

Balancing Work & Cancer

National Webinar Transcript

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Presented by:



SHARSHERET[®]
The Jewish Breast & Ovarian Cancer Community

About Sharsheret

Sharsheret, Hebrew for “chain”, is an international non-profit organization, that 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 regional offices in the Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, West, and Israel, Sharsheret serves 275,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students. 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, approximately 25% of those we serve are not Jewish. All Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.

As a premier organization for psychosocial support, 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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call or see your physician or other health care provider promptly. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read here.

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Jenna Fields: Thank you to everyone who joined us this evening and welcome. You will be joining us for tonight's webinar, Balancing Work and Cancer with Nicole Jarvis, who is the associate director of programs at Cancer and Careers. I am Jenna Fields. I am the Chief Regional Officer of Sharsheret based here in Los Angeles. And before we begin just a few housekeeping items. Today's webinar is being recorded and will be posted on Sharsheret's website along with a transcript. Participants' faces and names will not be in the recording. If you would like to remain private, you have the option to turn off your video and rename yourself or you can call into the webinar.

We also have closed captioning available and you can display those live captions by clicking on live captions on the bottom bar, click on captions, and then click on show captions. And you may have noticed that you were muted upon entering the Zoom. Please stay muted during the call. We will hold a Q and A at the end of the presentation, and if you have any questions, you can type them into the chat box as we go, and we'll get to as many questions as we can during the Q and A. We do ask that you keep the questions as broad as possible and we won't be answering any personal employment questions.

I want to remind you that Sharsheret is a not-for-profit cancer support and education organization and does not provide any medical advice or perform any medical procedures. And you can read our full medical disclaimer in the chat. I'm really excited to have this opportunity for a quick program spotlight. Sharsheret is launching a new monthly virtual support group program for those in survivorship for breast cancer and ovarian cancer. We will have one group for those in survivorship for stage zero through three and one for EMBRACE community members, those living with metastatic breast and advanced ovarian cancer. And we're putting that sign-up link in the chat right now.

The registration is going to close this Friday for those groups, so please take a look and sign up if you're interested. Most importantly, if you're currently facing a breast cancer diagnosis, please remember that Sharsheret is here for you and your loved ones. Sharsheret provides emotional support, mental health counseling, and other programs designed to help you navigate through the cancer experience. All of our programs are completely free and confidential and

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our contact information is in the chat. It is now my pleasure to welcome our survivor speaker for this webinar, Sari Winnick.

Sari is one of our amazing Sharsheret leaders in the Chicago area and is going to share her own personal story of facing a breast cancer diagnosis in the workplace. Welcome, Sari.

Sari:

Hey everyone, and thank you, Jenna. I'm Sari. I live in Deerfield, Illinois, which is a northern suburb of Chicago. I am married to my husband, Mark. We have three sons who are all adults now. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in fall of 2024. I work full-time as the chief marketing officer for an educational toy company. I've been there for a little over six years. And as Jenna mentioned, I'm an active volunteer for Sharsheret and love this organization and everything we do. I'll start by talking about how I shared my diagnosis at work. I wanted to have more information. I'm sure that people can relate to that about my treatment plan before I was ready to tell people.

I have enough flexibility at work and over the years have been able to duck in and out as needed for things like doctor's appointments and kid commitments. We're also hybrid. We're only in the office three days a week. So, it was pretty flexible for me to be able to take care of what I needed to before I had enough information to be able to share everything. I had several doctor's appointments from the initial biopsy to many opinions between surgeons and oncologists. And I just worked around those appointments. If they were going to be longer than a few hours, we do have sick time as a benefit at my company, so I just took sick time and blocked my calendar as though I were going to any other doctor's appointment.

Once I knew the initial plan, which for me ended up being surgery followed by chemo, I informed my manager first, then our HR team, my direct reports, and my close colleagues. I was very open about my diagnosis. I was worried that people would find out through the grapevine or think there was some big secret that for some reason they weren't being told. So, it didn't bother me to tell people. I have a very supportive manager, very supportive team. In fact, I ran the New York Marathon in 2021 and I raised money for Team Sharsheret and my manager happened to have been one of my generous donors. He also helped me get a referral to a major medical center here in Chicago after my diagnosis.

So, that's just a couple of examples of how supportive he was throughout this whole thing. I also have a large team. I have several direct reports and I have several levels. Some folks who are right out of school, very young, and some who are more seasoned. I wanted to be sure that they knew I would be fine and that I would still be able to give them the attention they needed, the stability that they were looking for. I was worried, especially about some of the younger ones. I wanted to make sure they knew I was feeling good. I had a good prognosis and I would be back to full strength before long.

I realized that I might have been their first experience with someone personally with cancer and I didn't want them to be afraid of what that meant for me and also what that meant for them. Now onto my experience. I had a double mastectomy and took two and a half weeks off from right after the surgery until I went back to work. I basically planned it around how long the doctors thought I would have drains in. I ended up working from home by the end of the second week. I was starting to get antsy. I was worried I was going to have tons and tons of emails when I came back to work. So, I was able to log in and start doing that.

