

April 2024, Issue 37

Dallas YACS-A-LOT Newsletter



How do you put into words our experience at the Cowtown Oncology Nursing Symposium? That's a great question. When it's all said and done, I think it was such a privilege to have the opportunity to share the different strategies that Alex has used for the Dallas Young Adult Support (Dallas YAC), young adults who are in treatment, and/or survivors of cancer (and are not in part of Dallas YAC). At the same time, it was also awesome to be able to personalize the impact of those services. Four of the Dallas YAC members got a chance to go to Cowtown Oncology Nursing Symposium and talk about the uniqueness and the impact of the Dallas YAC. And it was nice to know that the words that we shared could also help future survivors of cancer to not feel like they are alone. It's also important to note that Tia tried to steal the show. I can't speak for everyone else. But Tia was a little distracted and stole my water. I forgive her but I need her to be held

accountable. On a serious note, I hope that all who are reading this are encouraged to share their story. I hope that more of us are willing to be vulnerable and share our stories. When we share our stories, we are no longer having to endure our cancer story by ourselves, which allows other people to carry some of our journey for us. We must remember that you never know how your story can inspire someone else. I don't meet a lot of people who have a neuroendocrine tumor. But at event, I met an oncologist nurse who was diagnosed with a neuroendocrine tumor. I learned that by sharing my story, it inspired her to keep fighting in her cancer journey. In addition, she was inspired to find ways to help other people so regardless of their cancer story, so they would not be alone. Your story matters. If you have never shared it, I hope this writing encourages you to give sharing your testimony a shot.

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](#).

Camping at Cooper Lake

by Maritza Figy



We've all heard that spending time outdoors can help improve our mental and physical health. If someone told you that spending time outside in wet clothes, muddy boots, and heavy rain would still be beneficial, would you believe them?

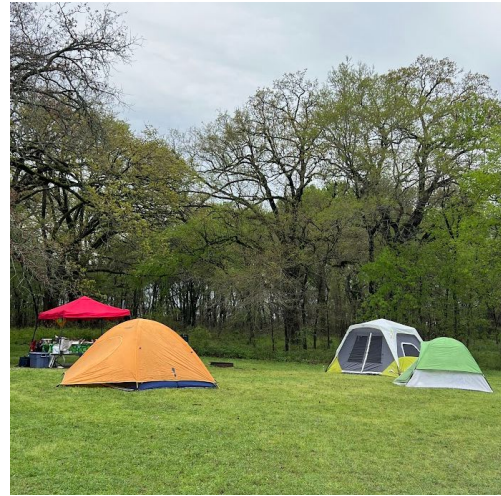
Despite the big storm over the weekend, camping at Cooper Lake was a great time and the highlight of my weekend. One of the many things I love about DYACS is our capacity to come together and support one another. This weekend was just another example of how we do that.

We cooked delicious fajitas with all of the sides, spicy salsas, and warm tortillas and enjoyed a family style dinner while chatting, laughing, and telling stories. During the 2023 DYACS retreat, I tried a Reese's s'mores for the first time. This time, we had Nutella s'mores! Yes, they are as delicious as they sound. I hope we can all get together again soon to have them and try new s'mores creations.

Throughout the day, we huddled together under the single rainy canopy and found ways to enjoy ourselves. I have found that the members of this group are good at overcoming challenges due to the circumstances we have been dealt with. I felt empowered being with a group of people who are resilient and joyful. As we've learned during support group, flexibility is the mechanism for resilience and I would say this weekend, we all mastered it! If Tia was having the time of her life with her friends and in nature, why can't we? She gave us her unconditional love and showed us that camping in the rain can be a blast as long as you make the best of it. I have learned that intention leads us to certainty of our actions. We intentionally put the rain in the back of our mind, were flexible with our plans, and focused on making a joyful weekend. We have to constantly practice to be mindful and pay attention to where our mind can take us.

I want to especially thank Alex and Monica, who went through with the original plan and did not budge despite bad weather. They also took personal time to

plan, cook, and organize this special weekend for us and I am eternally grateful for their kindness and selflessness.



Front row for the match!



Taylor's Comedic Turf

How do you wake a dad from a coma?

Dallas YACS Calendar

Upcoming Events:

Thursday, April 4th, 6-8pm – Night at the Arboretum, friends

and family are welcome to attend. RSVP by Tuesday, April 2nd.

Sunday, April 14th – Equest Outing! We will offer a couples' equine therapy session from 10-11:30am and an individual participant riding session from 12:30-2:30pm.

Tuesday, April 30th, 6pm – YACS Yoga at the Cancer Center
Tuesday, April 30th, 7- 8:30pm – In-Person Support Group at the Cancer Center

SAVE THE DATE!!! Friday, May 3rd- Sunday, May 5th- Our Annual Sam Snow YACS Retreat at Sky Ranch

RSVP for any of these events by emailing Alex at alexandra.huffman@utsouthwestern.edu.

Alex's Meditation Moment

"This too will pass." I probably said this a dozen times while we waited for the rain to pass on our camping trip. I just recently learned this phrase comes from a Persian adage and was employed by Abraham Lincoln before he became the 16th president: "It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence, to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: 'And this, too, shall pass away.'

