

Alicia Honors Her Mother Through All Facets of Her Life and Inspires Us All to Never Give Up

Alicia “ACE” Easter is a longtime friend and supporter of the Hirshberg Foundation. A [Hirshberg Training Team alumni](#), an LA Cancer Challenge team captain, a Yoga & Meditation teacher, and a Master Reiki Healer, Alicia not only embodies but inspires others to “Never Give Up.”

When Alicia lost her mom to pancreatic cancer on April 20, 2002, she became a very reluctant member of the “Motherless Daughters Club.” Facing undeniable grief after her mom died, and with a job that moved her to different cities across the country, Alicia realized she was searching for something. When she began exploring yoga classes, she knew it was the lifesaver she was looking for.

As a long-time athlete, Alicia thought she had an awareness of her body from years of playing sports. In one of her early classes, the teacher led them in camel pose, a backbend from kneeling where you reach to grab your heels while lifting the chin and chest to the sky. Known as a heart-opener pose, Alicia struggled and her body resisted. After class, the yoga teacher asked Alicia if she had a broken heart. It was then that Alicia realized she was still weighed down with the grief of her mom’s death.

Alicia’s mother, Cynthia Geneva Lawson, had died four years earlier but Alicia still carried the pain of a loss she never fully processed. Despite being physically fit, there was still

so much taking up space in her body that she wasn't aware of. Yoga inspired and empowered Alicia to find the healing she sought. After years of muffling her voice and her light, she realized the most powerful way to honor her mother was to share her light with the world.

Inspired, Alicia studied yoga, reiki, and meditation to help others and share her gifts of empowerment and mindfulness. Alicia now teaches yoga and meditation classes, locally and online, and recognizes it's an honor to guide students on their journey through yoga, meditation, and grief with love. She created *I AM FREE: Yoga, Meditation, and Intention Setting* workshops which she has hosted throughout California.

[I AM Candle](#)

In June 2020, Alicia launched the I AM Candle Collection with the hope to inspire generations to come. Each time Alicia lit a candle, she was reminded she "is a brave being of light who is protected and safe no matter what society says." Her hope is that, as you light the candle, you are able to feel the waves of peace wash over you and your home.

The I AM Candle Collection proclaims I AM BEAUTIFUL, I AM BRAVE, I AM LOVE, and I AM FREE. Each one declares one of Alicia's mantras, reminders to be the best of what we already are. Alicia believes we come into this world with love and have a duty to let love lead while we are here. She trusts it can all start with a spark of your own light and be reminded with a candle!

"It is never too late to affirm who you are and who you want to become." – Alicia C. Easter

[Buy an I AM candle today →](#)

Throughout the month of November, Alicia will be donating 18% of the proceeds from the sale of her I AM BEAUTIFUL candle to the

Hirshberg Foundation in honor of her mother, Cynthia, and in honor of all those pancreatic cancer has taken too soon.

Catch Alicia in-person at the [Flower Truck LA](#) pop-up on November 19th!

Our Gift to You on Giving Tuesday: Yoga and Meditation with Alicia

Yoga and meditation are ancient practices used across the globe to calm the mind and hone the senses. Participation in a yoga program has been shown to help cancer survivors feel better physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Clinical trials have shown that yoga can improve mental health outcomes of stress, mood and anxiety. There are findings that show relief from fatigue, gastrointestinal issues, pain severity as well as improvements in respiratory function and heart rate with yoga. There are many different forms of yoga and this noninvasive practice can be endlessly adapted so that all may benefit, regardless of functional or physical challenges.

Meditation, the practice of training attention and awareness to clear the mind and calm the emotions, is another natural boost for wellness. Mindfulness meditation practice for cancer patients can alleviate insomnia and, like yoga, provide a more elevated mind-body connection. Different forms of meditation use various techniques to focus the mind, such as focusing on the breath or a mantra. Breathing exercises, for example, can help patients feel calm before a procedure or doctor appointment or

soothe anxiety prior to a painful procedure.

Both practices provide tools to help move forward in life, and treatment, with a more relaxed, mindful and resilient attitude, as well as the ability to self-soothe and return to calmness. Selecting an appropriate style of yoga with an experienced, certified instructor is recommended, which is why we turned to [Alicia "ACE" Easter](#) for this special Giving Tuesday webinar.

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Alicia, also a Master Reiki practitioner, now teaches yoga and meditation classes, locally and online, and recognizes it's an honor to guide students on their journey through yoga, meditation, and grief with love. We've partnered with her on Giving Tuesday to share her gifts of empowerment and mindfulness with our pancreatic cancer community. Alicia will lead us in a *Soul Liberation Heart-Flow* yoga session followed by *I Am Love* meditation.

Soul Liberation is **unconditional** love of one's self. In loving yourself, you pay homage to our ancestors, teachers, and the lineage of yoga. Yoga is a reminder to be kind, love, and forgive quickly and often. This yoga sequence was created to help liberate the mind, body and soul. Designed to balance the Anahata (heart) chakra and strengthen the spine, this is a great class for those experiencing grief, in need of a little love, or

looking to find greater balance. Alicia will provide modifications for those without yoga mats and those who wish to stay seated. We will end our movement with an I AM LOVE meditation. Please have a journal, pen, and open heart ready. We hope this session will leave you with a deep, heart-expanded meditation which will energize and balance your state of being.

Watch Webinar

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

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.

Breaking Up With Cancer

By Wendy Hammers

As part of our Patient & Family Webinars series, Wendy Hammers [shared](#) her 10 tenets that supported her throughout her treatment

and continue to guide her as a 5-year 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

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. 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**

