

WHEN CANCER COMES TO WORK

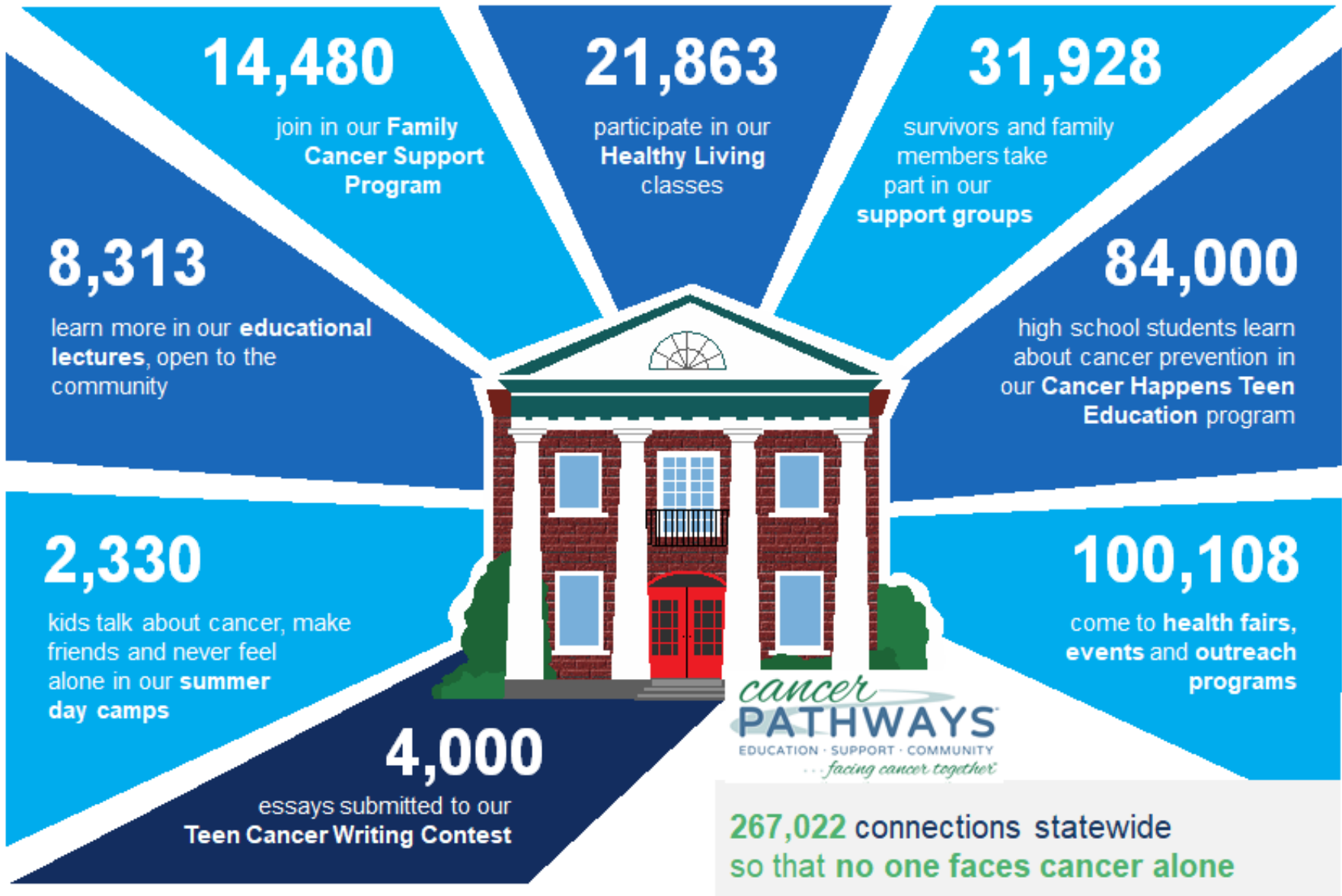
Best Practices for Navigating Cancer in the Workplace

