

# Coping in the Face of Cancer

Presented By The Gathering Place

Every year, hundreds of women (as well as men) walk through the doors of The Gathering Place, a cancer support center with locations in Beachwood and Westlake, to learn or enhance ways to cope with either their own or a loved one's cancer diagnosis. It's a big step to walk through the doors because asking for and accepting help isn't always easy, especially for those who are accustomed to being the one that others come to seeking help.

In the report *Cancer Facts and Figures 2010* issued by the American Cancer Society, one in three women are at risk of developing cancer. Of course, each diagnosis affects not only the individual but the family and any support system as well. Both the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) acknowledge the importance of accessing support to cope with the physical, emotional and spiritual impact of a cancer diagnosis. Each of their websites, ACS (Cancer.org) and NCI (Cancer.gov), provide a wealth of information and resources. The Gathering Place (TGP) provides free programs and services that address the mind-body-spirit connection for anyone touched by cancer. The programs are varied and encompass information, support, and stress management.

The adage that knowledge is power is particularly applicable for those facing a cancer diagnosis. At a time when it feels that control of one's life has been taken away, arming oneself with information can be empowering. TGP offers a lending library in both locations with a medical librarian that can assist with technical questions and research. The libraries have over 2,000 books, CDs and DVDs that provide tips, strategies and information for taking care of self as well as medical journals providing specific details on different types of cancer.

For many participants, the library is the first point of entry because they have so many questions and are trying to absorb lots of new information and the new language of oncology. On a regular basis physicians come in and provide presentations on the latest updates in treatments and the luxury of time to answer questions.

Many people coming for support have concerns about their children. How will they cope? What are the correct words to use with younger children and how does one allow teens their space, but make sure their emotional needs are met? The comprehensive children and family programs at TGP provide support groups, individual and family counseling as well as programs that provide opportunities for families to work together in creative ways that help to enhance communication skills.

Families can't put life on hold while coping with a cancer diagnosis. Work continues, meals have to be cooked, homework has to be completed, and other day-to-day tasks have to be managed. Finding balance is the goal of many who seek out TGP. Interacting with others on the journey can provide practical ideas like putting together a care team to help with cooking and caring for children and recognizing that it is okay not to answer every phone call. Participants share information about websites like *CaringBridge.org* that families can use to share updates and well-meaning and concerned friends can post words of encouragement and well wishes.

Probably one of the difficult concepts to grasp during this time, especially for someone accustomed to juggling a busy lifestyle and family, is taking time out to relax and be in the moment. Needless to say, a cancer diagnosis can be frightening and overwhelming causing a high level of stress. Suddenly priorities have to shift and major decisions have to be made quickly. Deep breathing, meditation, massage, guided imagery and even journaling are tools that can help to eliminate stress by quieting and clearing the mind and helping to bring about clarity.

All of the programs and services provided at TGP are free of charge and are provided to anyone touched by cancer. A wide array of programs are offered that take into account varied coping styles and that needs will change as the cancer journey progresses; what an individual or family needs at the time of a diagnosis is received is different than the needs after treatment is completed.



For more detailed information on the programs and services at The Gathering Place, visit [TouchedByCancer.org](http://TouchedByCancer.org) or call 216.595.9546 or drop in at either location, in Beachwood at 23300 Commerce Park or in Westlake at 800 Sharon Drive.



## Upcoming Programs

**Nutrition Classes:** Discover creative and fun ways to add more vegetables into a healthy, affordable lifestyle the whole family can enjoy.

**Gorgeous Greens**

Thursday, August 12..... 7:00-8:30pm  
The Gathering Place East

23300 Commerce Park, Beachwood

**Gorgeous Greens**

Thursday, August 26..... 7:00-8:30pm  
The Gathering Place West

800 Sharon Drive, Westlake

**KidShop:** A three-hour workshop for children of all ages who have an adult family member with cancer. An opportunity for parents and children to interact with other families.

Saturday, September 25 ..... 2:00-5:00pm  
The Gathering Place East

23300 Commerce Park, Beachwood

**Chemo-Brain:** Learn strategies to help relieve the difficulty with memory, concentration and word retrieval that sometimes result after taking chemotherapy.

Wednesday, September 15 ..... 7:00-8:30pm  
The Gathering Place East

23300 Commerce Park, Beachwood

**Cancer Etiquette:** What to say (and not say) when your loved one has cancer.

Friday, September 17..... 10:00-11:00am  
The Gathering Place West

800 Sharon Drive, Westlake

**Advanced Registration Required for all Programs. Call 216.595.9546.**

## Relaxation Minis

**Mini 1:** Take a deep breath and hold it for several seconds. As you very slowly release your breath out, repeat a focus word, phrase or prayer.

**Mini 2:** Put your right hand just under your navel (belly button). Focus on breathing down into your stomach. Your hand should rise as you breathe in, and fall as you breathe out. Now, as you inhale, say the number *ten* to yourself. Exhale. With the next breath, say *nine*, then breathe out. Do this until you reach *one*.

*The Wellness Book: The Comprehensive Guide to Maintaining Health and Treating Stress Related Illness*, H. Benson & E. M. Stuart (1993)