

FLORENCE AND JOSEPH APPELMAN  
EDUCATIONAL BOOKLET SERIES

# From the Practical to the Spiritual

Caring for Loved Ones Living with Advanced Cancer



This booklet is dedicated with gratitude to Sharsheret's visionary Senior Advisor, Shera Dubitsky, for her ongoing devotion and care in establishing, cultivating, and nurturing the Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg Embrace™ Program for women living with advanced breast and ovarian cancer, for her insight and contribution in developing this resource, and for her 12 years of invaluable service to Sharsheret.

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# From the Practical to the Spiritual

Caring for Loved Ones Living with Advanced Cancer

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## GET TO KNOW SHARSHERET

Sharsheret supports Jewish women and families facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer at every stage — before, during, and after diagnosis.

Our name, Sharsheret, means “chain” in Hebrew and represents the strong, nurturing connections we build to support Jewish women and their families at every stage of breast cancer and ovarian cancer. We help women and families connect to our community in the way that feels most comfortable, taking into consideration their stage of life, diagnosis, or treatment, as well as their connection to Judaism. We also provide

educational resources and programs for women and families to improve their quality of life. We understand that young Jewish women have unique concerns when it comes to breast cancer and ovarian cancer, and we are the only organization that specializes in serving them. Our programs are easy to access.

**Sharsheret is wherever you are.**

## OUR PROGRAMS

### The Link Program®

- **Peer Support Network**, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer or ovarian cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences
- **Peer Support Network Expansion**, connecting people to help make informed decisions about their treatment team with patients of the health care professionals they’re considering

Sharsheret is a growing community. Together, we are creating a chain of strong links that reaches across the country so that no woman or family of Jewish descent needs to face the challenges of breast cancer or ovarian cancer alone.

Visit [www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org) or call us at **866.474.2774** to participate in our programs and to become a link in the Sharsheret chain. All inquiries are confidential and answered by qualified staff who can help. Callers who choose to are welcome to remain anonymous.

- **Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg Embrace™ Program**, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer or recurrent ovarian cancer  
*Dedicated in memory of Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg by The Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer Foundation*
- **Genetics for Life®**, addressing hereditary breast cancer and ovarian cancer
- **Busy Box®**, for parents facing or at high risk for breast cancer or ovarian cancer while raising children or teens
- **Best Face Forward®**, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment  
*Dedicated in honor of Bella Chacky Diamond and Sylvia Diamond Geller*
- **Best Face Forward 2.0®**, offering financial subsidies for non-medical services critical to a woman's quality of life, including wigs, scalp cooling, and eyebrow and nipple tattooing
- **The Florence & Laurence Spungen Family Foundation Family Focus® Program**, 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
- **Thriving Again®**, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship plans for young breast cancer survivors

## Education and Outreach Programs

- **Health Care Webinars**, on issues unique to younger women and Jewish women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer
- **Beatrice Milberg Campus Program**, outreach and education to students on campus  
*Dedicated in memory of Beatrice Milberg, dedicated by Sherry & Neil Cohen*
- **Florence and Joseph Appleman Educational Booklet Series**, culturally relevant publications for Jewish women, their families, and health care professionals  
*In honor of Florence and Joseph Appleman, dedicated by Karen & Mottie Guttmann, Tammy & Dr. David J. Katz, Shari & Nathan J. Lindenbaum, Aviva & Dr. Yitzzy Jacobowitz*

## INTRODUCTION

Hearing that a loved one is diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer or recurrent/advanced ovarian cancer may lead you to think about worst case scenarios. At Sharsheret, we receive many inquiries from family and friends asking how they can best support their loved one. From the Practical to the Spiritual provides you with practical tips, testimonials, spiritual guidance, and references to traditional Jewish prayers and meditations for those living with advanced breast or ovarian cancer.

This resource is geared towards people living with advanced cancer and their families; spiritual leaders; healthcare professionals; and Jewish day schools and religious schools with students who have mothers living with metastatic breast cancer or advanced ovarian cancer. Through From the Practical to the Spiritual, we hope to offer comfort and spiritual support from the perspective of Jewish tradition, but relevant to all, no matter how you identify during a most challenging time, improving quality of life for those living with advanced breast or ovarian cancer and alleviating the loneliness and isolation associated with this chronic illness. In Judaism, there is a concept called *Refuat HaGuf* (healing of the body) and *Refuat HaNefesh* (healing of the soul). So, when Jewish people pray for healing, we inherently pray for both. Thus, it is understood that

both healing of the body and soul are necessary to move through cancer, or whatever has caused one's need for healing.

When a loved one is diagnosed with advanced cancer, anxiety provoking images of abrupt illness and death may fill your thoughts. But this is not what an advanced cancer journey looks like for many people. There may be someone in your community, friend group, or even family, who is living with advanced cancer and you may not know it. This is because when someone is first diagnosed, they may feel relatively healthy, other than having an advanced diagnosis. They may be on treatments that have few cosmetic side effects, and they are likely living life as close to "normal" as possible: working, vacationing, dating, and caring for friends and family.

Metastatic breast cancer and advanced ovarian cancer are chronic illnesses that, to date, have no cure. Although the diseases are progressive, the goal is to stabilize or stop the cancer from growing for longer periods of time. Typically, someone may respond to treatment and remain on that medication until there is new activity of cancer growth. At that point, her medical team will switch treatments hoping to stabilize the cancer until there is new activity, which will result in a new treatment intervention. This is the journey. There are increasingly new cancer treatments that are enabling people to keep cancer under control for months or years after the initial diagnosis.

