

Breath, Body, & Movement

National Webinar Transcript

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Presented by:



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Breath, Body, & Movement

Melissa Rosen:

Hi everyone, my name is Melissa Rosen and I serve as the Director of Community Education at Sharsheret. I want to thank everyone for joining us today for Breath, Body and Movement. Today we're going to learn why slow, deep breathing and physical activity are the cornerstones for those in cancer treatment and survivorship and gain some simple strategies on how to incorporate both of those things into our lives.

Before we begin, I have a few housekeeping items to share. First, you should know that this webinar is being recorded and will be posted on Sharsheret's website, as well as the transcript. If you would like to remain anonymous, please turn your camera off and I assure you, we will remove all of the names before the video is posted. You may have noticed all participants were muted upon entry, please keep yourself on mute throughout the call.

We actually recommend that you keep your screen on speaker view. You can find speaker view on the top right hand corner of the computer screen. This will actually enable you to see the slides that are going to be shared more clearly. We did receive several questions from you before the call, and if you have any additional questions, please use the chat box at the bottom of the screen to ask questions and we will go through them during the Q and A after the formal presentations.

As a reminder, Sharsheret has been providing telehealth services for the breast and ovarian cancer communities for more than 19 years. And although we could never have imagined the world as it is right now, we have been preparing for this moment and continue to be there for you each and every day. As we move into the webinar itself I also want to remind you that Sharsheret is a national non-profit organization that provides support and education and does not provide any medical advice or perform any medical procedures.

The information provided by Sharsheret is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment for any medical condition and you should not use this information on today's webinar to diagnose or treat yourself, always seek the advice of a physician or a qualified health provider with any questions you may have about your personal medical situation. Okay, let's get to it.

Today's speakers have a wealth of knowledge and unique perspectives. Amy Shapses who will be speaking first is the founder of Flow Physical Therapy. It's an integrative physical therapy practice based in New York City. With over 20 years of training and experience, she has devoted her practice to prevention, rehabilitation and wellness. She's actually been using yoga combined with physical therapy since the early 2000s, long before yoga was cool or trendy. She's certified in medical therapeutic yoga. This is a method that seamlessly blends evidence based practice of physical therapy with yoga, making it therapeutic safer and more accessible.

Michelle Stravitz is the co-founder of a long time Sharsheret partner 2Unstoppable. She is also a five-year triple negative breast cancer survivor. Founding 2Unstoppable brings together a wealth of experience and passion, advising and serving on the boards of various non-profit organizations and running a small management-consulting firm. She's served as a peer supporter for women of all ages undergoing treatment for breast cancer, both informally and through organizations such as Sharsheret and Life with Cancer. She and her husband live in Fairfax, Virginia and have four adult children. Okay, I'm going to pass the webinar over to Amy to start and again, please put your computers on speaker view to make it easier to view the slides.

Amy Shapses:

Okay. Thank you so much for that introduction. Now, I have nothing more to say that was great. I hope that all of you under these unbelievable times and circumstances, you and your family are well and safe.

My objective today is to show you and to help you breathe; it's the key to a healthy life. So let's first begin to assess our own breaths. So I'd like you to close your eyes, place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Notice what's moving as you're breathing. Notice if you're breathing in and out through the nose, the mouth or both.

Notice how long your inhale is versus how long your exhale is. So I'd like you to count to yourself how long your inhale is versus how long your exhale is. Okay, you can open your eyes now and please just make a mental note of those findings. So you can start the slides now, please. I don't see anything. Oh, now I do. Thank you.

Okay. So like it was said, I've been practicing for over 20 years and what moved me from just traditional physical therapy to infusing yoga into my practice was that I realized in 2002, when treating women with breast cancer, that traditional route was never going to be enough. So I decided to infuse yoga into my practice so that people could really, my patients could really reap the benefits of all of the ideas and philosophy of yoga.