Anna Gottlieb, MPA

Founder & Executive Director

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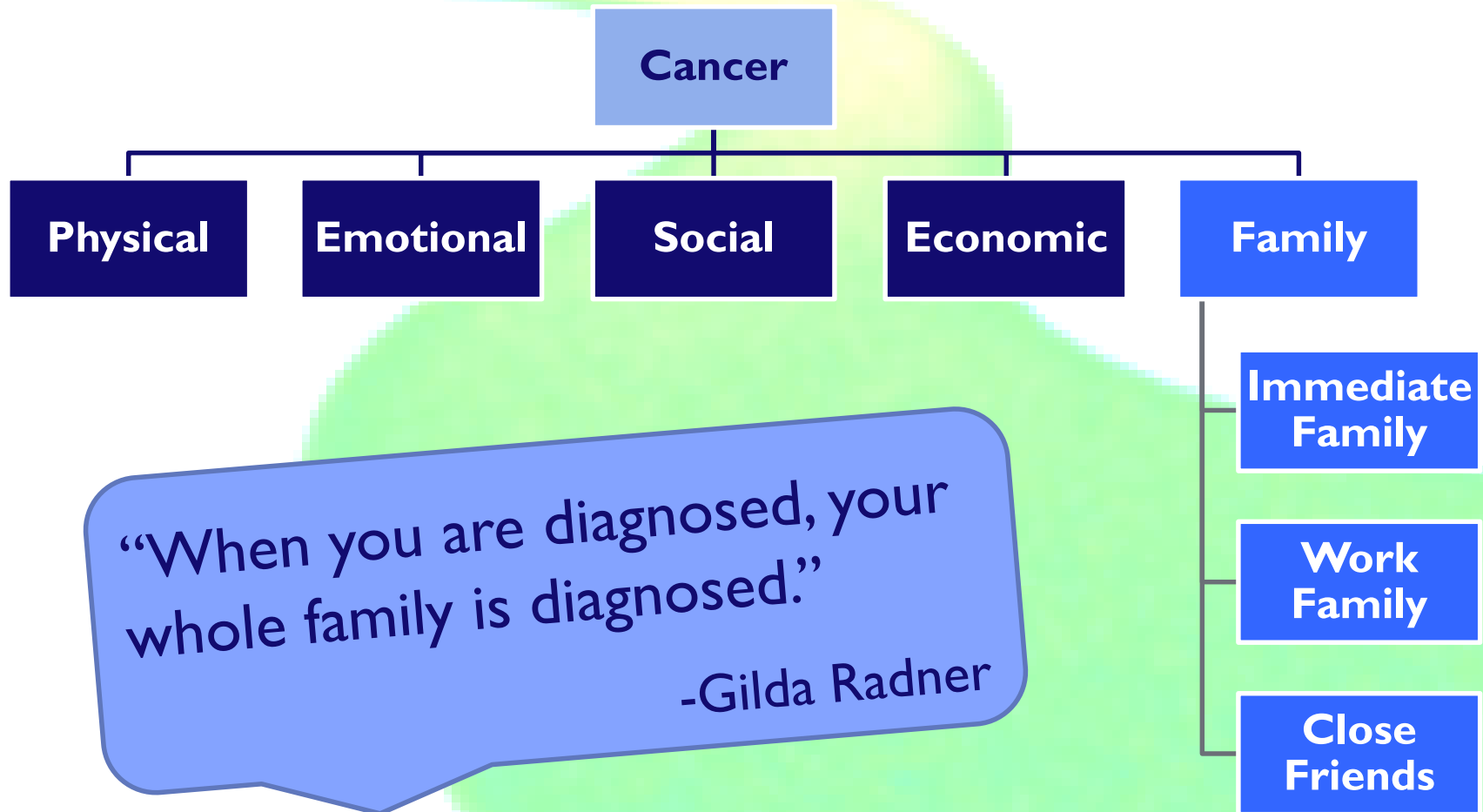
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267,022 connections statewide
so that **no one** faces cancer alone

Multitude of Issues Need Addressing when Cancer Comes To Work



“When you are diagnosed, your whole family is diagnosed.”

-Gilda Radner

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Cancer in the Workplace

Nearly half of the 17 million cancer survivors in the US have lived with the disease for 10+ years

80% of survivors of working age return to work

85% of employers do not have the tools to support employees affected by cancer

151 days is the average length of absence from work for cancer patients once diagnosed

Survivors' ability to return to work decreases with a non-supportive work environment

\$38.5 billion lost in productivity due to issues related to cancer

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Let's Not Forget About Caregivers

57% Caregivers had to adjust their work schedule or take time off

Caregiver needs include:

- Leave of absence
- Full-time → Part-time
- Turn down promotions
- Opt for early retirement
- Quit

Every **caregiver's needs** are different, but often share commonalities

1 in 5 caregivers provided more than 40 hours of care/week

Where and How to Begin

As one survivor said so well ...