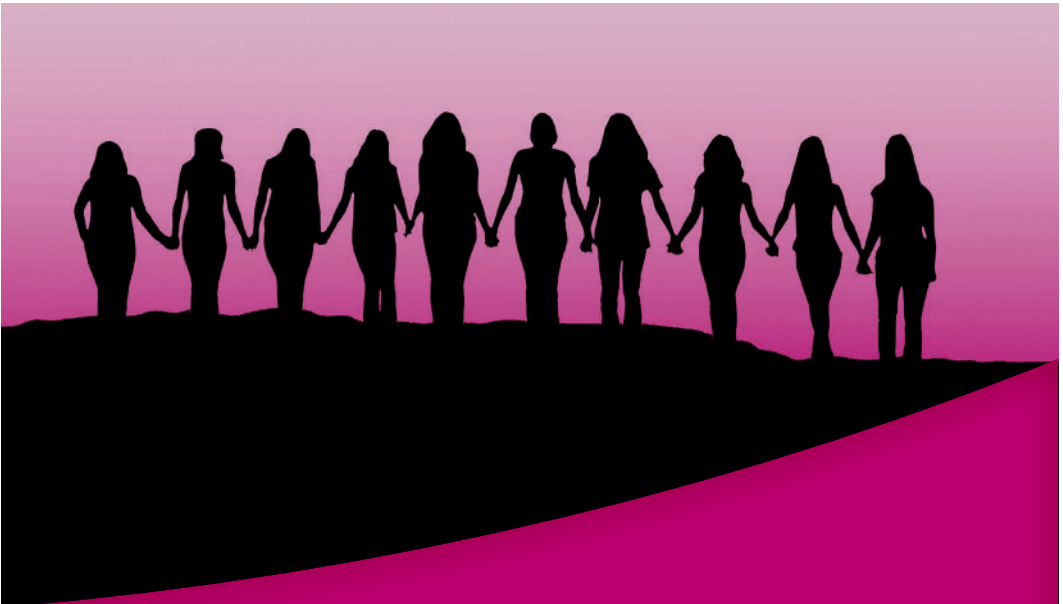
Researchers from around the world are working tirelessly to understand advanced cancer with the goal of slowing the progression, improving quality of life, and one day, hopefully, finding a cure. People are successfully living side by side with their advanced cancer diagnoses.

As one Sharsheret caller said:

*“Since my original diagnosis of stage II breast cancer, I was always waiting for the other shoe to drop. Well, that shoe has dropped and I now have metastatic breast cancer. I am focusing on enjoying life walking barefoot on the beach.”*

Instead of focusing on the next date of treatment or scan, many people are trying to focus on living the lives that they are fighting for. It’s not always easy. There is often an emotional roller coaster; feeling fear, anxiety, anger, or sadness one moment, and joy, happiness, and hope the next.

As the disease progresses, you may see their health deteriorate and hear about more serious side effects from treatment, and their experience facing end of life issues. It’s important to remember that people will continue to experience a full range of emotions. You may see a shift in their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Many people living with advanced cancer report that it is not helpful watching others struggle to try to “say the right thing,” and thus often say nothing instead. What seems most important is to hear “No matter what, I’m here with you.” It’s even okay to say, “I don’t know what to say, but I’m here.” It’s important to remember that how someone lived her life before diagnosis is often how they will go through their cancer journey. As you continue to support your loved one, Sharsheret is here to support you every step of the way.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP: PRACTICAL TIPS

“It was uncomfortable to accept help from friends and family, but ultimately it was very important. I had the opportunity to feel the love and support that comes from the community. And, I knew that no matter how I was feeling, there would always be someone to take care of me and my family. I was not alone, and knowing that was a very powerful feeling.”

— Amy, diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer at age 43

Many find it difficult to ask for help. Most Sharsheret callers tell us they tend to think of themselves as the ones who take care of others. As part of a community that values making the world a better place (*tikkun olam*) and giving to others (*tzedakah*), asking for or accepting help can often be difficult. Understanding that friends and family members feel empowered when they are helpful to a loved one can often make their offers of assistance easier to accept. That being said, whether someone feels healthy and is working, dating, or taking care of family, or their health is declining, they may also want to feel that they're contributing to the relationship even in the midst of their illness. If your loved one wants to be of assistance to you, or lend a listening ear about other events in your life, accept it. It is always meaningful to be able to be a contributing partner in a relationship. And they often appreciate the distraction of talking about something other than cancer. Every day, Sharsheret fields questions from family members and friends about how to best support their loved one who has advanced cancer. Here are some

helpful tips based on wisdom from the Sharsheret callers.

### At Diagnosis

**Follow their lead.** Let your loved one share the information they choose to share in the way that is most comfortable for them. It is not necessary to ask a lot of medical questions. What is important is being a good listener. Listening is a caring gesture that shows you support them.

**Validate their feelings.** Your loved one is likely experiencing a range of emotions. Whether they are scared, sad, empowered, or grateful, it's important to validate their feelings. While it's tempting to share stories about other people with cancer or offer “pep talks,” remember that this is their own experience and they should set the emotional tone at any given time.