Next slide. As an integrative physical therapist, when treating women, I use the bio-psycho-social model of healthcare. This model is an expanded view of the long-standing biomedical model, which usually solely looks at the physiology, the biology and the physics or physical part of a person. Using this kind of model, you're able to look into patients' behaviors, their emotions, their feelings, their thoughts, and what they're going through, so again, treating more holistically.

Next slide. All my goals to my patients when they come in or individualized, that our four principles are, to feel safe, to breathe well, to decrease pain, to regain movement and safely return to activity and exercise. Next slide. Breathing well has a profound effect on your health both physical and mental. During a crisis is an opportune time to learn how to breathe and we've all been going through a lot of that lately. The breath is such a powerful, amazing thing. It's something we do involuntarily every second, of every minute, of every hour, of every day, without both thinking about it, but the beauty of it and the magic is that you can voluntarily control your breath to create more health.

Today we're going to talk about a breath technique that you're going to be lengthening your exhale. The reason we're lengthening our exhale, is to start to stimulate the vagus nerve. That's the special part. Next slide. So here in this picture, you can see the vagus nerve is in yellow. It's our longest cranial nerve and it's anchored at the brainstem, runs down either side of your neck, down into your thorax and makes lots of branches and connections to every organ possible.

It's our system that works unconsciously, but that vagus nerve needs to be healthy and toned in order to work correctly. There are a few natural ways to do it. Slow deep breathing, extending the exhale, humming, massaging the neck area and we're going to go through that at the end. So when you have a healthy vagus nerve, in your gut it helps with digestion by releasing stomach acid. It helps with moving the food along the intestines. It helps with letting your brain know that you're full. In the kidneys it helps to filter toxins and blood flow. In your pancreas, it helps to break down food and regulate blood sugar throughout the day.

There's so much more that the vagus nerve does, again making an impact on every single organ and every process in our body. A healthy vagus nerve also helps to reduce chronic inflammation. It dampens the fight or flight response. We're all going through tremendous stress right now, whether there's illness on top of the pandemic and the riots going on. So one of the ways about decreasing that stress is through breathing. When we have stress, that's a cumulative stress on a daily basis, your body produces a hormone called cortisol, and that gets released. That cortisol creates a low level of inflammation in the body.

If there's that reaction, knee jerk reaction all the time and that stress level is high all the time that inflammation can become chronic. An inflammation is what causes many illnesses; think of diabetes, think of CLPD and many, many more. Next slide. The research shows slow deep breathing, defined as an inhale equal to five to six seconds and an exhale of six plus seconds or more is remembering the vagus nerve. You want to feel your belly expand as you breath in and return back to its steady state as you breathe out.

Your respiratory rate, meaning breaths per minute should be between four and 10. You want to breath in and out through your nose. This is important because if you breathe in through your nose, you're able to absorb more oxygen and breathing through your mouth will end up sapping the moisture and irritating the lungs. Next slide. So today we're going to learn the NAP breathing method. It's called the NAP because you can nap anywhere, anytime.

So you can nap while you're cleaning, cooking, which we've all been doing lots of. You can nap while you're taking a walk, anytime. Okay, you can stop the share, please. So I'm going to teach you the NAP breathing method, and you're going to place your hands on either side of your larynx. The N stands for neutral, neutral larynx. So you want to be able to, if you place your hand on either side of your throat, you want to be able to move your throat from side to side, that area easily and easily without changing your vocal quality.

So you see I'm mobilizing this area and my voice remains the same. You can begin to also then massage through the front of the neck. Remember that vagus nerve runs down either side of the neck and one of the other ways to get to it is through massage. Then if you placed your hands on your muscle by your jaw, so if you open and close the mouth and you feel that sort of muscle snapping over the jaw, and you just create a little pressure here. Notice if there's any tenderness or tension. If there's tenderness throughout the facial area, the neck or the throat, it sends signals to your brain that there's a threat and increases stress levels.

