

# Conversation and Coaching with Pancreatic Cancer Survivors Marisa Harris & Wendy Hammers

Surviving and Thriving – that’s what Marisa Harris and Wendy Hammers are doing. Marisa is a 21-year stage 4 pancreatic cancer survivor and Wendy is celebrating over 5 years since her diagnosis. We welcome both women back to our Patient & Family Webinar series to expand on their earlier presentation, [\*Breaking Up with Pancreatic Cancer: Survivor Stories\*](#). As they touched on, Marisa helped coach Wendy through her diagnosis. To provide our community with a deeper understanding of what cancer coaching is and whether it might be the right fit, we are thrilled to have Wendy & Marisa present a coaching session.

When Marisa was told she had just months to live, she decided to transform her life. As a Master Integrative Coach, Marisa supports patients in achieving their personal goals related to optimal health and wellness. After Wendy was diagnosed, she heard about Marisa and enlisted her as a coach where together they created personalized, integrated healing program. Wendy considers Marisa an important ingredient in her journey back to health.

In this webinar, Marisa and Wendy will take us through a coaching session, including tips, tools, practices and a question and answer session open to all participants. As longterm survivors, both Marisa & Wendy have a great deal of wisdom and hope to share it with our pancreatic cancer community.

Watch Wendy & Marisa’s presentation [Breaking Up with Pancreatic Cancer: Survivor Stories](#) »

Read [Wendy's 10 tenets on Breaking up with Cancer »](#)

Connect [with Marisa & learn more about cancer coaching »](#)

## Watch Webinar

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# The 23rd Annual LA Cancer Challenge Honorary Starter is Purmine Oksayan

The Hirshberg Foundation is excited to welcome Purmine “Mine” Oksayan as [Honorary Starter for the 2020 LA Cancer Challenge Walk/Run](#) ! Mine is an extraordinary woman whose light and smile bring warmth to those around her. In 2016, Mine was living a happy and productive life, spending time with family including her loving husband, children and grandchildren. In December of that year, the shocking diagnosis of pancreatic cancer came. As the glue that holds everyone and everything together in her close-knit family, Mine was asked by her daughter just after diagnosis, “Mom, are you doing ok?” Mine rolled her eyes and replied, “this diagnosis is annoying, inconvenient and an interruption in my daily routine”...and both started laughing. A typical response from this woman who had no time for pancreatic cancer. Mine moved forward with confidence as she went through treatment at UCLA. She refers to Dr. Timothy Donahue and his medical team as her superheroes. She continues to live her life selfless and generous, sharing a positive attitude about the

future. She truly lives each day to the fullest as a loving and guiding force within her family. If you have the pleasure of meeting her, you'll see that sparkle in her eye and her spirit shining through. It's is a privilege to introduce Mine as our virtual Honorary LACC Starter and we invite you to [register and join us](#) virtually this year too!

Read more about Purmine in a [heartfelt Mother's Day dedication by her daughter](#) Ani here.

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# Breaking Up With Cancer

*By Wendy Hammers*

As part of our Patient & Family Webinars series, Wendy Hammers [shares](#) her 10 tenets that have supported her since her diagnosis in 2015, throughout her treatment, and continue to guide her as a pancreatic cancer survivor.

## 1. Adopting a Wellness Stance

Assume health. Decide you are getting better. You do not have to assume the worst. Assume the best. In the words of [Dr. Christy Funk](#), "You are a survivor from the moment you get diagnosed, because you didn't die." Surround yourself with people, places and things that believe in your positive outcome. Create your wellness bubble and block CNN, the "constant negative news." There is nothing to be gained by thinking the worst. It is amazing how optimism can literally affect your outcome.

## **2. Fierce Listening**

Listen! With your whole heart, to the still, small voice inside, to the gut feelings. Listen to your team. Listen to your compassionate tribe. And listen to yourself, above all. If your doctor does not feel right, or makes you feel more sick, or doesn't support your wellness stance, there are others – make your healthcare team work for you. Listen to your body, if you think a purple crystal will help, try it!

## **3. Radical Self Compassion**

Decide to love yourself. Love every single part of yourself. Extreme kindness helped save my life, it can work for you too. Be compassionate to yourself as you go through treatment and the different ways it will change your body & what you are able to do.