I maybe sat in on one or two meetings over Zoom, but for the most part, I took those two and a half weeks as sick time and just recovered. And then six weeks after surgery, I started chemo. My chemo regimen was four times every three weeks, and I didn't plan to take any time off other than those four days, and I didn't end up needing to take any extra time other than those days. I was lucky. My side effects were mild enough that I was able to pretty much stay productive throughout that time. My immune system, of course, was weakened from the chemo. And when I first started chemo, those first couple of weeks, I went into work every day thinking, "I feel good. This'll be fine."

And my doctor had really encouraged me to work from home. And at this point, it's December, January, and it's cold and flu season, and I was worried that I was going to pick something up and not even realize that people around me were sick. So, about two weeks in, I kind of said, "Okay, that's it. I need to work from home." Again, my manager was supportive. He actually said he was surprised I'd even been there those few weeks. So, I ended up working from home exclusively starting about week two of chemo until I finished chemo and even a couple weeks after that to get my immune system strong enough.

About a month into chemo, even though I cold capped, enough of my hair had fallen out that I started to wear a wig. I found that transition to be easier on Zoom than having to show up one day in the office with a wig on. This gave people a chance to get used to it. It gave me a chance to get used to it. Eventually, I had four or five wigs. I liked them. I wore them once I was back at work. Probably the most awkward thing was people wanted to say something, but they weren't sure if they could. And I told them I was totally fine with compliments and accepted all of them. And they were just sensitive about it and I didn't want them to worry.

People who didn't see me often would ask if I got a new haircut, if I straightened my hair, if I got it cut. If I wasn't going to see them for very long, I didn't know them very well. I just said thank you. I told them it was a haircut and I moved on because I didn't want a short interaction with someone I didn't see often to be all about cancer. And so, that worked out fine too. And then I had that reverse transition as my hair started to grow back, I cut it into a short pixie and then had that awkwardness of going back to work looking like a different person for a few days, got used to the comments. And again, after a few days, just kind of rolled with it and stopped thinking about it.

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Some lessons overall from my experience was that for me being open worked. People were supportive. I'm very lucky the organization had good benefits. I had enough flexibility and a job where I could work from home. I recognize not everyone can. And for me, it was easier. Once I told people what was going on, it was easier for me to navigate the benefits situation. It was easier for me to decline meetings or say that I was going to be remote once people knew what was going on. I found for me that in terms of my own mental health, I preferred working. Keeping busy kept me distracted. And for me, I saw that distraction as a good thing.

I also found that with going back to work, I needed to balance what my doctors said with what I needed. I listened, but I also adjusted. So, those first few weeks when I went into work after chemo, that was my choice. And then eventually I listened and said, "I really need to protect myself a little bit more than that. " But I did start traveling probably a little earlier than my surgeon wanted after the double mastectomy. And again, after I finished chemo, I went to a trade show probably three weeks after, which was probably a little earlier than my doctor would've liked. And then finally, and this is just me, I approached everything with a positive attitude. Some days that's harder than others.

I know everyone can relate. Deep down, I felt like I knew I was making the right decisions for myself and that gave me confidence. And then without spending a lot of time, I'll share just a quick story about how that positive attitude for me comes to life. When I was diagnosed, I had registered about six months before that to run the London Marathon. And when I found out about the diagnosis, I started interviewing doctors about my treatment plan and I asked every doctor I met if they saw any reason why I couldn't run the marathon. And if they didn't think I could, I moved on and ultimately surrounded myself by a team who believed in me and supported my goals.

So, for me, it was all about, I had this attitude, I could do it, I wanted to do it, and I wanted to find a solution that worked for me, that did work out for me. Ten weeks after chemo, I ran the marathon and had an excellent experience. So, anyhow, I appreciate everybody listening and letting me tell my story.

Jenna Fields:

Thank you so much, Sari, for sharing your story with all of us. It was really inspiring to hear and a lot of really good nuggets to take away for everyone on this call. Thank you for being so open and sharing today. It's now my pleasure to introduce Nicole Jarvis, LMSW, who joined the Cancer and Careers team in 2015. Prior to her work at Cancer and Careers, she worked in administration at Memorial Sloan Kettering and as a social worker advocate within the family court system. As assistant director of programs, Nicole oversees the financial assistance grants, regional conferences, and general phone intake line, and assists with various in person and virtual events throughout the year.

Nicole is one of two in house social workers and acts as a point person for patients, survivors, healthcare professionals, caregivers, and employers who

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reach out to cancer and careers on a daily basis for advice and guidance. It is now my pleasure to welcome Nicole.

Nicole Jarvis:

Thank you, Jenna, and thank you all for having me here tonight. And thank you so much, Sari, for your story. It was very apropos to what we're going to be discussing tonight. A lot of things are going to resonate, I hope. I just want to make sure that everyone can see my screen okay. Just a thumbs up or nod. Perfect. Okay. So, as mentioned, my name is Nicole. I'm assistant director of programs at Cancer and Careers, and I am one of our in house social workers. So, those who call into our intake line will typically be speaking with me.