The A stands for in NAP, at position. At position of the diaphragm, so when we breathe in, you want the diaphragm to flatten and when we exhale, we want there to be a dome shape. So if you take your hands like a C and then you bring your fingers in towards you, you're going to slouch a little bit and see if you can get your fingers underneath your rib cage, underneath the rib cage. You're going to walk your fingers out, underneath the rib cage. If you notice any tenderness there, you want to stay on that spot until it decreases while you're breathing. Again, we're looking to release any restrictions or tension where the breath is flowing.

The P is my favorite. It stands for pitching. I'm not a good singer at all. I used to sing all the time, but not anymore. So the P stands for pitching, which means humming. Humming is another way or vibration in the throat is another way to stimulate the vagus nerve. So we're going to practice our breathing now and on our exhale we're going to lengthen that exhale and hum. I just need to do one thing right here because I don't see anyone. Sorry. Good. So we're going to breath into the belly. So remember your notes that you did from the beginning when we assessed your breath, when you assessed your own breath.

You're going to close your eyes again. You're going to inhale into your belly and as you exhale, make it fun everyone. I want to hear it; you're going to at hum. Inhale again into the belly and exhale and hum. This last time we're going to add it all together. We're going to get the best parts of stimulating the vagus nerve. You're going to massage through your back, right, the sides of the neck. You're going to breathe into the belly and you're going to hum your exhales. Great. So thank you so much. That was fun for me and enjoyable. I hope you learnt something and please ask questions later and we'll tag Michelle now.

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Melissa Rosen:

Okay, thank you.

Michelle Stravitz:

I'm right here. Should I get started?

Melissa Rosen:

Yes, please.

Michelle Stravitz:

Okay. So let me start by just saying Amy, thank you so much for that first segment. I'm grateful to you not only because I'm a huge fan myself of yoga and breath work, but because you've just basically set me and everyone else in this webinar up for being open to listening and hearing things, with that breath work, you calmed us all down. I mean, there's nothing better than having someone right before you give a presentation, teach you how to breathe and calm yourself, right? Then everyone else you've kind of opened us up intellectually, ready to listen, ready to change, socially and emotionally ready for some input. So I really appreciate that.

Amy talked about a lot about moving your breath and I'd like to focus now on talking about moving our bodies. So I'll let you put up that first slide and I'll tell you a little bit about what I'd like to talk about today. There we go. As Melissa said, today's actually a very special day for me because it is literally today that I mark five years since the day I was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer. I have two messages for those of you who have either been diagnosed with triple negative or are undergoing aggressive treatment for breast cancer.

One is yes, you can make it to five years and two yes, this hair is all new and no it wasn't curly before. So today is also very special for me because Sharsheret was a very big part of my own journey with breast cancer and they were an incredible support system for me, and I got a lot of good advice from Sharsheret along the way during these past five years. So it's my pleasure to give back by sharing some of what I've learned over the past five years with all of you.

Why do I mention this? Not because my particular situation or journey is important today in and of itself, but because what I bring you today is what I've learned through my own personal experience and a lot of reading and research and work that I've done through 2Unstoppable related to the importance of movement and exercise after a cancer diagnosis. So I truly understand from my own experience the benefits of exercise, as well as the challenges of doing it and making it happen in your own life.

So as she said, I'm the co-founder of an organization called 2Unstoppable and we are all about inspiring and supporting women to get moving while they are having treatment for cancer or during the entire long journey of survivors. So next slide. The truth is that my message is really very simple today, and that is that exercise is good. Before I go on, if you would like to argue with me about that particular idea you can put it in the chat, but I can't imagine that we don't know that exercise is good.

Next slide. We should all do more of it and that's true of anyone at any time probably, but next slide, this is especially true if you have had cancer. The reason I mention it this way is because not only is it really quite a simple message, exercise is good and it's really important if you've had cancer. But I think that many people make the connection between the importance of exercise and your cardiac health, or they make the connection between exercise and diabetes, but they don't necessarily make the connection between exercise and cancer and the benefits of exercise after you've been diagnosed with cancer.

