

WOMAN TO WOMAN

OUR INCREDIBLE BODIES

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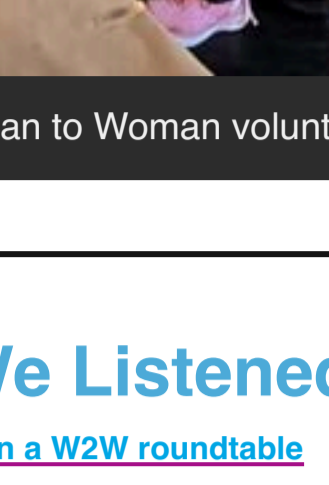
A Letter From The Editors

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024! This year, we plan to reflect on all the ways our community supports healing in a holistic, wholehearted way. In a series of three newsletters, we will spotlight the ways Woman to Woman members care for their bodies, minds, and spirits.

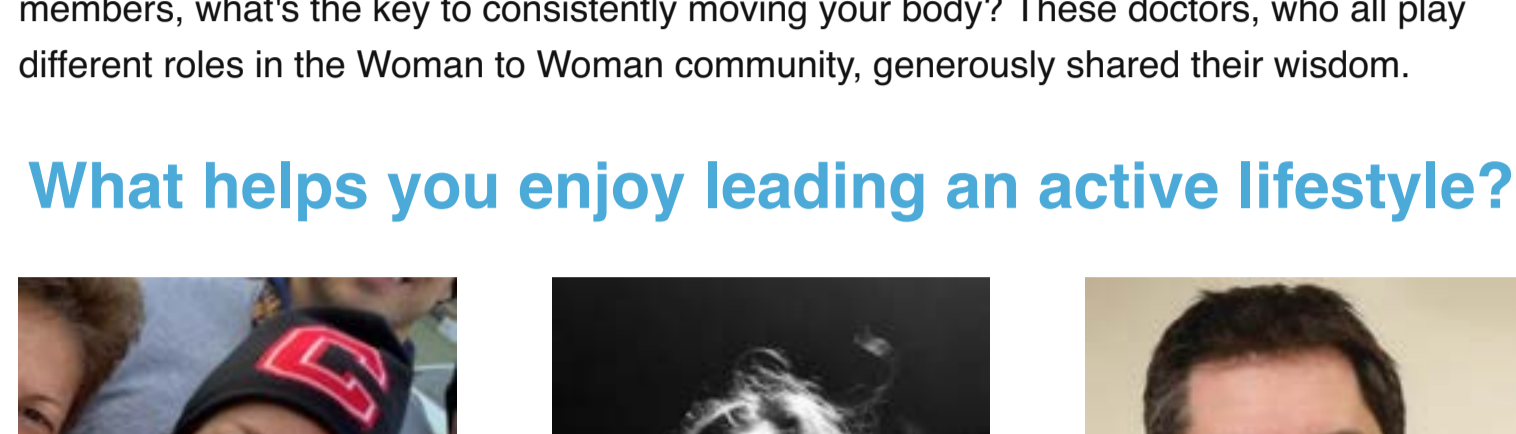
To kick off the year, this newsletter will celebrate our bodies: the incredible things they're capable of and the myriad ways we can care for them. We'll talk about the resources available through Woman to Woman, the ways our community members stay active every day, and take-home tools for meeting your movement and mindfulness goals in 2024.

Finally, January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. We are linking to [this resource guide](#), in the hope it will help facilitate conversations with women in your life about preventing, diagnosing, and treating cervical cancer.

Thank you for reading. We are so excited to spotlight our community, and our diverse approaches to embodying ideas of wellness, all year long.