**Let them make the decisions.** When your family member or friend is diagnosed with cancer, they may feel like circumstances are out of their control. In the areas where they can maintain control, let them do so. Remember that each of us handles challenging situations differently. Some want to learn as much information as they can about their



illness, while others would rather just be told the minimum of what they need to know to get through the experience. Whichever approach your loved one takes, it is the right one for them. You may not agree with their surgical or treatment decisions, but these decisions are theirs to make. Let them decide which household or family responsibilities they are willing to delegate. You can gently offer suggestions or help think things through, but in the end, support the decisions they make.

### **Create your own support system.**

Although your loved one is the one with the diagnosis, their journey will have a tremendous impact on you, bringing lots of complex emotions. Many find that talking to other caregivers who are also coping with stress, uncertainty, or loneliness helps them feel supported. It's also helpful to get support from friends, colleagues, a Rabbi or spiritual support, and mental health professionals, including the social workers at Sharsheret. Remember, by taking good care of yourself, you will be better able to support your loved one.



**Help share updates.** It can be both physically and emotionally draining to share updates with friends and family. You can help your loved one set up an online sharing system. Websites allow you both to post updates that your loved one wants to share with friends and family, alleviating the burden of having to talk with each person individually. Sites to consider include [www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org) and [www.mylifeline.org](http://www.mylifeline.org).

### **During Treatment**

**Be clear about what you can offer.** It's tempting to ask your loved one what you can do to be helpful. Recognize that they may not know what they need, or may ask for assistance you are unable to provide. It may be more helpful to offer a list of ways that you can help. Here are some suggestions:

- Keep them company at home, at the hospital, or during treatment
- Rides to treatment or to the hospital when needed
- Accompany them and take notes at doctor appointments
- Organize medical and/or insurance information, estate planning and legal documents
- Offer to research additional treatment and support options
- Organize or participate in a prayer group

- Purchase clothing that may help them feel more comfortable
- Provide magazines or other distractions
- Arrange a break for their spouse, partner, or primary caregiver
- Arrange a cleaning service for their home
- Arrange for or provide meals on a one-time basis or set up a meal train to share with others
- Shop for groceries
- Help with laundry
- Carpool for their children
- Help their children with homework
- Take their children to an activity
- Encourage them to reach out to Sharsheret for support

**Do what you can, and admit what you can't.** No one can do everything. It's okay and important to acknowledge your limits. Come to terms with feeling overwhelmed (it will happen) and resolve to be firm when deciding what you can and cannot handle on your own. Your loved one needs you. You cannot do this alone. Together, and with Sharsheret's support, you can get through.

**Keep in touch.** Treatment or recovery from treatment can continue for any length of time. Remember to reach out and stay in touch with your loved one. Check in to tell them you care and that you are still thinking of them. A quick note, e-mail, or phone message saying "I'm thinking of you" will lift spirits and

help them continue to feel supported. Let them know that it's okay if they do not return your e-mails or phone calls. Perhaps, even put a reminder in your calendar to reach out every few weeks because life gets complicated and you might forget that doesn't make you a bad friend, just a busy person!

**Life beyond cancer.** Your loved one may not want to feel like a cancer patient 24/7. It's okay to share the happenings in your life, updates about your family, what's happening in the community, or the plot of a favorite book or television show, enabling them to have cancer-free zones. They may be seeking to experience life beyond cancer when engaged in daily activities and routines. Allow them to take the lead and avoid overwhelming her with questions about her illness or treatment. Remember that their family members may also want to experience life beyond cancer and are not a conduit for information about how their loved one is coping. It is particularly important to remember this with children. You might see them at school and around the community, and they, too, need to have cancer-free zones.

**The journey continues.** Your loved one is living with advanced cancer as a chronic illness, so their feelings and experiences likely fluctuate as they are in and out of hospital care. Feelings may waver while in hospice considering end-of-life concerns. It's important to follow their lead and, as always, be a good and compassionate listener.

Regularly review these helpful hints and continue the meaningful and caring support that you have been offering throughout the experience. Remember to pace yourself, use your own support system, and delegate responsibilities when necessary.

**Communicate about Genetics.** The genetic component of your loved one's diagnosis may be the last thing on your mind, but eventually, it is important to ensure that your family is empowered with the genetic information they need to make the best healthcare decisions for themselves. Contact Sharsheret to speak one-on-one with our genetic counselor to provide support, context and answer any questions you might have.

### Caregiver Self-Care Tips

Being a caregiver can be extremely rewarding, but also very challenging. Most caregivers immediately put their own feelings and needs aside, however, it is important to remember that you will not be able to help your loved one if you do not help yourself first. Here are some tips on self-care that may be helpful during this time.

**Recognize a "New Normal."** Patients and caregivers alike often report feeling a loss of control after a cancer diagnosis. Learning how to manage this loss of control and care for your loved one will lead to a "new normal"—a new understanding of what your life is like now. It may also help to acknowledge that your home life, finances, and friendships may change for a period of

time. Try to manage each day's priority as they come.

**Plan for the future.** While planning may be difficult, it can help. Try to schedule fun activities on days when your loved one is not feeling the side effects of treatment. You can also give yourselves something to look forward to by planning together how you will celebrate the end of a portion of treatment. It is also important to plan for the possibility of losing your loved one. All of us, whether we have been diagnosed with cancer or not, should have in place necessary paperwork such as healthcare agent, power of attorney and a will. Having essential paperwork under control will allow you to have some peace of mind.