“Along with health worries, you now have to face the financial and professional concerns surrounding cancer and your job.”

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Why Return to Work?

Normal
Routine

Health
Insurance

Social Support

Sense of
Purpose &
Well-Being

Young Patients
Have to Work
for a Lifetime

Financial
Pressures

Remember

People return to
work **TOO SOON**

Kind of cancer &
treatment
determines when
employees can
return to work

No two people react
the same

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- **Communication**
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Cancer is Costly to Employees and Employers

This is a Business Issue

Physical, Emotional & Financial Costs

- Disability, absenteeism and reduced productivity may increase

\$264 Billion Lost Annually

- Productivity costs due to cancer-related challenges

#1 Cause of Bankruptcy

- Medical debt Financial Toxicity

Employee Questions Upon Diagnosis

Will there be any flexibility in my work?

Will I have employer support?

Am I still capable of doing my job?

Will I be a burden to my coworkers?

Will I be accepted?

Will my identity change?

Will this plateau my career?

Is my appearance different?

Is there any privacy left for me?

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Employer Questions Upon Diagnosis

What can I do for my employees with cancer?

What do I say to someone with cancer?

How do I handle changes in appearance?

How do I minimize the shock of coworkers?

What if someone gets sick at work?

How will the work get done?

How do I best respect their wishes when I am getting so many questions?

How much can I or should I really tell other employees/colleagues?

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Cancer in the Workplace

A number of employees have cancer in our office.

- How can I organize programs to learn more?

My coworker told me she has cancer.

- I don't know what to say.

One of my employees has just been diagnosed with cancer.

- I want to be helpful but don't know what to do.

I was just diagnosed with cancer.

- Should I tell my employer? Do I have to?

My child was just diagnosed with cancer.

- Does my employer need to know? Will I lose my job?

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Where to Start When Diagnosed – Reality

Clarify health insurance benefits

Find out what your employer provides

Know your rights

Think like your boss

Partner with your Dr. about side effects, limitations

Find your social worker

Write everything down—bring a recording device or a friend

If you need legal help, find a lawyer

Remember HR is your friend!

Get physical and mental rest

Ask for support

Anticipate and prepare for change

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Where to Start When Diagnosed - Medicine

BEFORE telling colleagues, talk with doctor about ways illness can affect your career

Tell your doctor if work is a priority

Ask how will medication or treatment affect your job performance

Ask how to manage side effects

Can you accommodate work into scheduling treatment?

Write a Plan

- **Manage expectations on both sides**
- **Who will your main contact be**
- **It's visual**
- **Employer and employee check in dates and times**
- **Plans can change**
- **Revisit plan after you begin treatment**
- **Revisit plan when you are ready to come back to work**
- **Learn about your health benefits**

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What to Share When Diagnosed

Diagnosis

Prognosis

Expected course
of treatment

Planned leave of
absence

Emergency
contacts

What you need
help with

Realistic
expectations

Know Workplace Protections

Americans with
Disabilities Act
(ADA)

Family &
Medical Leave
Act (FMLA)

Health Insurance
Portability &
Accountability
Act (HIPPA)

Consolidated
Omnibus Budget
Reconciliation
Act (COBRA)

Patient
Protection &
Affordable Care
Act (ACA)

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Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Cancer is a disability

Applies to all phases of employment

Applies to organizations with 15+ employees

Requires reasonable accommodations

Treat all employees equally

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Reasonable Accommodations

WHAT

- Employee has to initiate request
- Confidential
- May require medical documentation
- Employer must provide – as long as it is not an undue hardship

EXAMPLES

- Light duty
- Flexible hours
- Reassignment to vacant position
- Work remotely
- Periodic breaks
- Private area to take medication
- Modify office temperature

Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave

Employee is guaranteed previous or equivalent position upon return

Applies to companies with 50+ employees within 75 miles

Must have worked at least 12 months and >1,250 hours in most recent 12 months

Applies to workers in government agencies, schools, and private companies

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Recovery Time

- **Physical recovery** **1-3 years**
- **Emotional recovery** **2-5 years**
- **Cancer can be chronic**
-
- **Many people live full lives**

- **What is your new normal**

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Workplace Re-Entry: Managers & Colleagues

“My colleagues acted as if I had been on vacation.”