## **4. Learning to Receive**

Let others help you heal. Now is not the time to go it alone, you do not need to be a hero. You need support, and people want to support you. Learn to receive help and you set up a boomerang health cycle. Accept help. Once you are well, you'll be able to pay it forward.

## **5. Stillness as a Spiritual Practice**

“Don't just do something, sit there.” – [Sylvia Boorstein](#).  
Cancer will slow you down, take that as a good thing.

## **6. Serious Sense of Humor**

Loopy Loopenstein is my alter ego, the me on drugs from the hospital. I decided to find the joy and humor in things. People will do weird and unhelpful things, laugh it off, it is the only

way.

## **7. Cultivating a Kick ass Community**

Build your Recovery Tribe. Healing is a family affair. There are people who want to support you and help you, find them and surround yourself with them.

## **8. Taking a Day off from Cancer**

Because everyone needs a day off, even cancer patients. Find something, a day, a concert, something where you can decide to exist as someone without cancer. This might also be deciding that you want to help others. Small acts of kindness for others go a long way in lifting spirits and feeling like you are contributing.

## **9. Woo Woo Woo**

My deep dive into alternate healing modalities to supplement my traditional treatment. Supplements, feng shui, sound baths, writing workshops, crystals. I started thinking of it as a project I was doing, a project to get well. I tried all sorts of things that made sense to me, and then when people suggested ridiculous things, I listened deeply and decided if it felt right for me.

## **10. Life Beyond the Project**

“Tell me – what is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” – [Mary Oliver](#)

I spent a lot of time thinking about what my life would look like on the other side of cancer. I spent so much time thinking about my really cool life, I didn't have time to be scared.

## Additional Resources:



Wellness Coach – [Marisa Harris](#)



Bodyworker/healer – [James Arena](#)



## Tibetan Sound Bowls – [Jahna and Michael](#)



## [Cancer Support Community Los Angeles](#)

Want to speak directly to Wendy? Reach out here:  
[wendyhammers.com](http://wendyhammers.com)

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# Living with Pancreatic Cancer: Patient And Caregiver Experiences Study (PACES) Seeks Volunteers

The “Living with Pancreatic Cancer: Patient And Caregiver Experiences Study (PACES),” conducted by Dr. Annette Stanton is seeking volunteers. Dr. Stanton is a 2016 [Seed Grant Awardee](#) and spoke at the [2018 Symposium](#) on the importance of managing the emotional journey, for both pancreatic cancer patients and their caregivers. PACES continues Dr. Stanton’s esteemed career of

working to improve the psychological and physical health of patients & caregivers over the course of the cancer trajectory.

## **Living with Pancreatic Cancer: Patient And Caregiver Experiences Study (PACES)**

### **Introduction:**

When diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, adults and their loved ones often do not know what to expect. It is important for both affected individuals and their medical teams to understand the likely physical, psychological, and social consequences of the experiences, as well as useful strategies for living with and beyond the disease and its treatment. By taking part in the current study, you can advance the understanding of the experience of pancreatic cancer, and pave the way for the development of approaches to promote quality of life and health for adults living with pancreatic cancer.

### **Why is the study being conducted?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the physical and psychological well-being of individuals with pancreatic cancer and their caregivers (e.g., spouse).

### **Who can participate?**

Individuals with a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and their primary caregivers are invited to take part in this study.

### **What is involved?**

Participants will complete one 90 minute in-person session at UCLA as well as three questionnaires over the course of four months. Questionnaires about topics such as physical and psychological experiences, coping with pancreatic cancer, and



your relationship with your caregiver or individual with pancreatic cancer. Participation is completely voluntary and participants will be compensated \$40 each for their time.

**How can I contact the study team to learn about the study and take part?**

Email our study at [paces.ucla@gmail.com](mailto:paces.ucla@gmail.com). The Principal Investigator for the study is Dr. Annette Stanton at UCLA.

This study is closed for recruitment.



**HIRSHBERG FOUNDATION  
FOR PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH**

**A Research Study of  
University of California, Los Angeles**

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**Thriving in a year of  
challenges & change!**

Dear Hirshberg Foundation Family,

On behalf of all of us at the Hirshberg Foundation, we hope this

letter finds you safe and in good health. The past six months have not been easy for anyone, including businesses and non-profits. Normally, this time of year I would write to share our progress in research and news on grants we hope to fund. However, 2020 has caused us to pivot from our typical path. I am pleased, however, that I can share how well we have all adapted. Your donations and support have helped us thrive during these difficult times.