- Jillian Levinson and Rachel Justus, Woman to Woman Program Managers



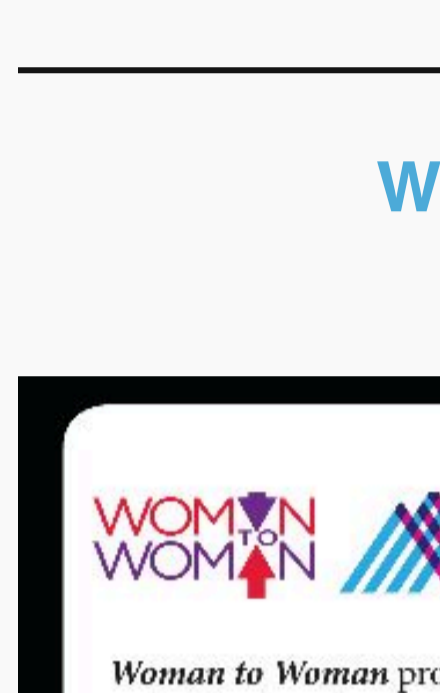
A snapshot from the December Woman to Woman volunteer luncheon

We Asked, We Listened

[Celebrating movement in a W2W roundtable](#)

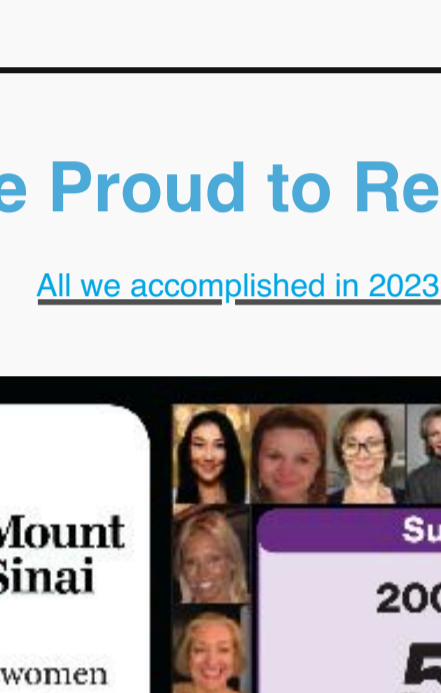
In our roundtable discussion, we showcase a range of perspectives by asking three community members the same question. Today, we've asked physician community members, what's the key to consistently moving your body? These doctors, who all play different roles in the Woman to Woman community, generously shared their wisdom.

What helps you enjoy leading an active lifestyle?



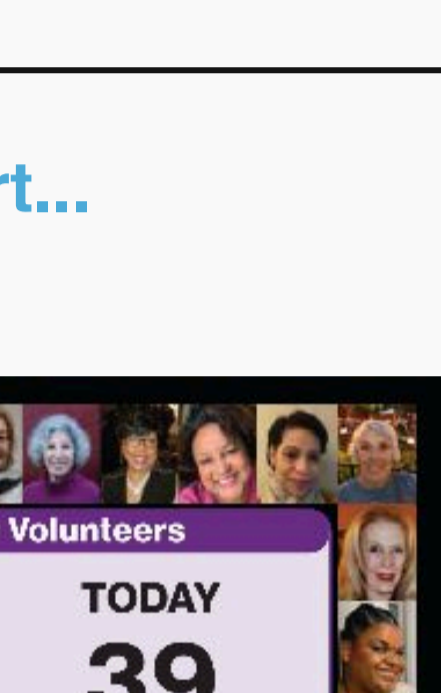
"I walk or jog in the park daily. I can't say it's always easy. But I've tried other exercise classes, and being outside in the park is what clicked for me. I'm fortunate enough to live near Central Park, so I show up every day."

— Dr. Shari Brasner, survivor volunteer



"My running group is phenomenal. We have people who start out fast, others who stay slow. No matter what, the entire team is cheering for you. It's like having an extended family who supports you."

— Dr. Ixel Cervera, gynecologic cancer patient



"As a child, I played tennis competitively. Now, the pressure is no longer there, and I enjoy the game a lot more. I don't have to win. The only challenge today is finding the time to play."

— Dr. Konstantin Zakashansky, Mount Sinai gynecologic oncologist

Questions about our programming or resources? Please email womantowoman@mountsinai.org if you would like more information.