**Accept a helping hand.** While it can be hard to accept help, it is okay and important to have "helpers." In fact, you may find that learning to let go and to say "YES!" will ease your anxiety and lift your spirits. Keep a list of all caregiving tasks, small to large. That way, when someone asks, "Is there anything I can do?" you are able to offer specific choices such as bringing over a meal or even an item like paper towels.

**Be mindful of your health.** In order to be strong for your loved one, you need to take care of yourself. Be sure to tend to any physical ailments of your own that arise as well as get regular checkups and screening, try to eat well, and get enough sleep.

## CONNECTING THROUGH SPIRITUALITY

“Throughout my sister’s journey with recurrent ovarian cancer, I found myself asking: How can our family and community support her? How might we garner the strength to face what lies ahead? In grappling with these questions, I discovered that spirituality helped carry my community through.”

— Rachel, a caregiver

Some people facing a crisis, like an advanced cancer diagnosis, have religious needs, but many people facing crises have spiritual needs. Amidst the emotional roller coaster of cancer, spirituality can offer people a sense of purpose and healing. Studies show that patients whose non-medical needs are met have better medical outcomes because meeting those needs reduces stress. When we think of non-medical needs, we often think of finances, childcare, and healthy meals. We often forget that faith, spirituality and culture also fall into this category.

It is important that not only are the spiritual and cultural needs of the person with the advanced cancer diagnosis being addressed, but also the needs of their loved ones and caregivers. Spirituality can be a way that many individuals find meaning, hope, comfort, and inner peace in their lives. While many people find spirituality and a sense of healing through religion, some find it through meditation, art, or nature. And some people find it in their values and principles. While religion is a shared practice, spirituality is often individual and unique. Spirituality is about belief in something larger than the self. It

tries to answer questions about the meaning of life, the interconnectedness of everything, and other mysteries. Spirituality can provide a sense of purpose, peace, and connection for both the people who are diagnosed with advanced cancer, and for the family and friends supporting them. Spirituality reduces stress, promotes relaxation, and can enhance overall wellbeing. Connection and community reduce feelings of isolation. Outside of a formal community, spirituality involves being a part of something larger than oneself.

Spiritual practices encourage self-care, self-reflection, and self-compassion. Spirituality can also help people cope with uncertainty. We all face uncertainty, but for many facing advanced cancer diagnoses, it can be top of mind constantly. Spirituality can also help people cope with loss. Not just potential loss of life, but loss of health, body part and image, security and more. These are sometimes called shadow losses.

Your spiritual health and cultural connection may help you cope with the stress and emotions of your loved one’s diagnosis. Whatever your religious or spiritual path, a loved one’s advanced cancer diagnosis may prompt you to ask life’s ultimate questions such as:

- Why is this happening to me/my loved one?
- Am I being punished?
- Is it okay to feel angry?
- How do I make sense of everything?

The nature of this emotional and spiritual journey is fluid. Finding meaning in this journey can mean embracing the range of emotions you experience and accepting that there will be times when you feel more or less connected spiritually. Whether you've previously had a spiritual connection to Judaism or another religious tradition for meaning and guidance, you may find that it now has increased meaning. Like Rachel, the Sharsheret caregiver quoted above, many individuals have found it helpful to integrate spirituality, Jewish/ ethnic tradition, and culture into their lives as they cope with the emotional impact of a loved one's diagnosis. For some, the recitation of Psalms (*Tehillim*) has been a source of comfort. Others find meaning, comfort, and a sense of connection by participating in healing services or having communities create their own customized rituals for a person affected by and cancer diagnosis, either when their loved one is newly diagnosed, or when their loved one's illness has progressed and they are coping with end-of-life issues. Many people living with advanced cancer find support in knowing that their community is rallying around them, whatever stage they might be, in reciting Psalms, and being an ongoing support to people and their families. It can be beneficial and healing

for the community at large as well as providing a shared purpose.

There are also Jewish organizations that can help you find meaningful ways to integrate spirituality, culture, or Jewish tradition into supporting your loved one's journey through advanced cancer, in a way that is comfortable for you and your community. Some find comfort in speaking to a rabbi, hospital chaplain, or communal leader for spiritual guidance and support. Additionally, at Sharsheret we understand that advanced cancer affects the entire family and community. Let our program for those facing advanced cancer help support your loved one and their family. Speak with a member of Sharsheret's support team so we can connect you with resources to meet your spiritual and cultural needs.

### Psalms/Tehillim Group

The book of Psalms is an ancient text or set of liturgy. People of all backgrounds may recite Psalms for a variety of reasons, one of which is when a loved one is diagnosed with a serious illness. Some people find that through reciting Psalms, both the individual who is sick as well as those reciting Psalms can find strength to face life's challenges and feel inspired by prayer. Psalms can be a powerful and uniting experience for everyone involved.

There are a number of ways that you can participate in reciting Psalms. Some people say Psalms individually in the

privacy of their own home, while others prefer to recite Psalms together with other members of the community. In some large communities, e-mails, phone calls, or texts are sent to see who would want to participate communitywide. Other times, communities decide to create Psalms groups that meet in people's homes or synagogues. This is often called a Psalms/*Tehillim* group. Psalms are available in English and other languages so that people of all backgrounds can participate and find strength together. Some Psalms commonly associated with illness and healing include chapters 20, 30, 121, 130, and 142. Each individual and community should decide which Psalms and customs resonate best for them.

Reading of the Psalms together as part of a group can often provide the members with a sense of togetherness and purpose in supporting their loved one.

