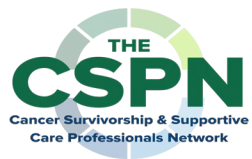


Can We Talk?

Communication & Tools for Sexual Health

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Who's here
today?



Can we talk?

This session is the place for YOU because:

- **Cancer and cancer treatments create problems with intimacy, desire, and sexual function**
- Intimacy and sexual health are not easy to talk about, even in the best of times!
- This session will offer practical tools for you to address sexual wellness during and after cancer
 - with your partner
 - with your healthcare provider
 - and even yourself





Everybody is different!


- You are normal.
- *You are NORMAL, and you are NOT broken.*
Things have just changed.

The image features a white background with several abstract geometric elements. In the top left, there are two vertical yellow dashed lines. To their right is a solid blue circle. Further right is a green L-shaped line. In the top right corner, a yellow circle is partially visible. On the left side, there is a green square outline. In the bottom left, a yellow dashed line forms a curved path. A large orange semi-circle occupies the right half of the image, containing the text.

Why does cancer affect
our sexual health?

Cancer & Body Image

- **Surgery & Radiation**
 - Loss of a body part or organ
 - Not 'ourselves'
 - Needing to adapt to functional changes
 - Skin & tissue changes
 - Areas 'look different'
 - Numbness/pain
 - Mobility changes
 - Lymphedema/swelling
 - Scars
- **Radiation, Chemo/Systemic therapies**
 - Surface changes
 - Hair, nails, mouth
 - Internal changes
 - Every organ may be affected
 - Pain, mobility
 - Ability to do day-to-day activities



Who am I
now? What
do I want?

- Trust in our own body may shift
- How we feel able (or unable) to
 - Do what you used to do
 - Do what you want to do
- Life goals may be altered – *on purpose or not...*
 - School, career, parenting
 - Motivation may shift
- Self-Care is NOT selfish!
 - *Mental health matters* -
 - Anxiety, worry, fear, depression
 - *Physical health matters* –
 - Sleep, nutrition, water, movement...

Cancer & Relationships

- Family & friends
- Yourself
- Your partner(s)
- Your healthcare provider(s)





Let's Talk About Tools

Briefly: Tools to use with caregiving family & friends

Communication

- Be clear about asking for time for yourself, time alone, or partner time
- Notice if communication feels supportive
- Ask clearly (nicely?) for what you want and need

Physical

- Be clear about body boundaries
- Be clear about if/how/when you need help
- Be clear about if/how/when you are touched

Tools to use with yourself

Communication

- Journaling: What am I thinking??
 - Write it down, send yourself a voicemail
 - Consider 'old tapes' you may be playing back
- Self-Talk
 - Positive, gentle, kind words to your terrific self!
 - Talk to the mirror, write Post-It notes, other ideas?

Physical

- Set aside "Me Time" – for self-care of any kind
- Sensate Focus – a tool for self awareness *and* shared awareness
- Notice arousal: when, what, where, how
- Products – moisturizers, lubes, vibrators, and more

Tools to use with a partner

Communication

- Be kind. Be clear.
 - Gratitude, thank you comments/notes, notice the good stuff & call it out
 - Be transparent, use “I statements”, ask clearly for what you need or want
 - Notice when you aren’t kind and fess up. Notice when you don’t feel like being kind and honestly say so. Notice when fear and insecurity may show up as criticism, etc.
- Admiration *and reframing of imperfections* tools (Nagoski, Gottman, Johnson)
 - What do I admire about my partner?
 - What imperfections do they have that reflect something I admire about them?

Physical

- ***Let Each Time Be Its Own Time!***
- Set clear and reasonable plans & expectations
- Try something. Try something else. Try again.

Tools to use with healthcare providers



Communication

- Speak up!!!
- Take notes – at home and at visits
- Make a prioritized list for each visit
- Ask for extended visit time, or another visit
- Ask for referrals
 - PT, pelvic floor PT, counseling, etc.

Physical

- Take pictures, document concerns
- Bring in your list
- Bring in examples

How Can I Advocate For Myself?

What goes on my 'to do' list?