“Co-workers assumed that if I was back at work, I was fine.”

“Empathy and support wanes after a few weeks – but I still wasn’t normal.”

“My colleagues didn’t understand the impact of side effects, especially when I looked okay.”

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Workplace Re-Entry: Employee

“I dreaded the ‘How are you, really?’ question.”

“I did not know my new boundaries.”

“I tried to overdo it to prove I could work.”

“I felt physically horrible but had to hide it.”

“I’m afraid to:

- Ask for support I need
- Ask for time off
- Cough
- Sneeze.”

Return to Work Challenges

Physical

Social

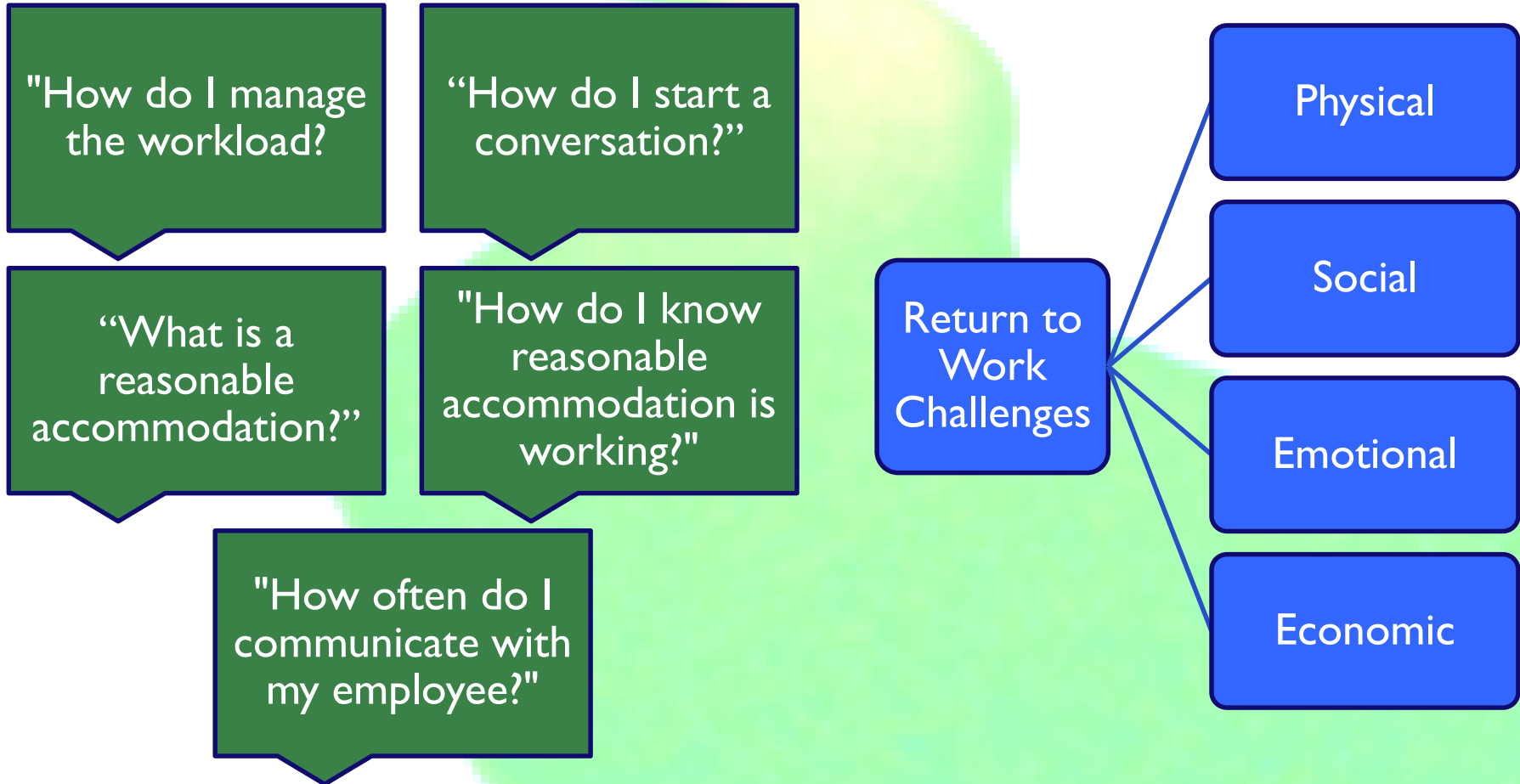
Emotional

Economic

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Workplace Re-Entry: Employer