We're Proud to Report...

[All we accomplished in 2023](#)

Woman to Woman provides women in treatment and survivors of gynecologic cancer with emotional, educational and financial support; resources to promote self-advocacy; and community, strength and hope today and for the journey ahead.

Survivor Volunteers
2023: 5 | TODAY: 39
Providing peer-to-peer mentoring and emotional support via phone, text, email, video, and in-person.

2023 IMPACT

- Virtual Support Groups:** 148 Groups (↑4%), 2,300 Attendees (↑8%)
- Community Membership:** 933 (↑3%)
- Community Support:** 200 Messages provided to Patients & Caregivers (↑43%)

Financial Aid Provided: 194 women in need received \$60,143 in financial aid grants ranging from \$25 - \$1,500.

Virtual Support Groups Provided:

- Survivor Support
- Newly Diagnosed
- Book Club
- Resource Patients
- Young Patients
- Long Term Survivors
- Women of Color
- LGBTQIA+
- Latino Patients

Financial Aid Provided Breakdown:

- Groups of Grants: 46 Grants
- Transportation: 46 Grants
- Medical Assistance: 25 Grants
- Mental Health: 25 Grants
- Household Bills: 25 Grants
- Food: 25 Grants
- Waves: 25 Grants
- Wigs: 25 Grants
- Assistive: 25 Grants
- Prescription: 10 Grants
- Genetic Testing: 1 Grant
- Other: 1 Grant

We are grateful to our community partners and individual supporters who make this program possible:

- OCRA ovarian cancer research alliance
- The Lewin Fund for High-Value Research
- SHARE
- red door
- SHARSHIBET
- Program Staff Leaders: www.mountsinai.org/womantowoman, www.mountsinai.org/mountsinai.org, 212-241-3793

Join our Facebook Group: Woman to Woman-Mount Sinai. Visit our "Woman to Woman Program" video library.

Woman to Woman's patient assistance fund is completely philanthropically funded. If you would like to continue our 20-year legacy of support, please click here.

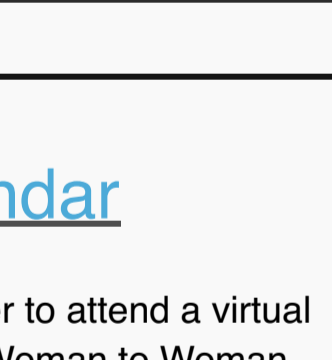
Why I Give Back

[Self-care and the holiday gift program](#)

Lauren Feld, a Woman to Woman survivor volunteer, has been in remission from gynecologic cancer for six years, and since 2020, she has given back in a profound and thoughtful way. By sponsoring the holiday gift program, Lauren has arranged for nearly 300 holiday gifts to be mailed directly to patient homes, including tea with personalized cups, warm blankets, and essential oil diffuser kits.

In 2023, Lauren went above and beyond, gifting foot massage care kits to 90 patients and funding in-person massages for patients and caregivers at Mount Sinai during the month of December. Throughout her life, Lauren said, wellness has been a fundamental touchstone. "It's my world," she explained, "so I've tried to embody health, wellness and self-care elements through the gift program." Lauren said she sees the message program as an undervalued aspect of self-care. "Reflexology can be used to relieve pain and nausea, and other symptoms of both cancer and cancer treatments. I wanted to alleviate the physical and mental symptoms," she said.

Often, massages are seen as a luxury or frivolity. "Self-care is not facials and fancy lotions. It's a vital part of our well-being and our balance," Lauren explained. "Tending to ourselves plays a part in our hormones, our appetites, and our stress levels." Removing the stigma of "indulgence" can have a lasting impact on whole-body health. "There are small, daily habits that can ignite a different energy inside of you," Lauren said.