While we usually apply this as a tonic to get through difficult times and to remind ourselves that what feels overwhelming, disappointing, and impossible will pass, it more widely means that all of life is transient in nature- the good and the bad. Everything is temporary, everything changes, and nothing lasts forever. We often look for permanence because it feels safe- we want things to stay exactly as they are. However, it is actually accepting the reality of impermanence that opens the door to healing, change, and personal development. When we treat life like it is finite, we can start each day with gratitude for what is right now and move forward with hope because the future will look different. When we spend time reflecting on what has passed, we can often see our own resilience in navigating difficult times too. While it can be initially unsettling to observe the impermanence within us and around us, a practice dedicated to this can help us take the ups and downs of life less personally and begin to see paths that weren't initially visible. I hope you'll try this meditation with the intention that even if the practice is uncomfortable, it too will pass!

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and

right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the sensations of breath. Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. Try to keep your attention at that spot.

As you breathe in, be aware of the in-breath; as you breathe out, be aware of the out-breath. Simply observe the breath going in and the breath going out.

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to do anything about it. There is nothing to fix. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

After building a foundation of calm attention to the breath, you may wish to expand your awareness to include a range of other arising and passing phenomena.

You may notice sounds arising; or smells, tastes, physical sensations or sights—even behind closed eyes.

Rather than engaging with the content of these sensations, try paying attention to the process of their arising and then of their passing. Notice that the sensations appear, disappear, or simply change. Notice how the flow of experience is constantly changing. Nothing stays quite the same; nothing is quite certain.

If, at any point, you find yourself being carried away by a particular experience—like the sound of traffic, or a smell or taste—try to take your focus back to the breath and then gently return your attention to the process of change.

From moment to moment, everything in our experience is changing. Sensations come and go.

You may also notice the arising and passing of thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Again, without engaging with the content of the thoughts, emotions, and sensations, try to pay attention to the process of their arising and passing. Notice the constant change in experience from moment to moment. A memory may be followed by an ache in the leg; the ache in the leg may be followed by a question; the question may be followed by a burst of anger, and so on. Notice how each of these experiences comes, goes, or changes.

Sensations, thoughts, and emotions are part of the flow of experience. Try not to be distracted by their content or how important they may seem; simply be aware instead that they come and go, that they are temporary, impermanent.

Observing this constant changing of experience, noting one altering experience after another, you may consider how ultimately satisfying any of the sensations, thoughts or emotions could ever be.

*Will this experience last? Is it changing?
Is it pleasant now? Will it always be pleasant?
Is this one pleasant now? Will it always be pleasant?
Is this experience you? Is it personal? Is it certain in every moment? Do you truly identify with this experience, or is it something passing, changing, impermanent?
And this one?*

*As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment-to-moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the changing, to the vitality of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.
Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.*

Joke Answer

Adjust the thermostat.

Sam's Writing Prompt



Today, I invite you to reflect on the theme of resilience and renewal in your cancer journey. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity, to find strength in the face of challenges, and to adapt and grow through difficult times. Renewal is the process of finding hope, purpose, and new beginnings amidst the complexities of life.

Think about a time when you felt particularly resilient during your cancer journey. What inner resources did you draw upon to navigate that moment? How did you find the courage to keep moving forward, even when faced with uncertainty or fear?

Now, consider moments of renewal in your journey—times when you discovered new perspectives, reconnected with

what truly matters to you, or found unexpected sources of joy and inspiration. What insights or revelations emerged from these experiences? How did they shape your path forward?

As you reflect on resilience and renewal, consider writing about specific events, emotions, or insights that come to mind. You may choose to focus on a single moment or explore a series of experiences that illustrate your journey of growth and transformation.

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers in this exploration. This is a space for you to honor your unique journey and celebrate the strength and resilience that reside within you.

If you'd like a past response to be featured in next month's newsletter, simply include it in an email to the group at dallasyacsalot@gmail.com.

Cooking with Chris!



This month, I'm featuring a seasonal favorite soup with summer around the corner. Watermelon Gazpacho! A gazpacho is a cold soup that is traditionally served during spring and summer seasons.

Ingredients:

- 1.5 pounds fresh watermelon, cubed
- 3 large Roma tomatoes, halved and cored
- 1 small (1/2 pound) cucumber, peeled and seeded
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cored
- 1/2 small red onion, peeled
- 2 small garlic cloves, peeled
- 1/3 cup packed fresh mint leaves
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly-cracked black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 thick slice of white bread, crusts removed, soaked in a bowl of water or under the sink (ring out excess water)
- Optional garnishes: homemade croutons, chopped fresh mint, a drizzle of oil olive

Instructions:

- Combine all ingredients together in a blender or food processor. Puree for 1 minute, or until the soup reaches your desired consistency. Taste and season with extra salt, pepper, and/or cumin if needed.
- Refrigerate in a sealed container for 4 hours, or until completely chilled.
- Serve cold, topped with your desired garnishes.



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...



UT Southwestern Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center | 6202 Harry Hines Blvd, Dallas, TX
75390

[Unsubscribe alexandra.huffman@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:alexandra.huffman@utsouthwestern.edu)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by alexandra.huffman@utsouthwestern.edu powered by



Try email marketing for free today!