Michelle Stravitz:

People know that there's a connection with smoking, that they don't necessarily think about the connection with exercise and I think it's really important. Next slide. So I think of exercise as not just a nice idea and something that's annoyingly important, but really it's part of our complimentary treatment plan. It's really part of my treatment, both during my active treatment that I underwent with the physicians as well as the ongoing lifestyle changes that I need to make.

Michelle Stravitz:

So, "Exercise truly is medicine and if the benefits of exercise could be encapsulated in a pill, it would be prescribed to every cancer patient worldwide." This is a quote from Dr. Prue Cormie in Australia, where they've actually already made the statement that exercise should be part of regular standard of care. Next slide. So I want to talk about some specifics, okay? There are some large studies that have been done and then meta studies that have been done. And I'm not sure that everybody's aware of the significance that exercise can have both on our experience during treatment as well as our overall long term outcomes.

Michelle Stravitz:

So first of all, physical activity has been shown to have the greatest positive impact of all lifestyle factors on reducing cancer recurrence. There are lots of things we can do to improve our lifestyle and actually Sharsheret has a whole section on healthy living. That includes nutrition and emotional well-being and so on, but exercise is actually a very significant component on that. Studies have shown that women diagnosed with breast cancer who exercise regularly have 40% better survival rates. To me, that's just an absolutely astounding number.

Michelle Stravitz:

I remember when I was diagnosed and we were talking about treatment and we were thinking about this treatment or that treatment, or this surgery or that surgery might impact my likely survival rate by 2% or 4% differences. Here we're talking about a lifestyle change that can impact survival rates by 40% overall. Similarly, women who exercise for 150 minutes a week getting moderate to vigorous exercise typically have 40 to 50% lower likelihood of recurrence. Again, an astounding number and something that you can take control of.

Michelle Stravitz:

I want to point out that, that 150 minutes is this number of minutes of exercise that are specifically used in the studies. They're actually consistent with the same recommendations for the general population. Everyone in the general population is recommended to exercise 150 minutes a week, but we're going to talk later about how intimidating that can feel and how we can get through that or around it. I also want to point out that during treatment, we often have experiences. We can also experience functional decline. I mean, we might lose strength. We might have fatigue. We might lose bone density. We might lose a lot of other things and exercise can actually help minimize that functional decline that is brought on by treatment.

Michelle Stravitz:

Exercise has been shown to minimize, fight off and reverse many side effects of cancer treatment and particularly in the area of fatigue, it is like the number one way to fight fatigue. I know that sounds completely counterintuitive, but my oncologist was clear with me during treatment that if I actually

stayed active, I would likely be less fatigued. That's of course, every individual is different and there's going to be days where you don't have the energy to walk to the mailbox, let alone exercise fully, but to the extent that you can stay active and just move your body a little bit, it can actually help fight fatigue.

Then exercise has been shown to elevate mood, boost the immune system, increase the efficacy of treatment and overall improve outcomes. So next slide. There is emerging evidence in this area that exercise not only improves our well being, but it actually might fight the cancer itself. So exercise or physical activity can change our body's chemistry and actually make it a less hospitable environment for cancer to grow. It can have beneficial effects against the tumor itself and can actually, there's been studies to show that it increases the effectiveness of radiation therapy, chemotherapy and even immunotherapy.

A little earlier I quoted Prue Cormie in Australia, in Australia they're actually doing some early studies where women are going or patients are going right from the infusion clinic where they get their chemotherapy directly into an exercise lab where they're doing supervised exercise to get their bodies moving immediately after infusion and they're showing early results that it actually improves the efficacy of the treatment. Next slide. So here, I'm showing you a whole long list. It's almost like a laundry list of benefits of exercise, both during and after treatment. This list comes from the American Cancer Society with some slight modifications here.

There's a long list of benefits. I'm not going to read them all off to you, but I'd like you to each like take a look at this list and think about which ones resonate the most for you, right? Which side effects or which benefits are most important to you and might be something that would light the fire under your belly to get yourself moving. For me, I remember learning through a variety of webinars, just like this one when I was in treatment and especially when I moved into that post-treatment phase of early survivorship.