So, if you are new to Cancer and Careers, a little bit about us, we're a national nonprofit and we are actually the only program of its kind solely dedicated to empowering and educating people with cancer to thrive in their work environments. We offer a ton of free programs and services. Our comprehensive website, which is available in both English and Spanish is really at the heart of everything that we do. So, a lot of what I'll be discussing today, further information can be found on our website as well. We also have a free resume review service, access to career coaches. We have an educational blog, and we also offer a free publication library.

So, if you are old school and you'd like hard copies, you can order those or you can download PDFs directly from our website. Those are also available in English and Spanish, and they can just be really helpful to have something on hand. And we also offer a number of events, which I'll discuss a little bit when I'm finished with my presentation, and I'll tell you a little bit more about what we've got going on. So, I want to just start by acknowledging that each person here may be at a different stage in their cancer experience, and I'll be discussing topics related to work after a cancer diagnosis, but I do understand that not all of them will be relevant to everyone at this moment.

So, my hope really is that you're able to take away something useful, whether for today or in the near future. But when facing a diagnosis, one of the key questions that come up is how important is work to you? And also, what information do you need in order to make decisions in this context? Now, reflecting on these questions can be helpful, both for those who are just starting out and for those who have already navigated some of these decisions, because it really allows them to assess whether their current situation still works or if it does need some adjusting.

Some other questions will begin to arise as well, such as what are your financial or your insurance needs, and how does your identity connect with your work? There are also personal aspects to consider like family obligations or what you need personally to manage stress. The idea is that while these questions may sometimes conflict with one another, they can help you to make informed decisions that will align with your own situation. Now, gathering information is an important step in the process that can really help guide your active decision-

making. Now, to simplify this process just a little bit, we do divide these types of information into three categories which you can see here.

So, there is the medical and treatment information, which includes timelines, understanding potential side effects, getting familiar with some mitigation strategies. Then there's workplace information, which includes insurance support, understanding company policies and the culture, which can play a big role, what types of flexibilities there might be available. And then finally, there's legal information. So, this includes understanding federal and state laws, medical leave, disability insurance, and health insurance. So, it can just be helpful to have this visualization of three different buckets of information.

Now, I want to start by clarifying and reminding you all that much to this dismay of my parents, I am not a lawyer. I am a social worker, so I can't provide very specific legal information, but I do want to provide just a foundation for understanding. So, we'll start with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is also called the ADA. Now, the ADA is a federal law, and that protects people with disabilities of which cancer is considered one in the workplace across all US states and territories, which includes Puerto Rico. Now, the part relevant to working cancer comes from Title I. And like all laws, it does have certain requirements that must be met in order to use it.

Now, in very broad strokes, they are that your employer must have a minimum of 15 employees for the law to apply to them. You must have the necessary skills, certification, experience, et cetera, to do your job. And finally, your disability must meet the criteria as determined by the ADA. So, if you do meet all of these requirements, the ADA can protect you from discrimination and may also provide access to what are called reasonable accommodations, which we will discuss a little later in the presentation and also is something that Sari had referred to in terms of working remotely. So, that is an example of one.

I do want to just throw in that it's important to note that immigration status does not affect a person's right to protection under the ADA, as this law does apply to anyone within the US jurisdiction. Some people may hesitate to seek these protections due to potential risks, but it is worth exploring. And it's just a good idea to explore whether the ADA is something to consider, and speaking with a legal professional to determine if you're eligible to use the ADA's protections can be really helpful. I also just want to point out that in this gray circle that you see on this slide here, we're talking about state fair employment laws.

And so, these are varied based on state by state, but sometimes they do offer further protections than the federal laws. So, for example, some states only need two employees for some of these fair employment laws to apply to them. So, it's a really good idea to explore what your specific state has in place so that you can find out whether that might provide you some further protections than the federal law will. There are some links at the bottom of this slide, and again,

you guys will all get a copy of this, but these are some good resources for finding out a little bit more about it.

So, it's critical to spend some time thinking about the kinds of decisions that you might make as they relate to disclosure. And this is so that you can make choices about sharing your story that work best for you. Obviously, Sari had her own circumstances and her situation allowed for her to disclose, and that was great. It sounds like she had the support that she needed. But in terms of making these choices, you want to be making clear decisions about what gets shared in your personal life where you may have people that you're completely open with versus in your work life where many people tend to be a little bit more closed off.

And then there's a third area where disclosure may happen that really has its own set of complexities and things to consider, and that's the online space. Now, at Cancer Careers, we hear often from patients and survivors about the role that the internet is playing in helping them through their cancer experience. For many, it creates a sense of community and a way to feel better in the moment, and you can connect with others. As in tonight, we're all over the country, which is amazing, but it does also create a written record of information that can be relatively difficult to get rid of.

Now, I do want to be clear, I'm not saying never post anything online since that's a near impossibility in this day and age, but it's also actually a good thing to have an online presence. What I'm trying to get to tonight is that it's important for everyone to have a solid understanding of the virtual landscape that you're using in order to make informed decisions and feel in control of how your story is being presented. And in part, this is because research indicates that more and more hiring managers, as well as existing employers, are Googling prospective candidates and current employees respectively.

Now, this isn't necessarily to find something negative, but for hiring managers, it's often done to perhaps confirm things that they already like about a particular candidate or for current managers to perhaps get additional information about the people that they currently work with. But it is still possible that they'll come across a post on Facebook or Instagram that could contain information that that person would prefer the employer didn't know. So, even if you have privacy settings in place, it's important to understand that social media policies are constantly changing, so it's a good idea to try to stay as current as possible in understanding what those changes might be.