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Workplace Re-Entry: Physical Challenges

Fatigue

Chemo-brain
memory issues

Pain

Sexual
dysfunction

Neuropathy

Lymphedema

Incontinence

Cardiovascular
Health

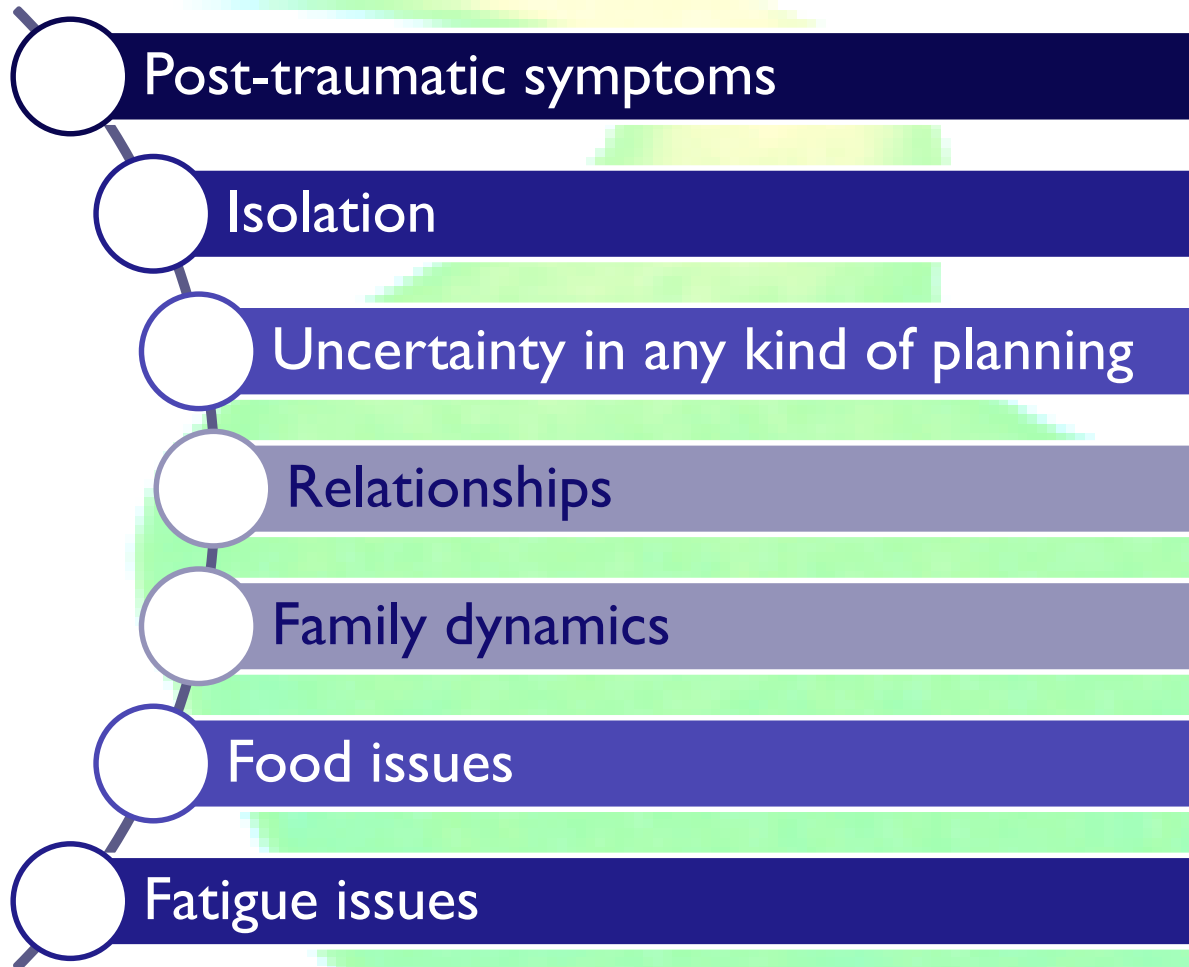
Secondary
cancers

Osteoporosis

Overall fitness

Desperate to
keep up

Workplace Re-Entry: Social Challenges



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Workplace Re-Entry: Emotional Challenges



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Workplace Re-Entry: Economic Challenges



Financial Burden



Health insurance



Ongoing Medical costs



Job Security



Recovery Time



Sick leave



Will I ever get a promotion?