I remember learning that we can lose muscle mass during chemotherapy and also radiation and surgery can reduce our muscle mass, especially because it's hard to move right after that surgery or during radiation, you can lose some of your mobility and then it's hard to get that muscle back. So exercise actually can help with that. I'd like to give a shout out to the Physical Therapy World, because I recommend that you consider, your doctor might recommend physical therapy and they can help you get started. So to build back some of that original mobility, to get your strength back and then be able to move into a regular exercise program.

For some people it's really important to be able to maintain their independence. So exercise can help you be less dependent on others because of what we talked about earlier, it reduces the functional decline due to treatment. It can help you control your weight. It can fight that cancer related fatigue that we talked about. It might, for some it lessens their nausea and so on and so forth. So there are so many specific benefits. The real important thing is which one or more resonate most with you, hold that idea in your head and use it to motivate yourself to get moving as much as you can.

Next slide. So I've talked about how exercise is good, right? I've talked about why it's important, especially after cancer, but it's hard. It's hard to get moving. It's hard to get yourself up and about. It's hard to find the energy, especially when you are feeling fatigued and when you are trying to conserve that energy during treatment. It's hard to find the time, there are logistical barriers, there are psychological barriers and that's not just true for women who have had a cancer diagnosis. It's really true in the general population.

Most people aren't getting the exercise they need. So some of that comes from what our definition of exercise might be. Do you think that exercise means you have to go to the gym and sweat for 45 minutes? Does it mean you have to run a marathon? Does it mean you have to lift heavy weights and build up bulk in your arms? Not necessarily. There are lots of different ways to get your body moving

and at 2Unstoppable we actually talk about just movement, right? Do whatever moves you because the best exercise for you is the one you're going to do. I mean, that's what's really important.

So if you enjoy it, you're more likely to do it. If you find it stimulating, motivating, interesting, whatever it is, you're more likely to get up and get going. So you need the motivation and then you need to have something that you actually find joy in or enjoy doing. So exercise can be belly dancing. It can be gardening. This might not bring joy, but it can be vacuuming your house. It can be walking up and down the stairs of your home. Actually when we talk about that 150 minutes, you can break that down into two 75 minute segments or 75, two minutes segments. There was a New York Times article that came out a year ago, or so that said that actually exercise can be done two minutes at a time and the bottom line is, it all adds up.

So give yourself credit for every two minutes of exercise that you do because every two minutes that you're not sitting on the couch is better than zero. So we talk about incremental exercise, just a little at a time, but you add it all up. We also talk about incidental exercise. So things that you want to give yourself credit for the movement, even if it's just part of your day. So if you park a little further away before you go to the grocery store and you walk a few more steps in the parking lot that counts.

Everything counts towards increasing your movement. They say that sedentary is the new smoking, right? So just keep your body moving, that's what's really important. Again, give yourself credit because what happens is that we think about physical activity and that difficult word exercise, and it often invokes guilt. It often invokes intimidation, but really it's accessible for all of us, it just depends on what moves you. So our message in 2020 is keep moving in 2020, despite all the current challenges and do what moves you.

Next slide. So you might be wondering like, how do I get started? There's a ton of ways to get started and it might just mean walking across the parking lot at the supermarket, but it also might mean finding some valuable resources to help you get started. So 2Unstoppable is a non-profit organization that I co-founded with my friend and another breast cancer survivor Ilana Gamerman. We are all about helping women get moving after a cancer diagnosis. We're trying to help you improve your own outcomes, take control of your own situation. We are here to inspire and support you in that process.

So our website actually provides a number of opportunities to help you get moving and a number of ways to help get started. One is, the reason we call ourselves 2Unstoppable is because we actually offer a free online fitness buddy-matching program. So similar to Sharsheret's peer support program, we recognize that we can help each other through this. So there are a lot of studies that show that women who buddy up for fitness are more likely to get started and to maintain their own exercise regimen. And also, even just in any given experience of exercising, you're more likely to work harder and do it longer if you're with someone or you have somebody to hold you accountable.