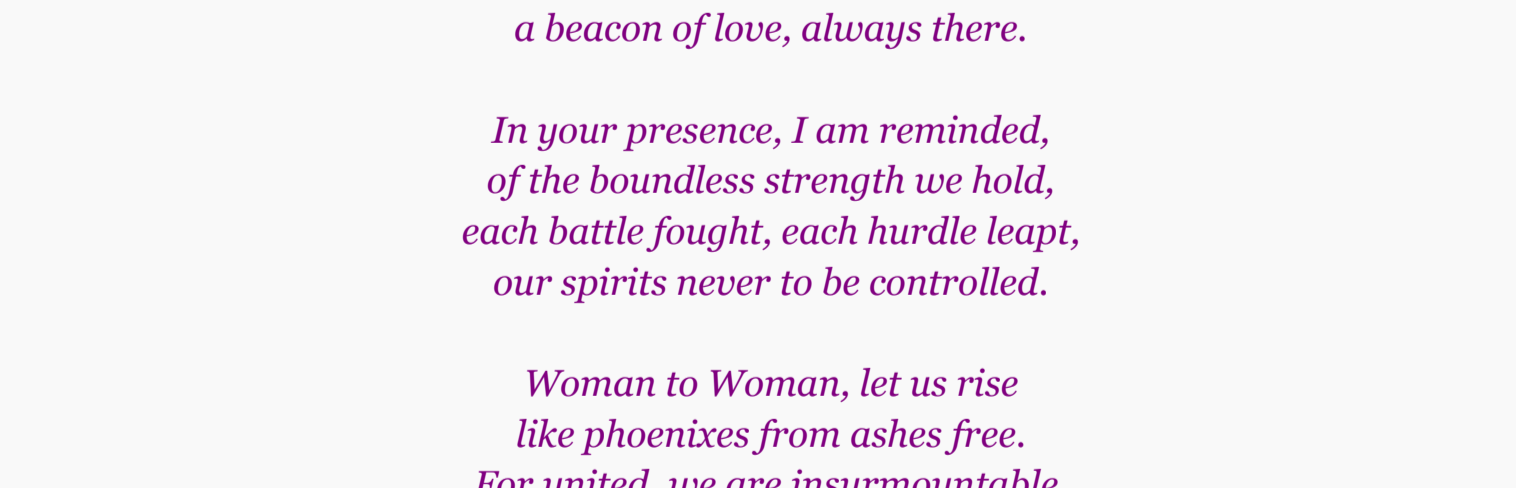
The Rabbit Effect

[Spotlight on the fall 2023 Woman to Woman reunion](#)

In November, we celebrated 20 years of community and support with a Woman to Woman reunion. It was a joyous event for many reasons. Chief among them: it was our first in-person reunion since 2019, and appropriately, our theme was "The Healing Power of Friendship and Connection." Dr. Kelli Harding, assistant professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University Medical Center, was one of two speakers at the event. In her book *The Rabbit Effect: Live Longer, Happier, and Healthier with the Groundbreaking Science of Kindness*, Dr. Harding illuminates the ways kindness and community intersect with our health.

In conversation with Woman to Woman following the reunion, Dr. Harding said that our intentional community stands out as exactly the type of support framework that makes a real difference in health outcomes. "People do better with support, and that support can come in all different ways. Sometimes it's from families, sometimes it's from neighbors, but often, it's from communities that we create and choose to be a part of," Dr. Harding explained.

