



## Now WHAT? First Steps after a Cancer Diagnosis: S.O.S Survival Guide SPA H2O: SPA Healers Helping Each Other

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The SPA Healers Helping Each Other (H2O) is a group designed to be a beacon of support and comfort for SPA members combating illness. Please see the SPA one-pager on Healers Helping Each Other for the rationale and goals of this group. The following content is adapted with permission from Dr. Karla Castro-Frenzel's [S.O.S. One-Pager](#).

1. **Assemble YOUR winning team** – create and build your support system with your chosen medical team and your inner sanctum of support as you navigate and tackle daily life responsibilities and your new diagnosis. Patience will be your virtue during this uncertain time.
  - a) Doctor and medical team – Remember they are like the Advisory Board, and you are your body's CEO 😊
  - b) The inner sanctum of support
    - Choose your go-to-colleague (a “safe” colleague) at work
    - “Public Relations (PR)” buddy –shares information of your choosing with your communities
    - Research Vetter –vets research studies related to your treatment options
    - Partner/Companion – your “person”
    - Family/Household supporter – tends to the needs of your children, household, and other responsibilities.
2. **Acknowledge your worries and our human tendency to jump to worst-case scenarios...**recognize that these thoughts are not your reality. Easier said than done, but this is a critical reminder to yourself.
3. **Build Faith.** Faith is closely tied to your ability to hold tight to hope and joy and thwart fear.
4. **Believe in yourself,** your strength, your team, and your support, and HAVE FAITH!
5. **Befriend hope** – Hope may serve as one of your greatest cancer-fighting weapons.
6. **Acknowledge your mental health and tend to any arising needs with professional support.**
7. **Take medical leave to help you navigate the time inherent in the work-up process and the time needed for your treatment, recovery, and healing period.**
8. **Disclose what feels right to you with your work, department, and colleagues.** This allows your work colleagues to support you and offer you compassion.
9. **Embrace Self-Care** - If you can, exercise daily, especially if you don't want to, and maximize sleep. Both exercise and sleep are most impactful to the immune system. Exercise mobilizes your Natural Killer cells and circadian cycles, and adequate sleep supports tumor suppressor genes. You probably won't feel like exercising, so enlist your inner sanctum or use an app to help. Exercise is the only lifestyle modification consistently shown to increase overall survival in cancer and is emphasized by prominent oncologists. Don't forget to focus on nutrition, search for awe-inspiring moments, lean into your hobbies, and surround yourself with your community and friends.
10. **Search for a disease-specific community support group to find support from others who have this lived experience.**
11. **Reach out to a physician-specific cancer support group, like the SPA H2O, at [SPACares@pedsanesthesia.org](mailto:SPACares@pedsanesthesia.org).**

### Recommended Books:

1. The Measure of Our Days, by Jerome Groopman
2. Radical Remission, by Kelly A. Turner
3. Cancer as a Turning Point, by Lawrence LeShaun