So part of how I came up with this idea was again, through my own experience, when I was going through treatment, I often would walk with a buddy. We would walk and talk and we would support each other. So it was another woman who had either been through cancer treatment or one who was undergoing treatment at the same time. We would talk about our experience as we would walk together and if they weren't showing up at my house at 9:00 on a Saturday morning, I might not have gotten out of bed and walked, but because there was somebody showing up to do it with me, I got up and I started walking and I probably wouldn't have walked for 45 minutes if I wasn't walking and talking with someone else.

So again, it gets you going and it keeps you going. So we actually have this program where we can match you with a fitness buddy. It's kind of like a dating service. You go in, you set up a profile, you search through other women. It's like match.com for women with cancer, but you're finding someone to be

your fitness buddy. In this world of the current pandemic and virtual everything, we are encouraging women to find virtual buddies.

So I've actually had the experience myself of setting up a virtual walk with someone. We set up a time. We're going to walk at 2:00 on Tuesday. We get on the phone together, I'm walking in my neighborhood, she's walking in her neighborhood and we're talking on the phone, and that's a way to support each other, even virtually, or you can text someone, what are you doing for exercise today? So there are a lot of benefits of having a fitness buddy.

2Unstoppable also has on our website and you're welcome to visit it, we have a lot of different resources to help you get started. We have videos and articles and information that tells you about exercise and ways to get moving even from home. One of the things I want to let everyone know about is that there are actually fitness trainers who are specifically trained in oncology fitness. So there are several certifications out there that are certifying a personal trainer or a fitness professional in how to work with cancer patients and survivors. So they understand the side effects that you have.

They understand the limitations and strengths that you might have, and the special needs that you might have as someone who's undergone, either radiation or chemotherapy or certain surgeries or whatever it is. There are ones, there are special yoga for cancer. There is Pink Pilates and on our website we actually explain all of those and help you find a trainer through their directories. We also have an online community with some now virtual events and anyone is welcome to join them. So I welcome you to email me or visit our website. I thank you very much for the opportunity to share this idea and my message to you is keep moving.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you very much. That is wonderful, and I was watching the chat box. Thank you to everybody who shared different programs that they are a part of to keep themselves active during and after cancer treatment. In addition, you can go to Sharsheret's website and we have a program called Thriving Again, which really is all about living healthfully after a cancer diagnosis, both physically and emotionally, and it was all sorts of resources including 2Unstoppable. So you can certainly look at that.

We received a lot of questions during and before. So let's start off at Michelle actually, let's start with one for you. You noted that 150 minutes of exercise is what we're going for, but is it any type of exercise? Does it have to be aerobic? What are our options there?

Michelle Stravitz:

So I think there's kind of two ways to answer this question honestly. One is that both getting your heart rate up a little bit. So when we say moderate to vigorous exercise, it's good to get to a place where perhaps you can talk, maybe say a sentence, but you can't sing. So you are raising your heart rate up a little bit. You can do that by walking. It might mean increasing the pace a little, it might mean going up a hill, but even walking, you can raise your heart rate a little bit.

So it is good to raise your heart rate a little bit. By the way, you can do that with vacuuming and walking up and down the stairs too in your house. So that's what we talk about with moderate to vigorous exercise, essentially, right? Sort of again, being able to talk, but not sing, but they also recommend particularly for breast cancer survivors, some weight bearing exercise, so that might include some strength training. So it is good to do something that involves weights. It can mean lifting a five-gallon jug of water. It can mean lifting cans of food in your own home. You don't have to have a lot of good equipment for this, but something that involves weight bearing.

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That is, again, it also depends not only on your goal to just get your body moving, but perhaps what specific side effects you're addressing. So you might have lost bone density because of chemotherapy or chemo induced menopause, or just aging and you want to work on that, so that does require some weight bearing exercise. It might, when you're working on fighting fatigue, it's more about just moving and getting your heart rate up. When you're talking about increasing your mobility, it involves stretching, right?