It's also helpful to communicate your preferences with friends and family and to monitor what they're posting online. Even if you have shared your preferences, it's a good idea to check up on them. I know that there have been too many stories of moms on Facebook asking for well wishes and things like that when the person really did not want that information out there. It's also important to keep in mind that online information can be relatively hard to control and it can impact job opportunities. So, a few practical tips include Googling yourself.

This way, you're able to know what will come up if someone were to Google you, and this way you can also stay ahead of the ball and be able to respond to anything that may come up. You want to use social media websites strategically, keeping it professional and polite. Creating a professional webpage or blog is a really great way to also control your own narrative by putting out information that you would want to come up about you in a Google search. You can delete old posts. They still will be there somewhere, but they are harder to find so that that potential new boss doesn't need to see an embarrassing photo of you at a party in 2010.

But last but not least, again, really thinking strategically about your posts. So, we recommend running each post through a filter. Would I want a boss, current or future, or my coworkers to know this? Would I want this on the front page of a newspaper or the homepage of my favorite news site? Would I want my grandmother or my mother to see this? Thinking about these aspects now can really help you protect your privacy while you're building an online presence that will best reflect your professional self. And as we continue talking about making disclosure decisions, it is important to think of them as part of a spectrum, and this means really that it's not a black or white issue, and there are no absolutes.

So, you want to start by asking yourself how you feel about sharing the news. Now, some people are comfortable with the idea, others not so much. All of that is valid. You also want to ask yourself why it is you want to share. Is it because it feels important for you to do so? Is it necessary in order to access certain legal protections or benefits? There's really no one right answer. It's about what your specific needs, preferences, and circumstances are. And of course, not sharing is also often an option, which I will talk about. However, if you are planning conversations, you really want to make sure that you're sticking to what you know to be true today.

So, you really want to try to avoid bringing the many what ifs that exist with a cancer diagnosis into the dialogue, and this helps to keep discussions a little bit more focused and productive. Also, sharing typically doesn't have to be an all or nothing scenario, which is why we have this visual of a spectrum. You can always start by sharing just a small piece of information that's relevant now. And if you feel that more needs to be shared, you can do that down the road if it becomes more relevant. But it's important to keep in mind that once information is out there, you really can't unshare it.

So, it can be a good idea to start small and keep it a little bit closer to the vest as you begin and start to figure out your own situation and then share more information as you get more comfortable or as the needs arise. Now, where you are in terms of your current work circumstances may also play a role in your decision-making in terms of what, when, and how you disclose. For example, someone who's been with their job for 10 years and is very close with their supervisor and coworkers may make a different set of disclosure decisions than someone else who is maybe currently seeking work, all of which is to say that

different people may have different concerns about disclosure and depending on who they are and what their circumstances are.

So, as I mentioned, Sari's story was great that she had so much support at work and she was able to disclose to her manager and coworkers, but of course that's not going to be the case for everyone. So, it's just a good idea to really think through the decision of the what, the why, the how. So, how can you activate all of this information in order to develop the personal disclosure plan that's going to work for you? Now, again, it's really important to make clear decisions about what, if any, information about your cancer experience that you're planning to share online and off. And it's also important to make decisions about where you are going to be sharing it in terms of specific websites or blogs.

And as you're thinking through what's going to work best for you, again, it's a good idea to spend some time considering the potential long-term impact of online disclosure. Now, again, it may be the case that some of you have disclosed at work and everyone is being supportive, and that is a fantastic situation to be in. But the fact is the internet doesn't go away, so it is really important to think beyond right now and consider that possible long-term impact because none of us can predict the future.

So, you may find yourself unexpectedly looking for a job five years from now, or your supportive manager may move on and be replaced by someone who decides they want to start Googling their new staff to get to know them, and there's really no way to know how that person's going to respond to the information that they've found. Then once you've made your decisions, you want to make sure that you're communicating them with people in your network, whether they are friends and family or people that you've connected to online. And as I mentioned, even if you have shared your preferences with your loved ones, it's still a really good idea to monitor what others are posting so that you have a sense of what's out there.

So, regular checks on social media presence is one way to feel informed about and in control of how the story of you exists online. And finally, it's a good idea to think through how you might explain your involvement with the cancer community, perhaps sharing that you volunteer with them, but not necessarily disclosing your own diagnosis if you do decide you're not going to be disclosing. Again, just something to keep in mind so you're not caught off guard if you are asked about any of the affiliations that you have. And this brings us to the considerations surrounding disclosure during a job search.

Remembering that the goal of your resume and cover letter is to highlight your skills and potential and not necessarily your diagnosis or treatment. Now, you are not required to include this information, and in many cases, it is best to save it for later in the process if you do choose to share it at all. This really allows employers to get to know you first based on your capabilities and your personality. We get asked a lot about the optional demographic questions on

job applications. There is one that asks if you have a disability. It is completely valid to select prefer not to answer.

