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Resilience in Real Life

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"My barn having burned down, I can now see the moon."

-Mizuta Masahide, 17th century Japanese poet and samurai

It's impossible to ignore the adversity we've endured the past three years. Yet as we take stock of the world, and of ourselves in 2022, what new perspectives, hopes, and strengths have emerged out of this historic period? What have you personally overcome and what helped you

"I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it," said Maya Angelou. All of us will continue to change and we will continue to adapt. Woman to Woman will continue to be there for our network of patients, volunteers, caregivers, community partners, and advocates who are constantly evolving and growing in response to adversity.

I will leave you with two more questions:

find light amidst intense darkness? Yes, I'm talking about resilience.

Resilience is defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary as "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change." Every individual in the Woman to Woman community is resilient. From offering resources during our virtual support groups, to donating to our patient assistance fund, to volunteers making phone calls to patients, the energy this community has poured into our program during these difficult times is a testament to the power of love, altruism, and resilience.

what is your self-definition of resilience?

And who in your life, whether that be a parent, a friend, or a Woman to Woman volunteer, reminds you of that power and strength that exists within you?



**-Nicole Theodore,
Woman to Woman
volunteer, cervical
cancer survivor and
W2W Newsletter
editor**

Take It From Her: Expert Advice on Establishing Resilience



Last spring, Cynthia Hayes, gynecologic cancer survivor, Woman to Woman volunteer and author of *The Big Ordeal*, spoke with W2W to share strategies for managing the psychological turmoil of cancer.

Above all? Being patient with day-to-day changes, and staying open to new ways of finding resilience. "We're fighting against our own bodies in order to try to establish that emotional balance,"

Cynthia said. "What works one day might not work the next day."

View the full video [HERE](#) to hear Cynthia talk about her research, and discuss moving through natural periods of discouragement towards optimism and healing.

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 W2W community.

**[Bookmark our calendar and stay up-to-date on Woman to Woman events.](#)
[We can't wait to see you!](#)**

We're Proud to Report...

- In 2021, our 31 incredible survivor volunteers provided peer-to-peer mentoring and support, online and face-to-face. Our virtual programming became more of a central hub for our patients, especially in the 125 support groups W2W hosted. In October, our 19th reunion went virtual once again. We celebrated the best way we know how: with the theme Woman to Woman Gives Back!
- Woman to Woman provided over \$31,000 for [patient financial assistance](#) in 2021—that includes rent, utilities, fertility preservation, groceries, and transportation costs.
- Thanks to funding from a generous donor, we launched a brand-new video library so you can benefit from our programming anytime, anywhere. Access our videos on [Vimeo](#) or [Youtube](#) now.
- And we continue to expand our virtual content offerings. Add the monthly programming to your own calendar—we'd love to see you there. Our Long-Term Gynecologic Cancer Survivor Group is approaching its one-year anniversary, and a four-session hypnosis series will debut in coming months.

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

Woman to Woman's patient assistance fund is completely philanthropically funded. If you would like to support these services for future patients, [please click here.](#)

Hamawattie Persaud on giving back: "I've been there, and it's not easy"

Inspired by a conversation at the 2021 Woman to Woman Reunion, Hamawattie Persaud spent the holiday season making beautiful, handcrafted silk scarves for patients in the Woman to Woman community. The reunion's theme was giving back, and Hamawattie said supporting community that saw her



through her own cancer journey came naturally to her.

“I’ve spent over forty years working and making projects like this,” Hamawattie shared. “I’ve been there, and it’s not easy to be in a hospital bed with cancer.”

“When I see people with a smile on their face, it makes me very happy, because I did walk that road,” Hamawattie said. “I know all about it and just wish no one had to go there.”

“I would just like to give back and make someone happy. I want people to know they’re loved, and not alone.”



Putting Resiliency Into Practice

with Guest Columnist Elicia Enriquez

Elicia Enriquez is a Clinical Social Worker at The Center for Stress, Resilience, and Personal Growth at Mount Sinai. She shared her expertise with Woman to Woman, first in a series of resiliency-focused workshops, and now in our newsletter. Here's what Elicia had to say about putting resiliency into practice:

When you find yourself in a stressful situation, it’s crucial to **recognize your interpretation of events** and try to keep that perception accurate. Often when we are stressed we revert back to what we have learned from our past experiences and find it difficult to view new situations objectively. Our automatic thoughts take over and we end up believing them to be true even when they are not.

Focus your attention on **potential positive outcomes** instead of dwelling on the negative, avoid overgeneralization and keep in mind that **everything is temporary** even if it feels like it will go on forever. If your gut reaction is “I’m failing and I can’t do anything right!” try

replacing that with a more neutral response: “This task may be challenging at the moment, **but it will pass eventually. I am not a failure; there are plenty of things that I do well.**” By recognizing the automatic thought you can train your brain to recognize all or nothing thinking and challenge it.

Keeping those negative thoughts at bay will be easier if you make a habit of **cultivating realistic optimism and practicing acceptance of things you cannot control**. A gratitude journal can help: keep an updated one that serves as an **inventory of positive things** in your life.