Here are some tips to consider when creating your own Psalms/*Tehillim* group:

- Designate a group coordinator. Some people find strength and meaning in being the coordinator. If you do not want to be the point person yourself, speak with your rabbi or spiritual leader to find someone who will coordinate and run your Psalms/*Tehillim* group.
- The coordinator can reach out to the community and see who is able to participate in the Psalms/*Tehillim* group at the scheduled time.
- Individual Psalm books can be ordered or downloaded online, or purchased at your local Judaica shop. The coordinator can order one set of books or pamphlets, and the individual books in the set are then distributed amongst the participants in the group.
- While Psalms can be recited in a number of different ways, some communities have the opening Psalm read out loud by one participant while everyone follows along. Following the opening prayer, each participant reads their books at their own pace until all pamphlets are finished. Once everyone reads their assigned piece, one participant can read the closing prayer. During the closing prayer, the reader will stop at a certain point (which is indicated in the prayer) and recite the names of people who you are praying for out loud.
- When reciting Psalms, Hebrew names are a person's first name followed by their mother's name (e.g.: *Leah Bat Sarah*). If you don't know your loved one's Hebrew name, you can consult with a rabbi or spiritual leader for how to recite the Psalm for them.
- When creating or leading a group, speak with your rabbi, hospital chaplain or religious leader to help create a format that you are comfortable with and for guidelines for your personal situation.

## Psalm 121

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת:	Shiyr lamma`aloth
אֲשָׂא עֵינַי, אֶל-הַהָרִים מֵאֵין; יְבֹא עֲזָרִי	'esâ ` `éynay 'el-hehâriym mé'ayin yâbho' `ezriy
עֲזָרִי, מֵעַם ה' עֲשֵׂה, שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ	'ezriy mé `im Hashem `osêh shâmayim vâ`ârets
אֶל-יְתֵן לְמוֹט רַגְלִי; אֶל-יָנוּם, שְׁמֶרְךָ	'al-yittên lammoth raghleka 'al-yânûm shomerekha
הִנֵּה לֹא-יָנוּם, וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר, וְשֶׁרְאֵל	hinnêh lo'-yânûm velo' yiyshân shomêr yisrâ'ël
ה' שְׁמֶרְךָ, ה' עֲזָרְךָ, עַל-יַד יְמִינְךָ	Hashem shomerekha Hashem tsillekha `al-yadh yemiynekha
יּוֹמָם, הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יַכְכָּה; וְיָרַח בַּלַּיְלָה	yomâm hashemesh lo'-yakkekâh veyârêach ballâyelâh
ה' יִשְׁמְרְךָ מִכָּל-רָע: לְשׁוֹמֵר, אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ	Hashem yishmârekha mikkol-râ` yishmor' eth-naphshekha
ה', יִשְׁמֵר-צֵאתְךָ וּבֹאְךָ מֵעַתָּה, וְעַד-עוֹלָם	Hashem yishmâr-tsê`thkha ubho`ekha mê`attâhve`adh`-olâm

A Song of Ascents. I shall raise my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come?

My help is from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not allow your foot to falter; Your Guardian will not slumber.

Behold the Guardian of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your Guardian; the Lord is your shadow; [He is] by your right hand.

By day, the sun will not smite you, nor will the moon at night.

The Lord will guard you from all evil; He will guard your soul.

The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from now and to eternity.

## Meditation & Yoga

While some people connect to religion and spirituality through traditional prayer, many find connection through other practices, such as meditation and yoga. It is said that Jewish contemplative techniques can help develop compassion and wisdom, and that cultivating this meditative state can lead to an expanded perception of the world and the possibility of feeling divine presence or intervention in our day to day. Meditation has long been part of Jewish tradition and practice. There are many biblical references to meditation, as well as Jewish mystics who connected and practiced Judaism through meditation. Kabbalah, a branch of mystical tradition, features all kinds of meditative practices based on each individual's goals or preferences. In Jewish prayer, many

strive to have a sense of *kavanah*, which can be defined as strong intention or meditative focus. For many, meditation can be a powerful, calming, and healing practice, using deep breathing techniques or visualization. Imagining Hebrew letters, focusing on an object or candle while breathing deeply, inhaling and then exhaling prayers and healing words are all examples of visualization.

There is no right or wrong way to meditate. However you choose to do it, meditation can decrease anxiety and provide emotional healing and a sense of peace. When seeking a method of prayer for healing and connection for both



yourself and your loved one, meditation can help you feel centered when you might otherwise feel surrounded by chaos, and send positive vibes, thoughts, and prayers for healing of the body, heart, and spirit.

Others may be more inclined to connect spiritually through yoga and exercise. Strengthening the body while relaxing the mind helps to cultivate awareness and keep a quieter mind. Developing a connection to your spiritual side through yoga helps you strike and hold a pose despite the obstacles or other circumstances around you. There are many ways to practice yoga. Some might decide to participate in a yoga class at their gym, while others prefer a yoga class hosted by their local Jewish community center or synagogue. Some may also prefer to do yoga individually from the comfort of their own home. Sharsheret's Yoga for Cancer series provides live yoga and meditation instruction from the comfort of your own home; you can access the recordings on our website. There is also an endless supply of online programs and books available to help guide you through yoga.