Our advice though, if you do choose to not disclose is to consider selecting that same option for all of the demographic questions so that that one isn't the glaring red flag that's popping out, so just something to think about. Now, while thinking through the idea of defining one's own experience in the workplace, I do want to spend a little time talking about side effects and how to best manage them. Now, the side effect that we hear about most frequently is chemo brain. This can include trouble focusing, struggling to process information, and difficulty remembering the steps of tasks that were once perhaps second nature, all of which can interfere with your work.

Luckily, there are some practical solutions that can ease some of these challenges. First and foremost, forget multitasking and focus on one task at a time. Studies actually show that only 2% of people are good at multitasking, so that just goes to show that no one should be doing it. You also want to write down a list of priorities and really capture what you need to do so that you can actually get through that list by doing things one at a time. It might not be enough to say, "I need to finish the report," because what does that actually mean for you? It's better to break it out like pages 10 to 12 still needs to be proofread or John from accounting needs to look at the chart on page 17.

So, if you break it down like that and put all of those items on your to-do list, you can tick them off for real and you can move on to the next one and feel as productive as possible. A couple other suggestions include turning off email or phone notifications so you don't have those bells and whistles going off and distracting you and focusing on one thing at a time. You may even want to set some meetings with yourself so that your boss and coworkers can see that you're busy, and this way you don't feel obligated to respond immediately to any emails. It's a really good idea to write everything down so that if you forget, you'll always have a record.

You want to keep a notebook with all of your to-do things in one place and just take it everywhere with you. Rehearsing everything from presentations to project updates and even phone calls, banning clutter and clearing your desk or work area actually does contribute to a much more focused work environment. And there's also research that supports that stepping away from what you're doing and actually taking the break like walking around the office or the block can really help you refocus and hit that reset button that most people need throughout the day regardless. We also on this slide, you'll see that there is a link to our Chemo Brain one sheet, which also has some more suggestions outlined as well.

So, that's part of our publication library. Now, another key tool for managing treatment side effects is reasonable accommodations, which I mentioned are a protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act. So, these modifications are to your job, schedule, or work environment that allow you to meet your

essential responsibilities. So, examples can include adjusting your schedule. So, perhaps you feel your best in the morning and by the afternoon you really hit that slump. Perhaps changing your hours from 9:00 to 5:00 to 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM if that might work better for you. Taking additional breaks throughout the day, requesting time off for medical appointments with the option to make up those hours later.

It's really important to remember that most accommodations are not expensive. According to the job accommodation network, most costs nothing or less than \$500. So, you want to think about what you need in your work environment, and don't hesitate to seek out legal advice if you do have more specific questions. The Job Accommodation Network is linked on this slide as well. It's askjan.org, and it's a fantastic organization. They have a library of side effects and potential modifications and accommodations that can be helpful for those side effects. They also have templates, letter templates if you want to use those to make a formal request.

So, it's a really, really great resource when you're trying to find out more about that. And it's really crucial to remember that what helps you today may change tomorrow. You can always request additional or different modifications and accommodations, and especially as treatment changes, side effects change, you may want to revisit what it looks like to have the supports in place that will help you do your job. It's also really important to think about how to communicate at work with supervisors and coworkers when your needs are changing. So, a good idea can be to identify a point person that can feed you information if you happen to be out of the office, ask for clarity on priorities, create a written plan, and you also want to set clear boundaries and stick to them.

This is an area where we can implement what we call professional nos. So, again, professional communication always remains key even when you're feeling exhausted. So, some examples of a professional no can include if you are asked to participate on a project, you can say something along the lines of, "I appreciate that you thought of me for this, but I'm a bit swamped this week and I'm concerned about my ability to get this back to you in a timely manner." Now, setting boundaries is hard. There's no doubt about it. Many people are not good at it, but it makes such a difference in the workplace to be able to set those boundaries and keep yourself healthier and more productive.

And while thinking about how to respond during specific conversations that might happen in the workplace, I do want to mention another conversation technique that we call the swivel. So, you can use the swivel technique when responding to cancer-related comments, which includes acknowledging them while redirecting the conversation back to work topics. So, similar to the professional know, it's a verbal formula or pattern, but specifically used in response to a cancer-related comment that might be from one of your well-intended colleagues. So, it involves acknowledging the cancer-related comment, putting an and right in the middle, and literally swiveling the conversation around to a topic that's more work-oriented.

So, for example, if a coworker were to approach you and say, "My uncle had cancer." You could respond by saying, "I'm really sorry to hear that. It must have been hard." And actually, while I have you, what did you think about the meeting we had yesterday? Being able to shift the conversation back to a place where you feel comfortable can be extremely empowering. And it also indicates to your colleagues that you're still a whole vibrant person with lots of contributions to make, and you are not just wearing the cancer hat in the office. So, this can be really helpful at work.

This can be really helpful in your personal life, honestly, especially with the state of the world right now, and there's certain topics you don't want to talk about, you can swivel your way out of those, but this can be really helpful if you are someone who is looking to maybe be a little bit more private in the workplace, or if frankly, you just are not interested in sharing information with everybody. Now, not everyone stays in the same job after a cancer diagnosis, so no conversation about navigating work and cancer can really be complete without addressing that sometimes people can't or don't want to continue in the job they had when they were diagnosed.