So maybe your upper body is a little harder to move because of a surgery or radiation, and then it's more about stretching. So some of what type of exercise we're recommending is depending on what your goals are and what your concerns are. But it's also about incorporating both something that raises your heart rate as well as strength training.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you, Michelle. Actually, that is a perfect segue into the next set of questions that we received. We'll start off with Amy. So one of the questions has to do with range of motion and different treatments, things to be on the lookout for as we're going through cancer treatment and swelling and lymphedema. Then specifically somebody asked, you were talking about going under the ribs and feeling there, if somebody is doing body massage for lymphedema does doing the massage under the rib cage impact that in a positive or a negative way?

Amy Shapses:

Okay. So firstly I think you said about movement after ... can you start from the beginning just for a second?

Melissa Rosen:

Absolutely. The two concerns were range of movement and lymphedema.

Amy Shapses:

Okay.

Melissa Rosen:

So, got it?

Amy Shapses:

Yeah. So depending on where you are in your treatment, so if you're coming right after your surgery, I generally like to see patients preoperatively to find out what their baseline movement is, that's my major goal. I bang my head against the wall begging; please send them before so I know what's really happening in the body. If that's the case, that's wonderful. If not, if they come to me, I usually see patients right after the drains are removed. With doctor's clearance, they come to me and the first things we're working on are what my goals were.

Again, feeling safe and comfortable and regaining motion and movement through specific stretches. It really depends on where they are in their sort of path and how close to surgery they were. With regards to lymphedema, it's still out there. There's a zero to 30% chance, but because of sentinel lymph node biopsies, this has been way down. I do still see some patients with lymphedema. Generally, it happens in the first three years of treatment, but it can happen later in life if there are any more comorbidities, like

heart problems or vascular disease, which again is why it's so important to continue to move and exercise and stay well because of the other things that can happen.

Then with regard to the ribs, what we were trying to do at that time is to mobilize or to track the diaphragm underneath the rib cage to look for any restrictions. So breathing and the diaphragm itself with regard to lymphedema helps to pump fluid in the body. So all of this breath work is helpful for lymphedema as well. So that's really just about the restrictions and you're looking to see if there are any restrictions there. So there are plenty where I'm working on patients and I'm working through their abdomen because there can be kind of tightness there too, from the surgery itself and then from overall just not breathing well.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you. That was actually very helpful. Let's go on to a question that's really about the obvious and that's that we're all in this state of physical isolation now. So the question is, do we need to delay or stop therapy in the age of COVID? I'll give that one to Amy and then for maybe Michelle or both of you, what can we do to maintain our progress or not lose progress until we can go back to physical therapy or going back to the gym?

Amy Shapses:

I mean, I think that it depends on where you live, right? So if you're in New York City, which is where I'm based, we were asked to close our practices. Hospital-based closed as well, I have friends over there. So I think it depends on where you live. I have continued very successfully with my patients virtually, so they don't get the unbelievable hands on work that I give, but I've taught them all different self-care models to use with a myofascial release pull.

What I found was it's an amazing experience to be in someone's home and to actually have them have to find a spot for their own, get the equipment and the tools that they need to be able to help themselves because self-care is unbelievably important. My patients, I generally see them two or three times a week. I can't be with them every day and I really found this helps to integrate their self-care movement regime, myofascial release regime at home. Did I answer all the questions there?

Melissa Rosen:

I think so. Amy, excuse me, Michelle, do you have anything to add about ways to keep up our progress?

Michelle Stravitz:

Absolutely. I think that, although true, we can't go to the gym right now. On the other hand, one of the silver linings of this pandemic or this social isolation period has been that there are so many resources available online. I mean, so many organizations have the common word now pivoted to offering programs online. Some of them are still at cost. Some of them are free. On our website, we actually have added a whole bunch of at home videos, things that you can do at home, including extra exercises, again that are literally you can use cans of food, you can use water bottles, you can use a towel to be your resistance.