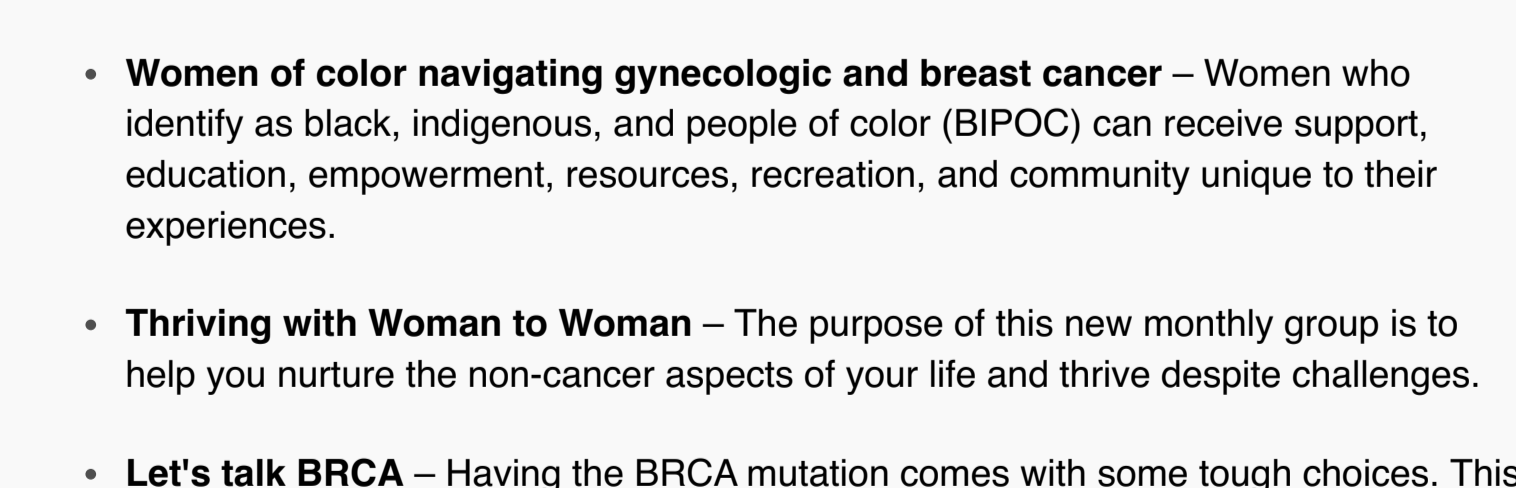
That's great news for anyone who attends our in-person and online events. Studies reflect that people who attend support groups for diagnoses have better outcomes than those who do not. And kindness is more than a two-way street. People who perform kind acts benefit, and people on the receiving end of that kindness do, too – but the positive health impact even extends to those who observe it.



Photos from the fall 2023 Woman to Woman reunion

Dr. Harding recommended doing a few things each day that are "kinder than necessary," such as making a phone call to a friend or smiling to a stranger in the hallway. Choosing to give your time and energy in small ways is also a key to receiving and accepting help. Women are often less likely to accept help, she said, even in highly stressful circumstances like the period immediately following a diagnosis. "Realize that, by allowing someone to help you, you're also helping them," Dr. Harding reminded. Of course, if you're already an active participant in Woman to Woman, there's a strong chance you're already reaping the benefits of a kindness mindset. Dr. Harding said she was moved by the community care she saw demonstrated at the reunion. "It's not just the willingness to show up and be a participant, but also the willingness to give back, that I found so inspiring," she said.

See the full fall Woman to Woman reunion in our video library.



Dr. Harding speaks at the fall Woman to Woman reunion

Don't Miss It: Our Events Calendar

Our monthly events calendar is now online, making it easier than ever to attend a virtual class, join a support group or book club, and get involved with our Woman to Woman community. Be a part of online and in-person opportunities for learning, healing, celebration, and connection.

Bookmark our calendar and stay up-to-date on Woman to Woman events.

Poem: Woman to Woman, by Ali Ibrahim Karim

As a patient care associate at Mount Sinai, Ali Ibrahim Karim has helped many patients on the women's health floor. He is also an author; his book, *America My Home*, is available on Amazon. We are honored to feature this beautiful poem, penned by Ali for the Woman to Woman community.

In the realm of sacred sisterhood, where empathy and strength collide, a call echoes from heart to heart, across the boundless cosmic tide.

Woman to Woman, let us gather, in unity, with grace unfurled, for we hold secrets and stories that redefine the ancient world.

In your eyes, I see fire, burning bright, fierce and bold, an untamed spirit, unconquerable, a force of light, never to fold.

In your voice, I hear a symphony, melodies woven with pain and pride, speaking truths that were silenced, igniting hearts once lost, deep inside.

