



“What’s Next for My Life” Program Outcomes – 9.28.08

Overview:

When treatment ends, most cancer patients feel bewildered by the question, **“What’s Next For My Life?™”** Our unique life-coaching program **empowers patients to take control** in their lives and **accept emotions and feelings about survivorship** as normal and natural. It can create noticeable **positive changes** in a person’s outlook on life so that when treatment ends they are prepared to really live as survivors.

“What’s Next For My Life?” is a group support workshop that enhances the survivor’s ability to **proactively manage survivorship long term**. It teaches them to **share concerns** with the healthcare team and **ask for what they need**. Moreover, it creates a **support network** to supplement support previously provided by the healthcare team after the “safety net” of regular treatment contact ends.

Real world outcome data demonstrate supports the pilot’s findings of an **effective and rapid transformation** of negative emotions and attitudes **into acceptance and hope**. The impetus behind “What’s Next For My Life?” is the real-life experience of life coach Paula Holland De Long, an 11-year cancer survivor and 10-year American Cancer Society employee, and Mike Bauerschmidt MD, MBA, FACEP, a CTI trained coach, 23-year veteran of Emergency Departments and a survivor of a life threatening illness of his own. The course has been successful for Broward General Medical Center, Broward Oncology Associates and at Gilda’s Club South Florida, where it has been repeated due to popular demand.

Patient navigation programs, treatment center workshops, lesson groups, patient support groups and educational support programs for cancer patients and survivors are all potential beneficiaries of, or sponsors for this course.

“What’s Next For My Life?” Program Description:

What is it? Specific emotional issues experienced by most survivors when their treatment ends are examined in a supportive, non-threatening environment. Survivors **share emotions, clear fears and create hope** for the future as they begin to create their own definition of normalcy.

How does it work? Participants explore key lessons, reinforced by group discussion, personal exploration exercises and homework assignments. They learn about the **emotional stages of cancer, regaining control of their lives, honoring personal values and how to achieve goals**.

How is the course structured? WNFML is offered as a one or two-day workshop. It is available to cancer treatment centers and practices, cancer support providers and organizations, and directly to patients.

How can survivors participate? **Patient navigation programs, treatment center workshops, lesson groups, patient support groups and educational support programs** for cancer patients and survivors are all potential ways for survivors to participate in the program.

POSITIVE BENEFITS:

Healthcare Professionals:

- Enhances patient’s ability to **proactively manage their recovery**, reducing time and emotional stress of transition and healing.
- Increases patient’s ability to **ask for what they need** and **share concerns** with their healthcare team.

- Provides **information and skills** that can positively impact the patient's quality of life in the short and long term.
- Helps create a **support network** for patients to replace the support provided by their healthcare team.

Patients & Survivors:

- Promotes **increased quality of life** by providing education, support from other survivors and specific exercises and tools designed to reduce anxiety and promote healing.
- Increases the survivor's self esteem and confidence by helping them **regain a measure of control over their own decisions and future.**
- Provides reassurance, **eases concerns** and **helps patient process common emotions** successfully when their "safety net" of regular, frequent contact with the health care system ends.
- Provides survivors with the opportunity to talk openly and frankly with other survivors, which creates a support network and **reduces feelings of fear, isolation and frustration** that can inhibit healing.
- Provides an opportunity for the survivor to create a **healthier, happier life** that reflects their **personal values and ideals.**
- Teaches the survivor how to identify the **steps needed to change** and provides practical advice as they go forward.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: 34 people have participated in the course developed by 11-year cancer survivor and life coach Paula Holland De Long, and executive Coach Mike Bauerschmidt MD, MBA, FACEP, most of whom were ending treatment soon or had completed treatment within the last 18 months. The participants were primarily women, aged mid thirties to mid sixties, and of various ethnic groups. There were varied types of cancer and projected outcomes represented.

Pilot Participant Response Details:

Participants from the groups rated their before and after knowledge on the topics below on a scale of one to five with 1 being the lowest or least and 5 being the highest or most.

TOPIC/CHARACTERISTIC	BEFORE					AFTER				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Camaraderie/support from other patients/survivors	2	7	6	3	12			1	5	24
Knowledge of common emotional stages of cancer		7	9	5	8		1	1	10	17
Comfort/acceptance of your emotions	1	5	10	4	7		1	3	7	16
Feelings of control/empowerment about your life	3	4	10	4	7		1	1	5	21
Knowledge about your values	1	4	11	5	8		1	2	7	19
Amount of permission to make your own choices	2	3	11	2	9				4	23
Knowledge of things that can keep you from changing	1	6	7	6	6			1	5	20
Ability/Motivation to take action	1	8	6	7	8		1	1	5	23

Program Outcomes:

This program's **impact on healing** and the **successful transition from patient to survivor** appears to hold great promise. In pretests, a majority of participants rated their feelings of camaraderie, knowledge of common emotions, acceptance of their emotions, feelings of empowerment, knowledge of their values, permission to choose, and ability and motivation to take action at 3 or lower. Post-test results showed ratings increases to 4's and 5's in all areas measured. Several patients had increases of 3 to 4 points in some areas and had **noticeable changes in their attitude and demeanor** after participating.

These results indicate:

- The course can benefit survivors, their loved ones, healthcare professionals and the community by **reducing the time and emotional stress** needed to transition from the time of diagnosis and treatment into a healthy life as a survivor.
- Knowledge of self and understanding the process of change can promote healing by creating **feelings of hope and empowerment** for the future.
- The survivor's ability and motivation to **take action** can increase their ability to effectively **manage recovery** and reduce the time and emotional stress of transition and healing when treatment ends.
- Sharing personal stories with other survivors can help quickly **diminish feelings of loss, fear** and abandonment that are common when treatment ends and regular contact with healthcare professionals disappears.
- The renewed sense of **choice and control** found through personal values and priorities exploration provide much needed clarity and support for the survivor facing the changes and demands of creating life after cancer, and to **proactively manage survivorship** in the short and long term.

Pilot participant comments:

"Made me think deeply and put things back in perspective. I know now that I have the ability to get all of this into perspective and really be happy. Thank you for helping me see beyond the darkness." Doris, Florida

"The thing I liked best about the workshop was that we aren't victims of cancer and life, but have the tools to revive and pursue passions. The greatest gift was knowing that for two full days my entire time and focus would be on me and getting the help I both need and so well deserve." Jane, Wilton Manors

"I loved the 'AH HA' moments when something someone said really resonated with me." Julia, Ft. Lauderdale

Outcome results were obtained by written evaluations and personal interviews at the events. Willing participants will also be interviewed at three, six and 12 months after their completion of the course. The participants' before and after knowledge of key topics or characteristics were rated on a scale of one to five. The participants also provided general feedback about the course.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Contact Paula Holland De Long at 954-565-6894, paulaholland@bellsouth.net or visit www.CoachForLivingOnline.com.
- Contact Mike Bauerschmidt MD, MBA, FACEP at 954-415-6046 or mike@peregrine-consulting.com.