Know your resources

- Learn what you need
 - Find a Survivorship Clinic
 - And/or providers who 'get it'
- Research and learn on your own
 - Find reliable resources
 - Seek reliable & supportive tools
 - Download the extensive *RESOURCE LIST* that FH will have available for you from me after this event

Be proactive

- Practice your healthy choices
 - Exercise, nutrition, hydration
 - Stress reduction, sleep
 - Schedule and attend routine care, follow-up, labs, and tests
 - Bring your list, and seek additional care as needed
- Talk about your concerns
 - Seek counseling & healthy support
 - Seek resources
- Communicate with your partner(s)

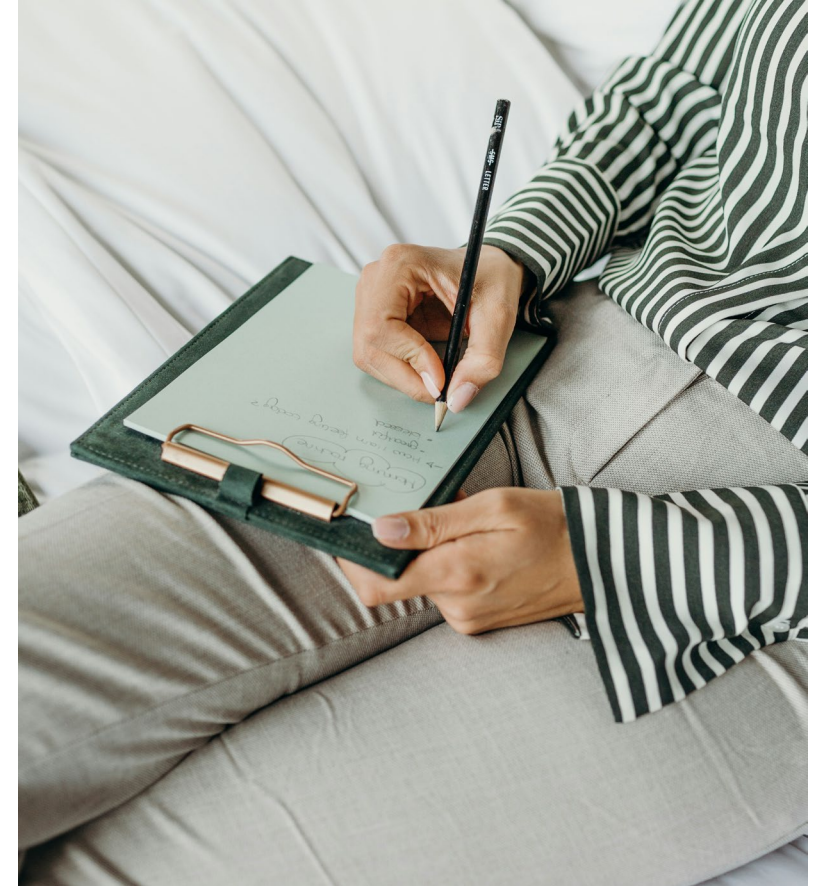
Stores and Web-Based Information

- **SheBop:** She Bop is a women-owned sex toy boutique in Portland, Oregon specializing in body safe products and education. 503-473-8018
<http://www.sheboptheshop.com/>
- **Shine:** A unique cancer specialties store with many books and products mentioned in this talk as well as compression garments and more. 206-606-7560 www.sccashine.org
- **Babeland:** Seattle based erotic toys and books. 206-328-2555
www.babeland.com
- **American Cancer Society**
www.cancer.org
- **CANCERcare**
<https://www.cancercare.org>
- **Livestrong** www.livestrong.org
- **Oncofertility Consortium:**
<https://oncofertility.msu.edu/>
- **Stupid Cancer: All things AYA**
<https://stupidcancer.org>
- **The National LGBT Cancer Network**
www.cancer-network.org
- Many oncology institutions have intimacy and sexuality resources and links on their web sites



What tools are on MY to-do list?

- Am I taking good physical care of myself?
- Am I being honest & kind with myself?
- Have I tried physical aids to address sexual function?
- Am I being clear, honest, and keeping boundaries with my partner, family, and friends?
- Am I using clear, kind communication with my partner(s)?
- Am I asking for what I want/need clearly?
- Am I noticing & being appreciative?
- Am I speaking up and advocating for myself?
- Who do I want to add to my support team?
- What else do I want to try?



Thank you for being here today!

Q & A

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