Can I get another job?

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Michelle Millman

May 4, 2019



michellekiro7 🟦 Here goes: it's been quite a journey. 11 years ago I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit, I did NOT tell work. I was in the studio (anchoring) more frequently & now I had a scar front & center on my neck. I learned how to use makeup to cover it up. In the field, reporting, was easier. I wore scarves. A lot. I don't know what I was afraid of, but I even kept this from my closest work friends. Fast forward one year (2009); I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. I couldn't "hide" this one: I needed major surgery, chemo & radiation (what I refer to as "the full meal deal"). I told work. @kiro7seattle & my "work family" were incredible, to say the least.

So here we are this week, May of 2019: two blood draws, an ultrasound & visits with 2 docs. My endocrinologist said what's "left" of my thyroid looks great, no change & blood work is 🙌. He is retiring now & said I really don't need follow up! Then came the "BIG" appointment w/ my medical oncologist. If you see my stories here you already know this news: I will see her next year & if THAT appointment goes well, she will "discharge" me! WHAT?! Yes, I will fire my oncologist! 🙌 That makes me nervous, tbh. No one poking, prodding, drawing blood, checking on me. It is freeing as well. So yes, I have to wait until 2020 for THAT day, but the fact that I can wait a YEAR to see her & knowing at *that* visit it could be the last, is AMAZING! 🌸❤️🙌 I

be the last, is AMAZING! 🌸❤️🙌 I can't believe this summer marks 10 YEARS since my BC diagnosis. For those recently diagnosed, remember you ARE a survivor NOW. Reach out for support, it is there. Don't be afraid to tell. To talk. To be scared. It is ok. I will listen if you need someone. 🙌🙌

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#swipeleft #thyroidcancer
 #thyroidhealing #thyroid
 #breastcancer #chemo #radiation
 #fcancer #cancerawareness #cancer
 #survivor #warrior #cancersurvivor
 #celebrate #support #life #carpediem
 #lovelife #thisismylife #newnormal

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The Washington Post

Morning Mix

A teacher battling cancer must pay for her own substitute. In California, it's the law.

“What it really is, is a reflection of how financially strapped the system has been for so long,” Heins said. “It is outrageous when you think about someone suffering from a catastrophic illness that they actually have to deal with these kinds of issues while already facing extra financial pressure.”

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USA TODAY

Court: California teacher fired for needing time off for cancer treatment can sue Catholic school

**THE
HILL**

Seattle man awarded \$5 million for wrongful termination after cancer surgery

Casting Exec Sues E! for Wrongful Termination Following Breast Cancer Treatment

*THE
Hollywood
REPORTER*

**THE
HILL**

Parents outraged after California teacher diagnosed with cancer forced to pay sub's wages while on leave

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cancer
PATHWAYS™
EDUCATION · SUPPORT · COMMUNITY

HOW TO HELP

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Tips for Colleagues

Say something

Not knowing what to say is normal

Keep your relationship as it was before

Ask the patient or caregiver IF they want to discuss or be asked anything

Some people come to work to get a break from illness

Send a card or email

Offer specific, practical help

- Run errands or cook a meal

Continue normal gossip and talk – keep things normal!

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Tips for Survivors and Caregivers

Agree to a return-to-work plan with your employee

Consider a phased return to work

Consider changing your role at work if you feel you can no longer perform your job

Think about what you want to disclose before returning to work

Schedule regular meetings with your boss in advance

Pace the road to recovery

HR is your best friend!