Meditation and yoga are not inherently religious practices, but they can give a heightened sense of spirituality, and for those who choose to, can be done in conjunction with other prayer. Sharsheret social workers have lists of both meditation and yoga/exercise resources ready to share with you. Whether you prefer to connect to spirituality through

meditation and yoga, Psalms, or something completely different, there is no right or wrong way of engaging with spirituality. Connecting to spirituality is a personal endeavor, and it is important to find a path that is right for you.

## Additional Spiritual Practices

There are many other ways to practice and explore spirituality. It is engaging in any practice that promotes personal growth and self-awareness. Mini-breaks are an easy way to replenish your energy and lower your stress. Taking time for yourself is not selfish, it is necessary. Here are some more ideas, but the possibilities are endless:

- Journaling - written or video
- Poetry writing and/or reading
- Time in Nature aka Forest Bathing
- Adopting a Mantra
- Baking
- Mindful movement (dance, walking, hiking, swimming, etc.)
- Giving back to others
- Self-care
- Inner-child Work
- Creative, artistic expression (painting, arts and crafts, crochet, etc.)
- Participating in community activities that foster a sense of connection and unity
- Imagery
- Listening to music



## PERSONAL STORIES

### We Need You Now More Than Ever — Ilene, age 49, living with stage IV breast cancer

*“In many ways, we are still the same person as we were before the diagnosis...”*

Looking at my breast cancer journey, I have learned that what I need and what others may think I need can vary so greatly. I know my friends and loved ones want to support me, and sometimes feel that they need to walk on eggshells in fear of “doing the wrong thing.” The biggest lesson I have learned, and want to share with others, is the value of just being yourself. Show us you love us, and please do not feel you need to walk on eggshells. Just be yourself. What women with advanced cancer are often seeking is understanding from friends and family. Understanding that there are days when we may not feel great; physically and/or mentally. Sometimes we just want to escape from answering questions about how we are feeling or what’s happening with our cancer. We want the opportunity to just be ourselves. In many ways, we are still the same person as we were before the diagnosis, wanting to talk about our kids, dating, work, pop culture, or anything else that interested us. We just hope that you don’t dwell on the cancer and you also don’t forget about it, and that you don’t forget about us.

What is most helpful to me, is to always listen to me. I mean really listen. I know

that having someone you love facing a metastatic breast cancer diagnosis can be emotionally difficult, and it may be helpful to seek your own support to manage your feelings. I want to make sure that you also seek the support you need, in addition to supporting me. I know that you may feel helpless and try to be supportive by offering me medical advice. Please know and understand that my oncologist and the rest of my medical team and I have a plan. That plan is to keep me healthy and keep me alive. I just want you to be there, and to feel your support.

Since I am still relatively young, I am navigating my work life, my married life, my life as a mother, my life as a friend and my life as a cancer patient. I appreciate the offers of dinners, play dates and sleepovers. I am not always an asker of help. If you want to bring me a meal, just tell me you’re cooking pasta and bring it over. If you want to let me take a nap, just tell me to drop off my daughter at 1 pm on Saturday. Make the plan. A concrete plan. I am always grateful for this help and support.

What I need isn’t necessarily what everyone needs or wants. It isn’t a one-size-fits-all. We are all human. We all appreciate that text or call to say “Hello, I am thinking about you.” Don’t get mad when we forget something, between the navigation of our new normal and the medication we may have unintentionally forgotten.

We need you now more than ever. We are so grateful to have you in our lives. Just continue to be there, and continue to be real.

## Rewriting the Golden Rule — Deborah, best friend

*“Being present and an active listener (listening just as deeply to what she does say, as to what she doesn’t) is really the bulk of your job.”*

It turns out that if your best friend is a woman living with metastatic breast cancer, you have to step up and learn on the job. There’s not a lot of good news immediately associated with this diagnosis, but here’s a little gem: I screwed up a lot, so you don’t have to. Here are a few standout tips I can offer anyway.

Throughout life the golden rule of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is held up as the gold standard for how to make and keep friends. When it comes to supporting a friend with cancer, it’s time to tweak that way of thinking.

Forget the golden rule. Forget what you would want. This isn’t about you. This is about her.

If you can’t straight out ask your buddy what they feel comfortable with (yes to jokes, no to the compassionate head tilt and meaningful eye contact), pay close attention to how she reacts to your efforts, take note and respond accordingly.

You’ll make mistakes. Learn. Apologize as needed. Move on.

Be there for the heavy moments when they come up (being there, not saying the right thing, is 95% of your job), but also be yourself. You can bet that people probably treat your friend like cancer is now the most interesting thing about her. You know better. Don’t forget that.

Act normally. She probably still wants to hear about a fight with your sister or the latest on the co-worker who always tries to steal your thunder or any other mundane problem in your life. You’re not competing with cancer.

Make sure you have an outlet to process your feelings about her cancer separate from your friend. Her mother is not the right person to share your grief with. Find a friend or a therapist - preferably someone with some distance from the situation.



Talking, laughing about nothing and everything and making the most of all the moments in between?