You don't need any fancy equipment at home, which is good because I understand they're hard to find on Amazon right now. There are a lot of opportunities to actually work out at home. Some of the benefits of that are that actually it's more efficient. You don't have to drive to the gym, park there, go inside and do your thing and then drive back. You can do 45 minutes of exercise from beginning to end and that's all it takes.

Breath, Body, & Movement

I also think that a lot of people have been taking to walking and walking is an amazing form of movement. It's good for us in many, many ways and at this time of the year, we can walk in nature, which is also better for us. Some of us feel comfortable like socially distance walking. So you can kind of walk with a buddy or a friend or a family member or a furry family member and keep yourself company and supported while walking, or you can do my little phone example, right? Talk on the phone while you walk and have a companion in that way. So there are many, many ways to keep moving even during this situation. And I think the unbelievable amounts of resources that are now out there are again, a silver lining and a gift.

Melissa Rosen:

Thank you. That's great, and you should all know that Sharsheret is in the process of creating a new page on our website that has links to many of those free resources and videos for you to watch created by many of our partners and experts in the field, so that's a resource that's coming your way very soon. I have one more question and then a couple of notes to finish with. Amy, how do you know if your vagus nerve is healthy?

Amy Shapses:

If you're well, really.

Melissa Rosen:

Oh, really, it's that simple?

Amy Shapses:

Yeah, it's that simple. If your vagus nerve is not healthy, you're more reactive, you're more sluggish. You have poor digestion. Maybe your skin's not healthy. There's a multitude of things that inflammation causes that overall stress piece. So really if you're healthy and well, you're doing a good job and it can always be improved obviously with walking and with slow, deep breathing.

Melissa Rosen:

You know what, thank you. I want to thank both of you so much for sharing your expertise. I am sure it was as helpful to all of you as it was as inspiring to me. I also want to take a second to thank our sponsors, which include Seattle Genetics, GSK, Eisai, Daiichi-Sankyo, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Siegmund and Edith Blumenthal Memorial Fund. I want to remind you that Sharsheret is here for you and your loved ones during this time.

We provide emotional support, mental health counseling, and other programs designed to help you navigate through your cancer experience. They are all completely free, completely private one-on-one. Our number is (866) 474-2774. You can also email us at clinicalstaff@sharsheret.org. It's right there in the chat room. Our social workers, genetic counselor are available to each and every one of you. You are our priority, your health, your well being, and we're going to get through this together.

Our next webinar is scheduled for Monday at 3:00 pm EST/12pm Pacific. As people across the country and one of our speakers today actually acknowledged this, as people across the country begin to resume some level of life outside of our homes, Dr. Jane Carleton, who is the associate chief of clinical affairs at the Monter Cancer Center of Northwell Health will be discussing specifically that, re-entry into outside life for those impacted by cancer. You can register for that by going on our website and the link is also posted in our chat box below.

Breath, Body, & Movement

Additionally, on Monday evening at 6:00pm EST/9pm PST, we are partnering with the Manhattan JCC to bring you Broadway's Best for Breast Cancer. A series that joins the best of Broadway and medical and lifestyle information for those impacted specifically by breast cancer. I will be on this Monday's webinar representing Sharsheret, which will be co-hosted by Broadway star, Mandy Gonzalez. She was in Hamilton, Wicked, In the Heights, and we'll also include Kelly McGonigal, the author of Joy of Movement: How Exercise Helps Us Find Happiness, Hope, Connection, and Courage.

I like that because it's truly another perspective about the importance of breath and movement and you guys talked about the physical, and she'll talk a little bit about the emotional as well as that kind of stuff. So registration is also on our website for that as well as the link is in the chat room. We continue to provide medical updates and information on physical and emotional health during these unprecedented times. So please be on the lookout for emails and social media for future webinars. And as always, you can visit our website for information or access to all of these programs. Thank you again for joining us and we look forward to seeing you in the future. Stay well.

Michelle Stravitz:

Keep moving.

Melissa Rosen:

Keep moving.

Amy Shapses:

Bye.

Melissa Rosen:

Bye, bye everyone.

Michelle Stravitz:

Thank you everyone.

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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