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Tips for Supervisors

Let your employee take the lead in conversation

Ask your employee how they are feeling

Ask how much time off they will need for appointments & treatment

Discuss what will or won't be told to their colleagues

Offer options for time off

Discuss policies on flexible working

Discuss their rights to be protected

Share services your organization has to help them

Check in regularly

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Tips for Everyone

Be mindful and don't ask tons of questions

Always ask – do not assume anything

Listening speaks volumes

Be specific in offers to help

Follow the lead of the person you're speaking to

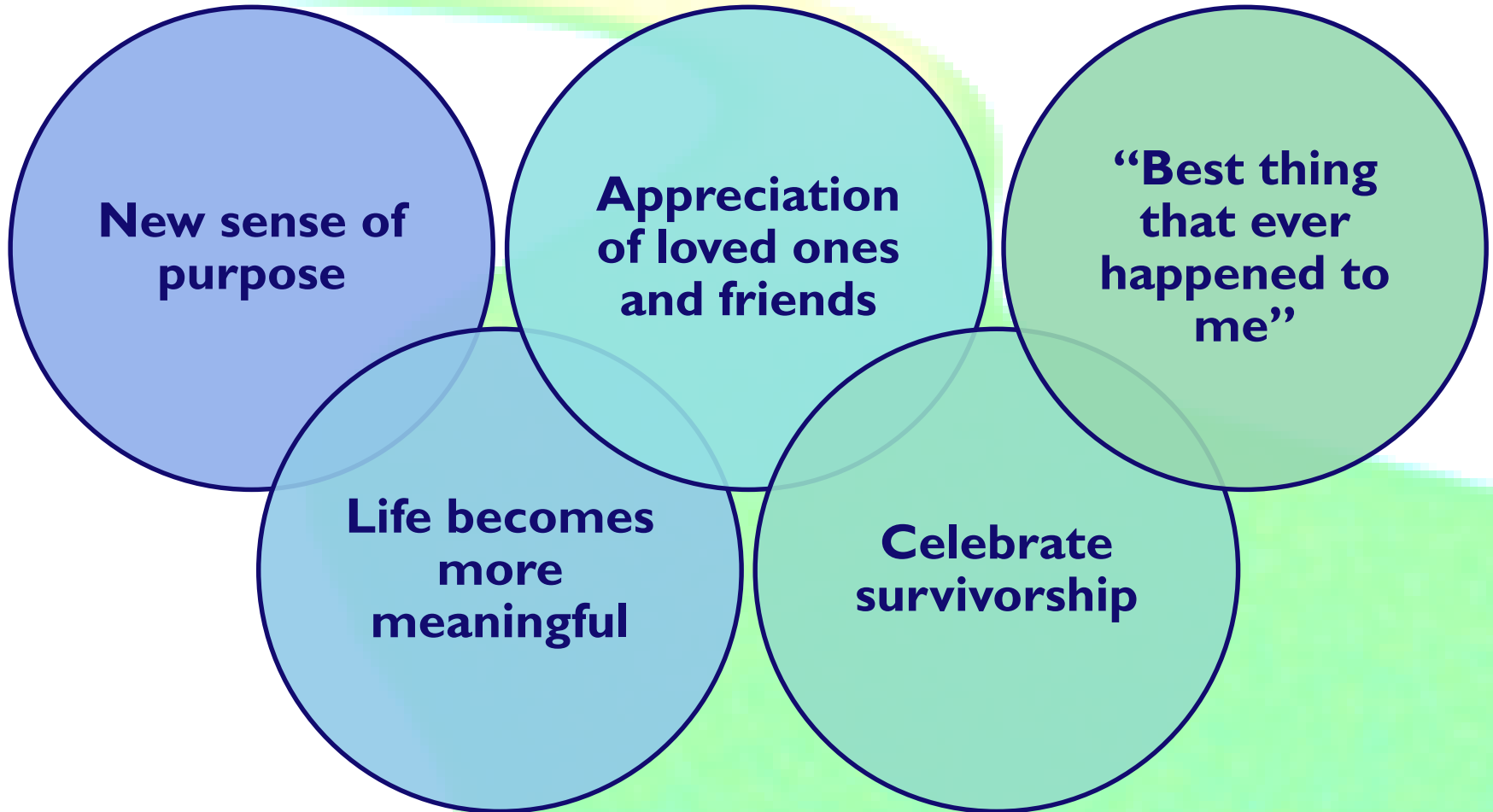
Everyone handles cancer differently

Say or do something!

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Positive Changes from Cancer



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GOOD NEWS

Rates of cancer survivorship are increasing!

- In 2017 there were 15.5 million survivors
- By 2026 we will see an increase to over 20.3 million survivors

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Tell Your Workplace to Register Today!



WHEN CANCER COMES TO WORK CONFERENCE

■■■■■ For employers, executives, managers, HR specialists, and healthcare professionals

**BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVELY
NAVIGATING CANCER IN THE WORKPLACE**

*Thursday, November 7, 2019 | 8:00am - 4:00pm
At the Fourth & Madison Conference Center | Seattle, WA*

www.cancerpathways.org

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THANK YOU!

More questions?

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