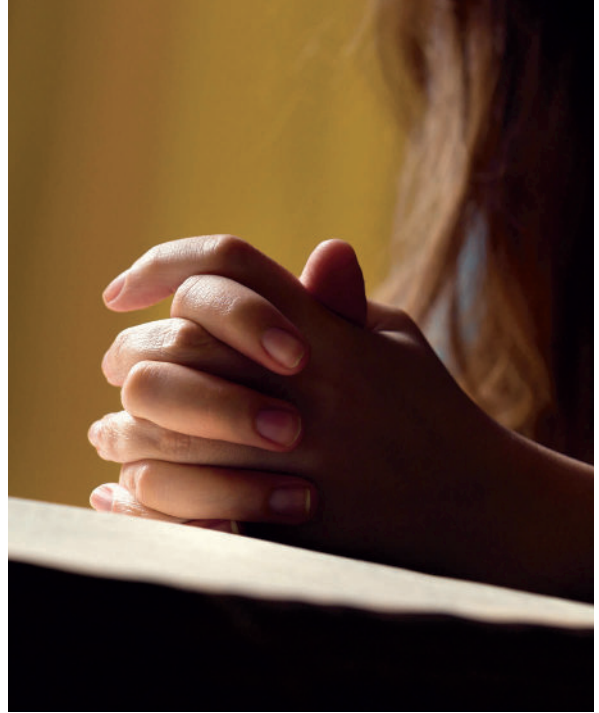
That's just great friendship.

## Finding Hope, Comfort, And Support — Lizzy, sister

*“The feeling of so many people being together saying Tehillim for her felt comforting...I did not feel alone.”*

When my sister, Margot, told me she had breast cancer, I was shocked and numb. The fear of not knowing what to expect or what to think overwhelmed me. Margot's spirit was positive and she tried to make everyone around her comfortable, even though she was not comfortable physically and emotionally. I have to admit, I numbed myself out hoping that this would all go away. I just did what I “needed” to do - carpools, errands, volunteering, and being available whenever anyone needed me to do something for them. I was there. I did not realize at the time that these were just rote things to help me get through everything.

It was not until our community came together in honor of Margot to do something very special that I started “feeling” what was going on. It was right after Rosh HaShanah that year that her cancer had spread and it felt devastating. Some very special women at our shul came together and started saying Tehillim (Psalms) after prayer every Shabbat morning.



The feeling of so many people being together saying Tehillim for her felt comforting. It felt consoling because the power of numbers was so meaningful to me. I did not feel alone. It allowed me to be with people that were praying for the same thing, and I felt supported.

The beauty of this group continues today and the women come together to say Tehillim for anyone in need. Margot's memory continues every Shabbat and I feel like she continues to give to so many people in our community in a special way.

When my sister Sheri was diagnosed, it was shocking! We had been through this before and feared the unknown or, in some way, the known. Staying positive and living life was the best I could do, until I remembered that I had felt comfort knowing that the Tehillim group was there for Sheri, my extended family and me. This group never went away. It gave me a way to remember to feel and know I was not alone in praying for her health and comfort.

Both sisters' deaths were hard on me for so many reasons. I was in different places when they were each diagnosed and found ways to deal with watching them fight for their lives.

Everyone finds his or her own ways to find, hope, comfort, and support.

There is no one "thing" that fills all these needs, but for me it was/ continues to be our synagogue's women's Tehillim group on Shabbat. Margot may have been the reason it started, but it is still there today for everyone in need. It brings women together to feel support, encouragement, and hope for anyone and everyone they love. Margot and Sheri may physically be gone, but they are still giving in their own way to many people through this group.



## HOW CAN SHARSHERET HELP ME AS A CAREGIVER?

**If your loved one has been diagnosed with advanced breast or ovarian cancer, we can help.**

- Call our helpline of skilled, trained one-on-one professionals for resources and guidance.
- Let us help you create your own support system, so you can better support your loved one.
- Refer your loved one to our program supporting women living with advanced breast cancer or recurrent ovarian cancer.
- Keep informed by experts in the cancer community on our national teleconferences and webinars.
- We offer the recordings and transcripts of Sharsheret's helpful webinars online at [www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org), covering topics such as

“Caregiving and Cancer: Ideas and Inspiration for Loved Ones of those Facing Cancer,” “Creative Coping,” and “Beyond Surviving.” Check our website for the continually updated list of relevant transcript topics. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call our office to request copies and learn about other relevant transcripts available to you.

For more information about Sharsheret's programs, please contact us toll-free at **866.474.2774** or at [info@sharsheret.org](mailto:info@sharsheret.org). Sharsheret's programs are free and are open to all women and men. All inquiries are confidential.

**Remember, wherever you are, Sharsheret is, and we will be there for you every step of the way.**

Please visit Sharsheret's website at [www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org) or scan the QR code below for a continually updated online resource directory on topics such as counseling, financial resources, and holistic support.



# RESOURCE DIRECTORY

## Advanced Breast Cancer

**Living Beyond Breast Cancer**  
855.807.6386  
[www.lbbc.org](http://www.lbbc.org)

**Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg Embrace™ Program (A Sharsheret Program)**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

**MBC Connect**  
[www.mbccconnect.org](http://www.mbccconnect.org)

**Metastatic Breast Cancer Alliance**  
[www.mbcalliance.org](http://www.mbcalliance.org)

**SHARE (Support group for women newly diagnosed with metastatic disease)**  
844.275.7427  
[www.sharecancersupport.org](http://www.sharecancersupport.org)

**Sharsheret Embrace Community- A Private Facebook Group**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org/embracefbgroup](http://www.sharsheret.org/embracefbgroup)

## Recurrent Ovarian Cancer

**Foundation for Women's Cancer**  
[www.herafoundation.org](http://www.herafoundation.org)

**Rosewell Park Familial Ovarian Cancer Registry**  
800-767-9355  
[www.ovariancancer.com](http://www.ovariancancer.com)