First, we'd like to share good news for our dedicated donors. Under the [CARES Act of 2020](#), donors can now get a Federal Income Tax deduction for charitable contributions up to 100% off their Adjusted Gross Income. This opportunity is slated to end December 31, 2020 but it can be used in subsequent years as well. Please consult your tax advisor whether this option will work for you and share this information with family and friends who have or will support us this year.

I am also happy to share what a wonderful job our staff is doing imagining creative ways to keep us afloat. Our annual Symposium was quickly replaced in April with our new [Patient & Caregiver Webinar Series](#). Our wonderful UCLA doctors generously connected with our community on Zoom to discuss updates in chemotherapy, clinical trials, cannabis research, surgery and more. This has included mental health topics, from a nurse's guide during treatment to the effects of positive thinking while battling pancreatic cancer. While each session was virtual, we enjoy seeing each face and [every video is now available on our website](#).

Today in-person events are still not an option, but we have adjusted brilliantly with how we engage supporters. We've been busy organizing two virtual events. Our reimagined [Tour de Pier was a success](#) and the [Virtual LA Cancer Challenge](#) coming up on October 25th! I hope you will participate in the LACC wherever

you are – its success and fundraising are fundamental to ending this disease. You and your loved ones can [register today](https://www.lacancerchallenge.com) at [www.lacancerchallenge.com](https://www.lacancerchallenge.com).

I am humbled by your consistent support and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your “never give up” attitude while we search for the cure! The times we are living in are difficult for all of us, but our commitment to fight for a cancer-free life is a promise we will keep.

All the best,



Agi Hirshberg  
Founder

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## **Two Perspectives, One Journey: Caregiving for the Pancreatic Cancer Patient**

For those who have been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer or have a loved one who has, you know all too well that it's not just the patient whose life is immediately affected upon diagnosis.

Although family members and close friends do their best to jump into high gear to help, the person who is thrust into the position of primary caregiver carries the bulk of the weight on their shoulders.

Caregiving can be filled with rewards and joy but it can also be overwhelming and exhausting. The caregiver is most often the spouse, child or a close friend that takes on the role of organizer, note taker, nurse, researcher, news central, housekeeper, cook, driver, cheerleader and so much more. Initially the pancreatic cancer patient has no idea what their needs will be and the caregiver is clueless as to what will be expected of them. Too often the role of caregiving lands on someone who feels ill-equipped to fill all of these necessary shoes. In some cases, the patient lives alone and there is no obvious caregiver to speak of.

Pancreatic cancer support groups in-person or online provide important supportive services but there are still basic needs that have to be met in the home and often, round the clock. This webinar will help guide the patient and caregiver to better understand and prepare for what lies ahead.

Dr. Annette Stanton joins us to present important information about how each person may be affected during this stressful time. [Dr. Stanton's](#) research centers on identifying factors that help and hinder individuals as they adjust to health-related adversity. Her research tests theories of stress, coping and how individuals and couples confront cancer and other chronically stressful experiences. Her career has focused on answering questions such as, "when adults face profound and prolonged stressors, what factors enhance or impede their well-being and health?" and "how can research that specifies those factors be translated into approaches to enhance psychological and physical health outcomes during chronically stressful experiences?"

[Annette L. Stanton](#), PhD, is Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry/Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles, a member of the Center for Cancer Prevention and Control Research in the Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, and senior research scientist at the UCLA Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology. She is incoming Chair of the Department of Psychology and currently chairs the PhD program in health psychology. Through research, Dr. Stanton identifies factors that promote or impede psychological and physical health in adults and couples undergoing chronically stressful experiences, with a focus on the experience of cancers of the pancreas, breast, eye, and lung. She then translates her findings into action by developing and testing approaches to enhance psychological and physical health over the course of the cancer trajectory.

[Learn more about Dr. Stanton's PACES study and apply to be involved »](#)

## Watch Webinar

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A very special thanks to our Sponsors & Supporters for helping ensure that these vital patient resources can be offered free-of-charge in place of our Annual Symposium.

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