

Breakout session

LIVING BEYOND
BREAST CANCER®

Addressing trauma and emotional support in MBC

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Navigating trauma of living with metastatic breast cancer



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Presented at the Living Beyond Breast Cancer Conference

Philadelphia, PA

April 18, 2026

Admin Items

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Session Overview

- Understanding trauma in MBC
- Explore emotional and mental health impacts
- Recognize systemic barriers patients face
- Identify trauma-informed support strategies
- Lived Experience Panel discussion

Practitioner-Scientist-Survivor-Advocate



IRIS

Breast Cancer
Rehabilitation

*Formerly TurningPoint Breast Cancer Rehabilitation
A Non-Profit 501(c)3 Organization.*



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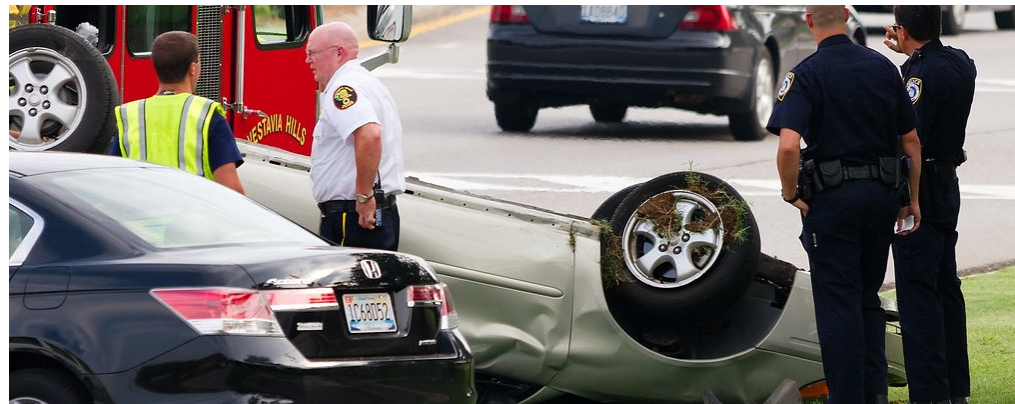
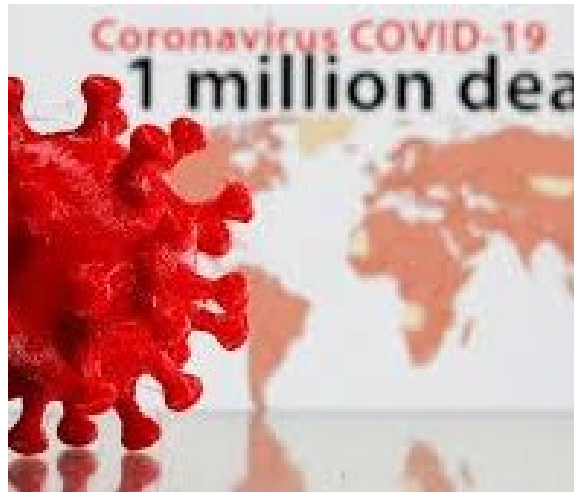
What is Trauma

- Refers to:
 - experiences causing intense physical and psychological stress reactions
 - can be a single or multiple event(s) or a set of circumstances experienced by an individual [or group] as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening
 - has lasting adverse effects on physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being

(SAMHSA, 2012, 2014)



Understanding Layered Trauma



Common Trauma Responses

Type	Response
Emotional	Anger, sadness, anxiety, shame, feeling overwhelmed, numb, fear
Physical	Associated with (chronic) health problems (gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, neurological, musculoskeletal, respiratory, dermatological, urological), hyperarousal, sleep disturbances
Social	Isolation, relationships strained or lost, difficulty connecting or trusting, hypervigilance
Behavioral	Self-harm, self-destructive behaviors, substance use
Cognitive	Hallucinations, delusions, intrusive thoughts and memories, cognitive errors, (survivor's) guilt, triggers, feeling different, dissociation

MBC can be traumatic

- The emotional shock of diagnosis
- Grief for expected future
- Identity disruption
- Impact of relationships and loved ones



Patients' Anecdotal Comments

- This is mutilation
- Cannot look at myself in the mirror
- Pain is excruciating



- Exhaustion
- Can't stop crying
- Terrified



- Feelings of hatred, guilt, shame
- Going crazy
- Loneliness
- Everybody has moved on



- Why bother...
- Others are worse than me...
- I know I need to be grateful...

Emotional and Mental Health Impacts

- Medical trauma
- Living with uncertainty
- Scanxiety
- Adverse mental health



Systemic Barriers to Care

- Insurance and financial barriers
- Employment constraints
- Access to specialists and trials
- Geographic disparities
- Racial and socioeconomic inequities

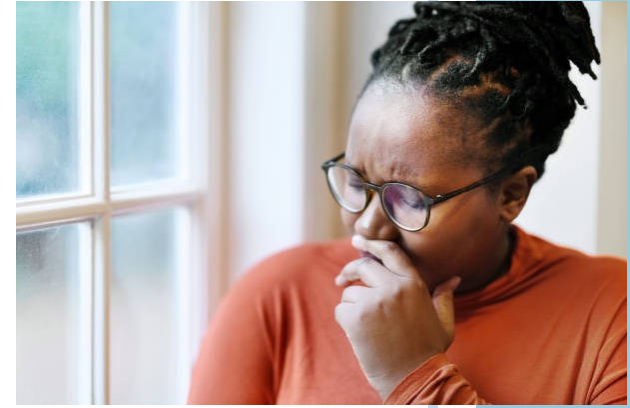
BREATH PAUSE





WHAT OTHERS EXPECT

The Invisible Battle



YOUR EXPERIENCE IS VALID

What is not yours to carry

- Doing/being everything you once did/were
- Pretending cancer never happened
- A misaligned warrior/fighter narrative
- Serving as a receptacle for the following comments/perceptions:
 - “you should be grateful that FILL IN THE BLANK”
 - “you seem fine...”
 - “you don’t look like a cancer patient”
 - “just move on with your life”

You matter

- Acknowledge and process your feelings. Write them down.
- Seek and accept support and services.
- Ask healthcare providers for mental health referrals.
- Find community. Find safe space.
- Balance challenges with fulfillment.
- Set boundaries.
- Give yourself grace and even more grace.



Thank you



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Lived Experience Panel Discussion

