

AYA NEWSLETTER

ADOLESCENT & YOUNG ADULT (AYA) PROGRAM • MAY 2020



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

“I just want this to be over and for life to be normal again.”

This phrase, or something like it, has been familiar to me for a while now. Right now, it’s been focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire world has been changed by this new virus and an extraordinary amount of people are worried about a flood of unknowns. Will I get sick? Will my family be okay? How long can I afford to not be working? When can I see my friends again? When will this be over?

Dani Taylor MSW RSW with the Messner Allogeneic Transplant Program and the Supportive Care Department.

I’ve heard similar questions in my work with AYA cancer patients. As a social worker with the allogeneic stem cell transplant team at Princess

Margaret, many of the young adults I work with these difficult questions. COVID-19 has only emphasized the challenge of these problems. The uncertainty that AYA cancer patients have had to navigate is now shared by the rest of the world. But the rest of the world isn’t necessarily managing reduced immune systems, chemotherapy appointments, surgeries, fertility treatments, and scanxiety.

After a cancer diagnosis, getting back to normal isn’t so simple. For many AYA patients, there is the creation of a new normal. As an AYA cancer survivor myself, it became clear that I couldn’t go back in time and erase my experiences, I instead had to build a new normal. While finding this new normal can be hard, it can also be beautiful. New normal might mean committing to things that help you feel better. Our new normal might include yoga, therapy, calling our friends more, meditating, or whatever it is that helps us cope with being young and sick.

Right now, the world is preparing to adjust to its new normal. Maybe the world will find some new ways to feel better too.

If you’re having trouble finding a new normal that fits you, talk to your doctor about a referral to psychosocial oncology to connect with a social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist that could help.



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AYA PROGRAM UPDATES

MAY 28: VIRTUAL AYA MEET-UP

Since we anticipate social distancing will go on for a while longer, we have decided to launch a Virtual AYA Meet-up, the first one will be scheduled on May 28th from 6:00 p.m - 7:30 p.m from the comfort of your own home!

The meet-up will be hosted on the Ontario Telehealth Network (OTN) so all personal health information is safe and protected. We will have a limit of 15 participants so if you are interested, please let us know ASAP by emailing us at aya@uhn.ca and we will send you the invite link.



VIRTUAL MUSIC THERAPY

SarahRose is now accepting referrals for inpatients, outpatients and their family members for virtual music therapy. She has been doing sessions by phone (and video at the Kensington Hospice). Please e-mail SarahRose at sarahrose.black@uhn.ca with name, MRN and location of the patient (inpatient or home) and the preferred method of contact.

RESOURCES FOR ADOLESCENT & YOUNG ADULT ONCOLOGY PATIENTS AND SUPPORTERS

Returning to work or school, or seeking a new job or school program following cancer treatment is an important goal for many young adult cancer survivors.

Engaging in work and educational activities are meaningful life roles that provide a sense of self-identity, stability, daily structure and offer a network of social support. Returning to work or school following treatment can provide a sense of normalcy and can have a positive impact on your self-confidence and self-image.

The following link consists of a list of programs and services that aim to address school and work concerns:

https://www.uhn.ca/PrincessMargaret/Clinics/Adolescent_Young_Adult_Oncology/Pages/school_work.aspx

COMMUNITY EVENTS & UPDATES

A number of AYA-focused nonprofits have great online content or are hosting virtual events during this time. Here are a few we recommend that you check out.

LOOK GOOD FEEL BETTER (@LGFBCANADA)

It's easy to forget how much of our identity is related to our physical appearance - things like hair and body image can be a powerful part of that. Cancer affects this at a time when a woman may be feeling vulnerable in many other ways. Their workshop shows women certain steps they can take so they can look good, feel better and get closer to the person they were before they began fighting this debilitating disease. It takes one thing off the table at a time when there are so many other fears that a woman may be facing.

Due to the COVID-19 virus, the LGFB in-person workshops are temporarily suspended. Now they offer two different virtual workshops - one for Skincare & Cosmetics and another on Wigs & Hair Alternatives. Feel free to sign up for one or both!

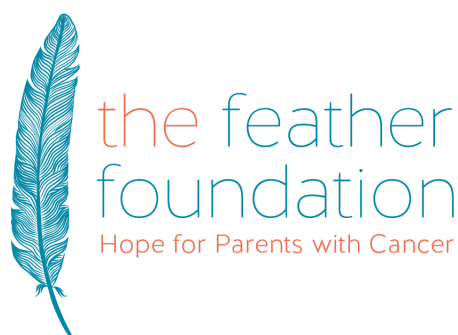
<https://lgfb.ca/en/workshop/>



THE FEATHER FOUNDATION (@THEFEATHERFOUNDATION)

If you just need space to think or share with others like you, consider joining their online community. You can talk to other parents also impacted by cancer and parenting through it all! Get connected, receive support and information. This online group is private, facilitated by an oncology social worker.

You can go to their website here: <https://www.thefeatherfoundation.org/>, click 'Just for You', fill out their sign-up request form and, pending their review process, they will send you a personal invitation and password to access The Feather Foundation Forum.



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PINK PEARL CANADA (@PINKPEARLCANADA)

Pink Pearl Canada is a community-oriented charitable organization that provides support, facilitates connections and empowers young women who are courageously overcoming the social and emotional challenges of being diagnosed with cancer across Canada.

They are shifting to virtual programs and introducing their Learning, Conversation and Movement Series via Zoom video conference on Wednesdays. These are open to those who would benefit. Sessions will be recorded and uploaded to their website.

RSVP at least two-days before a program start-date to programs@pinkpearlcanada.org.
For more information, visit <https://pinkpearlcanada.org/virtual/>.



EPIC EXPERIENCE (@EPICXPERIENCE)

Epic Experience (@EpicXperience) is hosting a variety of virtual programs to help you stay active at home, like yoga and ballroom dancing: [See schedule.](#)



AYA PROGRAM AT PRINCESS MARGARET CANCER CENTRE (@AYAPROGRAM)

We will be sharing AYA Awareness posts on our social media platforms. Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and share with your own network to help increase awareness for this often-overlooked group of young people.

If you're an AYA survivor and want to help others find hope and inspiration through your personal experiences, we want to hear from you. Send your story to aya@uhn.ca and encourage others to get the help and support they need.



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