow cooker along with the remaining gravy mixture, followed by the pot roast and any juices from the plate.
4. Cut the potatoes in half or thirds of equal size. (If 1-2 inch potatoes, you can leave them whole.)
5. Peel the carrots and slice them into halves or thirds. Very thick carrots can also be sliced in half lengthwise.
6. Cut the celery stalks in quarters. You can leave the celery leaves as they provide aromatics.
7. Arrange the potatoes around the roast and top with carrots. Place the lid securely on top and resist the temptation to open it during cooking as you'll lose a lot of heat.
8. Cook on high for 5-6 hours or on low for 8-10 hours.

9. Carefully remove the carrots, potatoes, and the roast and set on a serving platter. Tent with foil.



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...





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