Now, for some, the realities of treatment and side effect make working that job impossible, or for other reasons, they're just not able to stay in an existing job. I hear frequently from people that the experience of working during treatment or going out on temporary leave helped them to realize that they were ready for something new, either moving to a new job in the same field or perhaps one with greater flexibility so they're able to spend more time with loved ones, or maybe they've decided it's time to change lanes completely into a new career path that might feel more meaningful to them.

Whatever the scenario is, this is really another moment where people usually find themselves facing a number of questions that they need to answer in order to figure out their best, most strategic path forward for job searching. And again, there are two key questions you can ask yourself, how important is work to you personally and what information do you actually need to make good decisions about your job search? Now, job searching can be an emotional rollercoaster, but approaching it strategically can really help you regain control and that confidence that tends to lack during treatment. It's also important to manage emotions and to seek support from a professional if needed.

Utilizing the support system is for share it is a great start as well. It's also been found that many survivors feel pressured to share more about their health than is necessary, but we like to say that job searching is like dating. It's about knowing when to share certain information, projecting confidence and putting your best foot forward. Now, while many of these things may feel out of your control, there are certain things that you can focus on, like refining your resume, improving your cover letter, and building your professional network out. Now, according to one of our career coaches, more than 85% of jobs are found through other people versus through job boards, headhunters, or ads.

So, this really highlights the fact that networking is a really necessary part of the job hunting process. You want to try to be open-minded when it comes to networking. Basically, anyone you know can be a source for networking. There's great online resources for this like LinkedIn, which is the go to source for employers that are looking to hire. Actually, according to a recent study, 87% of recruiters reported LinkedIn to be the most effective tool when vetting during the hiring process. But LinkedIn really isn't the only place you should be networking because as I mentioned, anyone you know is a resource.

Often people tend to think only people that they've worked with or those in their professional community are who they should be networking it with, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Any community you're a part of is part of your network. So, try not to forget about the people that you encounter in your day-to-day life who are connected to lots of other people. For instance, I see that there's 40 people on this call. It's very possible that if you were to network with them, you might be able to get connected with something that you're interested in.

We also have a number of networking tools and articles to help you stay organized and strategic so you can visit our website in the networking section if you're interested in learning a little bit more about that. And of course, as important as networking and LinkedIn and your overall online presence are for job searching, they don't replace the time-tested tools of job hunting starting with the resume. So, these are a couple dos and don'ts. General rules for resumes is one page for early career, two pages for someone more seasoned, including a profile or summary at the top can really help capture employer's attention.

Using keywords is really essential since many employers are using what's called applicant tracking systems to filter out resumes. So, computer is completely scanning most resumes before they even see a person. So, you want to also make sure to only include relevant professional information and describe your experience with specific examples instead of vague phrases. So, instead of saying detail oriented, maybe you can explain how you identified an error that prevented a financial loss. Being able to really get in the weeds with those things can be really helpful. And as I mentioned, tailoring your resume with keywords from the job posting can also increase your chances of being considered.

One positive of AI is that you can put a job description into something like ChatGPT and ask them to highlight the keywords, and then you can see how you can fit those into your resume. So, that can be really helpful. Now, in addition to a resume, the cover letter is also a key part of the hiring process. It should be tailored to the position, highlighting what makes you unique for the role without simply regurgitating what was on your resume. It's also your chance to showcase your communication skills and how your abilities will align with the company's needs. Make sure to proofread carefully.

I've been part of the hiring process here at Cancer and Careers and making little mistakes like using a generic letter and not replacing the title or the company name can really make or break your chances of a callback. So, if you're getting yourself all prepared and really putting in the work, this is a basic thing that you'll need to be doing. Now, despite some of the concerns surrounding the internet, one of the advantages of living in today's digital age is that you can use Google to research a potential employer, and you absolutely should. Before your interview, it's a good idea to try to learn as much as possible about a company.

Not only will this help you sound informed, but what this also does is it allows you to take the time to assess whether this company is a good fit for your needs. So, going on websites like LinkedIn or Glassdoor and seeing a little bit more about what the culture is like, is it a very flexible place? Is it extremely corporate environment? Things like that can help inform your decision of whether this will be a good fit. As I mentioned, when you're preparing for an interview, you want to focus on how you can solve the problems for the employer and meet their needs. So, using those specific examples from past jobs to demonstrate your skills is really helpful. Don't be afraid to make the conversation more natural.

Interviewers are also looking for a personal fit. I'm 99% sure I got hired at Cancer and Careers because the executive director and I shared an extreme love for cheese, so you never know what's going to work. If you are asked about a work gap, you want to be honest, but keep your answers brief and positive. So, highlighting how you've continued growing and developing your skills. We recommend using the swivel technique and practicing your responses so that they feel natural and help you to redirect the focus to what you can bring to the role.

Also, resume gaps are much more common than they used to be, so it may not be the case that you're asked about them, but again, it's just always a good idea to be prepared so that you are not caught in a situation where you may freeze and share something that you didn't intend to. So, again, just practice, practice practice. Now, once you've decided to accept a job, one of the best things about starting a new job with a new employer is that it's a fresh start. Remember that you don't need to work a million hours. Instead, focus on creating a simple plan for yourself. It's also really important to learn and understand what success looks like at your new company.