Woman to woman, let us share, the triumphs and the tears we've known, for we are warriors of resilience, seeds of resilience forever sown.

In your touch, I feel healing hands, a gentle embrace of divine care, you soothe wounds, unseen and bleeding, a beacon of love, always there.

In your presence, I am reminded, of the boundless strength we hold, each battle fought, each hurdle leapt, our spirits never to be controlled.

Woman to Woman, let us rise like phoenixes from ashes free, for united, we are insurmountable, indomitable, forever we shall be.

Let each heart inspire another, with shared wisdom, love, and light, for the sisterhood we manifest transcends all limits, shining bright.

Woman to Woman, let us remember, our worth, our power, our long-fought fight, together, we shall change the world, with unity and immeasurable might.

In Case You Missed It

In 2023, we increased the number of virtual support groups offered by Woman to Woman by 4%. Here are three of the latest additions to our virtual calendar.

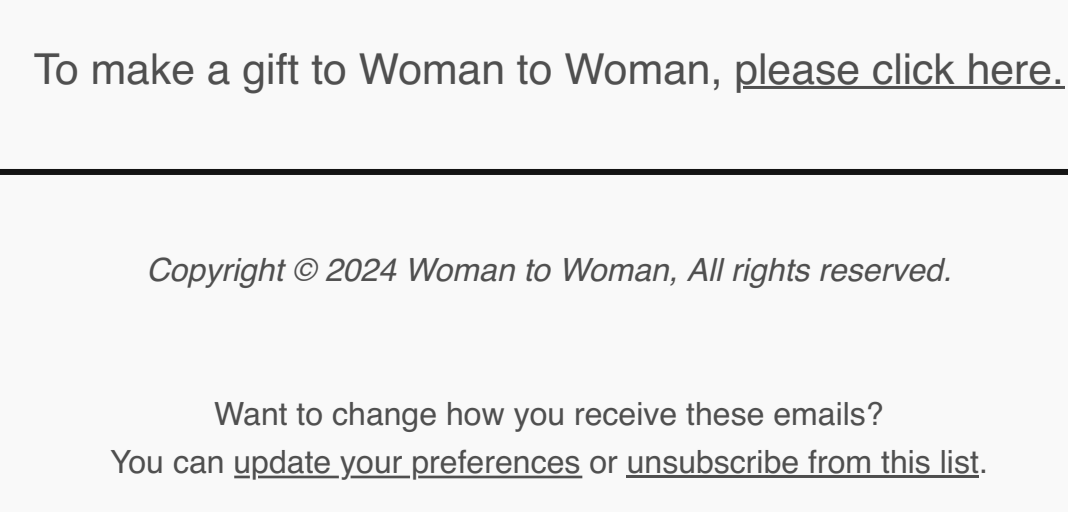
- Women of color navigating gynecologic and breast cancer** – Women who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) can receive support, education, empowerment, resources, recreation, and community unity to their experiences.
- Thriving with Woman to Woman** – The purpose of this new monthly group is to help you nurture the non-cancer aspects of your life and thrive despite challenges.
- Let's talk BRCA** – Having the BRCA mutation comes with some tough choices. This group empowers you with factual information so you can advocate for yourself and, with your healthcare team, make informed medical decisions.

New Year, New Routine

[Self-care resources to use every day](#)

We ended 2023 with an online seminar highlighting the power of routines. Refer to this "routine resource library" all year, and you'll have no trouble meeting your 2024 goals.

- Take a holistic approach to self-care. If you've been struggling, take a brief inventory of your physical, social, emotional and spiritual health. For a daily reminder of a well-rounded self-care routine, save [this helpful – and cheerful! – illustration](#).



- Starting a new routine is easy. Sticking to it takes work. See expert-approved tricks for making your [fresh start into a yearlong success](#).
- When in doubt, simplify. Keep it simple with a short mantra or brief "keyword" that can guide your choices throughout the year, like [this easy-to-remember acronym](#).

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