**Margot Rosenberg Pulitzer and Sheri Rosenberg Embrace™ Program (A Sharsheret Program)**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

**National Ovarian Cancer Coalition**  
888.682.7426  
[www.ovarian.org](http://www.ovarian.org)

**Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance**  
212.268.1002 | 866.399.6262  
[www.ocrahope.org](http://www.ocrahope.org)

**Sandy Rollman Ovarian Cancer Foundation**  
610.446.2272  
[www.sandyovarian.org](http://www.sandyovarian.org)

**SHARE (Self Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer)**  
212.719.0364 or 844.275.7427 (Helpline)  
[www.sharecancersupport.org](http://www.sharecancersupport.org)

**Sharsheret Embrace Community- A Private Facebook Group**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org/embracefbgroup](http://www.sharsheret.org/embracefbgroup)

## Family and Friends

**Mothers Supporting Daughters with Breast Cancer**  
410.778.1982  
[www.mothersdaughters.org/](http://www.mothersdaughters.org/)

**SHARE Dedicated Experienced Support for Women Facing Breast or Ovarian Cancer**  
844.ASK.SHARE  
[www.sharecancersupport.org](http://www.sharecancersupport.org)

**Sister to Sister**  
718.338.2943  
[www.sistertosisternetwork.org](http://www.sistertosisternetwork.org)

**Spungen Family Focus Program (A Sharsheret Program)**  
866.474.2774  
[www.sharsheret.org](http://www.sharsheret.org)

## Holistic, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine

**American Academy of Medical Acupuncture**  
301.379.8261  
[www.medicalacupuncture.org](http://www.medicalacupuncture.org)

**American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**  
[www.aaaomonline.org](http://www.aaaomonline.org)

**Foundation for Alternative and Integrative Medicine**  
[www.faim.org](http://www.faim.org)

**Holistic Primary Care: News for Health and Healing**  
[www.holisticprimarycare.net](http://www.holisticprimarycare.net)

**National Acupuncture Foundation**  
[www.nationalacupuncturefoundation.org](http://www.nationalacupuncturefoundation.org)

**National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health**  
[www.nccih.nih.gov](http://www.nccih.nih.gov)



**National Center for Homeopathy**  
www.homeopathycenter.org

**Office of Cancer Complementary  
and Alternative Medicine**  
www.cam.cancer.gov/

**Oncology Nutrition**  
www.oncologynutrition.org

**The Annie Appleseed Project**  
www.annieappleseedproject.org

**Jewish Organizations Addressing Cancer  
and Health-Related Issues**

**Bikur Cholim, Partners in Health**  
845.425.7877  
www.bikurcholim.org

**Chai4ever**  
646.519.2190  
www.chai4ever.org

**Chai Lifeline**  
877.CHAI.LIFE  
www.chailifeline.org

**Hadassah**  
888.303.3640  
www.hadassah.org

**Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies**  
201.977.2400  
www.networkjhsa.org

**Nishmat: Women's Health and Halacha**  
877.963.8938  
www.yoatzot.org/home

**The Jewish Board**  
844.ONE.CALL  
www.jewishboard.org

**Jewish Organizations Addressing Spirituality**

**Aneinu: International Tehillim Organization**  
516.239.6083  
917.575.8719  
www.aneinu.com

**Institute for Jewish Spirituality**  
646.461.6499  
www.jewishspirituality.org

**Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community  
Mikveh and Paula Brody & Family Education  
Center**  
617.244.1836  
www.mayyimhayyim.org

**Ritualwell**  
215.576.0800  
www.ritualwell.org

**Shira Ruskay Center**  
http://66.39.71.250/about.html

**Cancer Organizations Addressing Spirituality  
CancerCare- Spirituality Page**  
www.cancercare.org/tagged/spirituality

**Cancer Center- Spiritual Support**  
www.cancercenter.com/integrative-care/  
spiritual-support Breast Cancer Organizations

**Keeping Loved Ones Informed and Involved  
Caring Bridge**  
651.789.2300  
www.caringbridge.org

**Jasper**  
www.Hellojasper.com/members

**MyLifeLine**  
www.mylifeline.org

**Meal Train**  
www.mealtrain.com

**Take Them a Meal**  
800.951.7715  
www.takethemameal.com

**Creating Living Legacies**

**Memories Live**  
646.245.1698  
www.memorieslive.org

**Safe Beyond**  
800.844.0515  
www.thedigitalbeyond.com/online-services-  
list/safebeyond

**Thru My Eyes**  
914.725.1836  
www.facebook.com/ThruMyEyesInc

**Cancer Support Community's My LifeLine**  
888.793.9355  
www.mylifeline.org

## BOOKLETS AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES

Your Jewish Genes:  
Hereditary Breast Cancer  
and Ovarian Cancer

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Facing Breast Cancer as  
a Jewish Woman

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Facing Cancer as a Frum Woman

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Facing Ovarian Cancer as  
a Jewish Woman

.....

Breast Cancer and the Ritual Bath:  
A Guide for Mikvah Attendants

.....

Thriving Again®: For Young  
Jewish Breast Cancer Survivors

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Our Voices: Inspiring Words from  
the Women of Sharsheret

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From the Practical to the Spiritual:  
Caring for Loved Ones Living with  
Advanced Cancer

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For information about this booklet and other Sharsheret publications,  
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Call Toll-Free: 866.474.2774