I encourage people to ask that question during an interview so you are fully aware of what the expectations of you are and how you can plan to meet those expectations. Make sure that you are taking care of yourself physically and mentally. And most importantly, remember that people aren't hired with the hope that they'll fail. They're hired with the hope that they will succeed. Finding the right person for a job takes time and is really expensive, so your new employer will likely do everything that they can to ensure your success in your

hiring. And of course, the investment that they've made in you as you are a reflection of their judgment.

So, it's just important to really remember that when you do get those new jobs, it's so nerve-wracking and those first few weeks can feel like you're completely underwater, but remember that they chose you for a specific reason. That's it in terms of content for me. I do want to just point out some upcoming events. We have our Midwest Conference on Working Cancer. It's Midwest because we used to actually do things in person, but it is open to anyone who is interested in joining. So, that will be in March. We also have our national conference in June and our West Coast conference in October, again, all virtual, and registration is open for them and free of charge.

Some upcoming webinars, the First Impressions resumes and LinkedIn goes more in depth on what I discussed today. And we have also expanded our Spanish programming, so we're offering Spanish webinars as well with different specialists. And I believe we'll have time for questions tonight, but if anything comes up for you afterwards or if something pops up, please feel free to reach out to me directly. I'm usually best by email, but you can call me as well. So, I will hand it back to Jenna now and we hopefully have a couple questions I can answer.

Jenna Fields: Yeah. Thank you, Nicole. That was excellent and covered so much. I was writing down questions that I had and then you answered them later on. So, thank you so much.

Nicole Jarvis: That's what I like to hear. Okay.

Jenna Fields: So, you were right. You were right. And in particular, I want to thank you for the swivel, which I look forward to using in all areas of my life going forward.

Nicole Jarvis: I like to say to our young adult audiences, I often encourage them to use that at Thanksgiving dinner. Why are you single? When are you having kids? Things like that. Just swivel that conversation.

Jenna Fields: All the things. Very, very good social work term. So, I do want to invite anyone to put questions in the chat, and then I do have some questions as well off chat that I can ask, but feel free for anyone joining us to put some in. So, Nicole, can you provide some insight for those who maybe have been in a workplace that seemingly did not support our leave and now they're backpedaling. They're saying they were being supportive of medical leave. Can you help someone navigate that process of an employer not being consistent in their support?

Nicole Jarvis: Sure. I mean, it's bound to happen at some point. That's why one of the biggest things that's important to do is to really clarify everything. Getting whatever you can in writing is a really good idea because that gives you the opportunity to point to something. Understanding that if you send an email that counts as a

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written record, even as long as it was delivered, I encourage people, if they're having phone calls about certain setup, schedules, things like that, to just do an email recap afterwards so you're writing it all down, it's all there because it lessens the chances of a he said, she said kind of situation where they were like, "Oh, I never said that."

Because unfortunately that does come up quite a bit. So, that's a lot of the proactive things that you can do. In terms of if they are now backpedaling, again, I think you point to what was discussed. It's a good idea to become very familiar with the employee handbook and understanding the policies, thinking through who you're talking to, if it's your manager who may not be as familiar with the policies as someone perhaps in HR, keeping that in mind and being well versed in what your rights are. So, speaking with a legal representative just to get a better sense of that. I see that someone asked about ADA accommodations. Yes, that absolutely could be.

So, it's just a matter of really doing the due diligence of researching and learning and understanding before you're making decisions and having conversations. That's really the best way to set yourself up for a more protected scenario.

Jenna Fields: Yeah, and I really appreciate the slide where you talked about how you don't have to share everything, but you can't unshare. So, your recommendation about being very prepared about what your plan is makes so much sense. Someone had shared a question about they're a nurse and they're managing their own cancer diagnosis. Can you advise people who are in the healthcare provider field, any particular tips or tricks for people who are in that environment?

Nicole Jarvis: In terms of the practical aspects of their job or communications or what?

Jenna Fields: She wrote pushing through it, so I'm assuming she meant accommodations.

Nicole Jarvis: Mm-hmm. So, I will say that the healthcare system is notoriously not the best employer when it comes to having employees who are sick or dealing with a chronic illness. With that said, there are also a bureaucratic system with lots of policies in place. So, again, understanding what's available to you and things like that. Really understanding also what the essential functions of your job are is really important. We are all doing things in our job that maybe weren't on our job description, so those are technically not the essential duties, right?

And so, seeing where you might be able to offload some of them, leaning on coworkers when you feel that you have a relationship with someone that could do that, having the point person, maybe if certain things are optional, like meetings and things like that, when you could be taking a break, maybe you could ask someone to take some notes for you, things like that. So, it's just getting creative and really recognizing where your challenges are. And from there, thinking through what kind of modifications or approaches might help

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you alleviate some of those obstacles for yourself. Nursing is really hard. It's a physical job. It's an emotional and mental job.