And, when you struggle to keep negative thoughts at bay, try **behavioral activation**. Pick one small task that you can do every day, like making your bed or doing a light exercise routine, and stick to it. Repeating that positive action consistently serves to **reinforce a positive outlook**, one day at a time. -Elicia Enriquez

In Case You Need It: Resources You Can Use

Our team loves seeing the Woman to Woman family thrive. We’ve compiled these resources from within W2W and beyond to help you stay strong through big changes, and—because we know you can—be the change, too.

- A total of 1,951 patients attended Woman to Woman virtual programming in 2021! Let’s break that record this year—make sure to [access our calendar](#), available on our website or by signing up for emails, and add events to your schedule.
- Working on a long-term goal? [Pacemaker.press](#) is an online tool that lets you set a goal and a deadline, then breaks down how many pages, miles, hours, steps or stitches you’ll need to log each day to succeed. And it’s free.
- The Woman to Woman book club is open to new members! Discuss titles like *Where the Crawdads Sing*, which was a favorite title of 2021. Delia Owens’ novel resonated with W2W readers because “we are all looking for ways to improve our emotional strength during such a difficult time for each of us,” said Barbara Camarda, a devoted member of the monthly group. If you’d like to join, or if you’re interested but are unable to purchase a copy of the book, please reach out to womantowoman@mountsinai.org for assistance.
- The Poetry Foundation has offered daily poems on their homepage for a long time—and now it’s even easier to work poetry into your daily life. Subscribe to the [Audio Poem of the Day](#) podcast to hear one poem every day. The foundation spotlights our greatest classic writers and inspiring new voices, and each episode is just a few

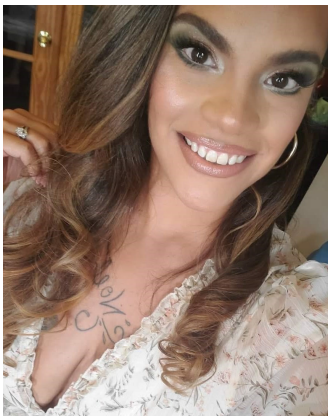
minutes long.

- Have you bookmarked our video library on [YouTube](#) or [Vimeo](#) yet? When you do, you'll have instant access to wellness resources and expert insight, specifically tailored to survivors of gynecological cancer. We can't recommend it enough.

We Asked, We Listened: A W2W Roundtable

To showcase the range of perspectives in Woman to Woman, we asked three wonderful women the same question. They were kind enough to share their wisdom with us, and we're excited to pass it along to you.

How has your community shaped the way you approach challenges?



Rebecca Rivera

Buti Yoga Instructor and Admin Assistant to Dr. Stephanie Blank

"Movement brings us to a place where we can come together and let go, and relieve the stress. My Buti Yoga community deepened my connections with patients and coworkers, knowing they



Sandra Wang

Cancer survivor and Woman to Woman volunteer

"Within Woman to Woman, we find predecessors who are inspirations and encouragements, and we find peers, who we share our current experiences with. They're the traveling



Hildred Rochester

Cancer survivor and Woman to Woman community member


"My spiritual family helps me approach things with optimism. I try not to focus on the challenges. Those of us who take the time to learn about our faith are able to help someone else

got to feel all the emotions
movement brings."


companions to the
journey we're on."

gain the confidence and
hope that we have."

Woman to Woman: 2021 Impact



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.



2021 IMPACT

125 Support Groups	1,951 Support Group Attendees	769 Community Members	31 Survivor Volunteers
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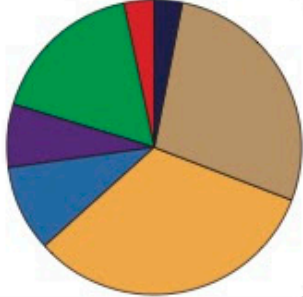
VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS OFFERED:

- General Support
- Newly Diagnosed
- Book Club
- Recurrent Patients
- Young Patients
- Long Term Survivors
- Covid & Cancer
- Reunions
- Latina Patients

Provided peer-to-peer mentoring and emotional support via phone, text, email, video, and in-person.

128
Financial Support Grants Totaling
\$31,481
to Women in Need Ranging \$10-\$1,128

Household Bills (22 Grants - \$5,301)
Groceries (22 Grants - \$2,200)
Mental Health (7 Grants - \$3,000)
Medical Assistance (34 Grants - \$10,247)
Transportation (40 Grants - \$8,733)
Rent (2 Grants - \$1,000)
Fertility Preservation (1 Grant - \$1,000)



We are grateful to our individual supporters and Community Partners who make this program possible:

Join our Facebook Group: [Woman to Woman-Mount Sinai](#)
Search "Woman to Woman Program" to subscribe & view resource video library

Rachel Justus & Jillian Levinson - Program Staff Leaders
• www.mountsinai.org/womantowoman
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☎ 212-241-3793

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