So, sometimes it might involve maybe taking on a different role for a little bit if patient facing isn't going to work for a little bit, so doing lots of charting, things like that. But regardless of what you're doing, it's always just a really good idea to try to be creative and think outside of the box. The only definite no is the question not asked, so it's always worth at least just exploring it. Worse comes to worse, they just say, "No, that's not going to happen." And then you can go back to the drawing board.

Jenna Fields: So, Cynthia wrote in the chat explaining the lapse in employment as a result of undergoing cancer. I know that you spoke a little bit about this already, and I know Cynthia, you shared that you missed some of the audio, but I'm curious if you can maybe expand on or provide some of those talking points for an interview. What language have you heard work best for people who are trying to explain that absence without disclosing too much?

Nicole Jarvis: Absolutely. So, we have a ton of responses on our website too if you want to look through them. But one example that I feel has worked well is if someone has a gap on the resume and the hiring manager says, "Hey, I see you have a gap. What were you doing at that time?" Again, I encourage people to be vague. You don't want too much attention to be on any deficits, right? You want it to be focused on what you can bring. So, it's good to just move on quickly. So, something that's worked in the past for some people is I was dealing with a family issue that's since been resolved, and now I'm so excited to work on X, Y, Z, right? And so, it's the opportunity for you to bring that conversation back to what you bring to the table.

And again, in the moment, this can be kind of challenging, so that's why it's worth just practicing a little bit. If you know you have a resume gap, then you know that is a potential question that you can be asked and you can do it. For some specific reason, I don't know why people with cancer tend to feel like they owe more explanations than people with other chronic illnesses. So, I like to often bring up the idea of people with diabetes, which is a very serious illness, don't necessarily go into an interview and say, "Hey, just so you know, I'm diagnosed with diabetes," right? But for some reason, people with cancer feel that they need to share that information, and if they don't, that they're lying.

And so, what we really try to encourage people is to understand that omission is not lying. People are not entitled to all the information about you, especially at work. And so, again, setting those boundaries for yourself and understanding what's necessary for you to share is also a really important mindset to get into when you're looking for work, or just at work in general.

Jenna Fields: Yeah. And I really appreciate what Sari shared about managing what cancer means, particularly to younger staff who maybe haven't been exposed to cancer

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at all in their lives and being able to very much manage their expectations of, yes, cancer can be this, but for me, it's this.

Nicole Jarvis: Totally. Yeah. And it's about owning your own narrative and your own story. So, that's an important aspect. And also, everybody comes to the table with their own biases and prejudice. And so, that's why I also encourage people maybe not to bring it up too soon because perhaps they had a bad experience with someone who had cancer and now that has colored what they expect to happen, and that can be hard to separate from your personal situation. So, there's something to think about in that.

Jenna Fields: Definitely. Okay. One more question and then we'll wrap up. Lily, how do you respond to people asking about your hair? For example, "Oh, did you get a new haircut? That's an interesting hairstyle. My hair is going back in a strange transition phase." I also know Sari mentioned this in her comments. So, Nicole, I don't know if you want to weigh in and Sari, you as well.

Nicole Jarvis: Yeah, I mean, obviously Sari was in this situation and she specifically said this example. I mean, I think it's the same with anything, people losing weight. You don't know if they're losing weight because they're trying or not. And so, there's going to be people that are just ignorant and oblivious to social norms and graces. And so, I think if someone says that's an interesting hairstyle, I'd have some things to say to them, I think. But I think you try to just deflect and just say, "Oh yeah, trying something new. Anyways, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," right? And bringing up something else because if you just completely ignore it, that's going to bring more attention, unfortunately.

So, again, just getting it out of the way and moving on can be really helpful. It also is kind of empowering for you to have control over the conversation like that when you feel in more of a vulnerable situation. I see someone else talked about wearing wigs and getting stares. And I mean, I think unfortunately people are not always graceful, right? And so, I think it's about you trying to get comfortable with yourself and trying to embrace where you're at in the moment and hopefully move forward with it.

Jenna Fields: Yeah. Sari, do you have anything to add to that?

Sari: I mean, if they say an interesting hair, "Yes, thank you." Or I'll say, "I'm growing my hair out." I don't have to say why I'm growing it out. I maybe chose to cut it short and change my mind or it's seasonal. So, I just smile, roll with it, and it depends on how well I know them and if I decide how much to tell them at that point.

Jenna Fields: Right. And I'll just say as a manager, being able to model that as well. If you're not commenting other people's physical appearance changes, they won't comment on yours or trying to show what a professional work environment could look like. Okay. So, thank you, Nicole and Sari so much for this really

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informative conversation. There's so many wonderful takeaways. I'm going to ask my colleagues to put our evaluation for this webinar in the chat so that all of our participants can provide feedback, so we can continue to improve and grow our programming. Thank you so much to Nicole and Sari. Please remember everyone that Sharsheret is here for you and your loved ones.

We provide emotional support, mental health counseling, and other programs designed to help navigate you through the cancer experience, and all of our services are completely free and confidential, and our contact information is below in the chat. And Nicole, we will be sending out the slide deck to everyone who registered for today. So, you'll have Nicole's contact information as well to reach out to her with any additional questions or our access to services at Cancer and Careers as well. So, please take advantage of this wonderful organization. Thank you for filling out the evaluation and have a wonderful evening, everyone.