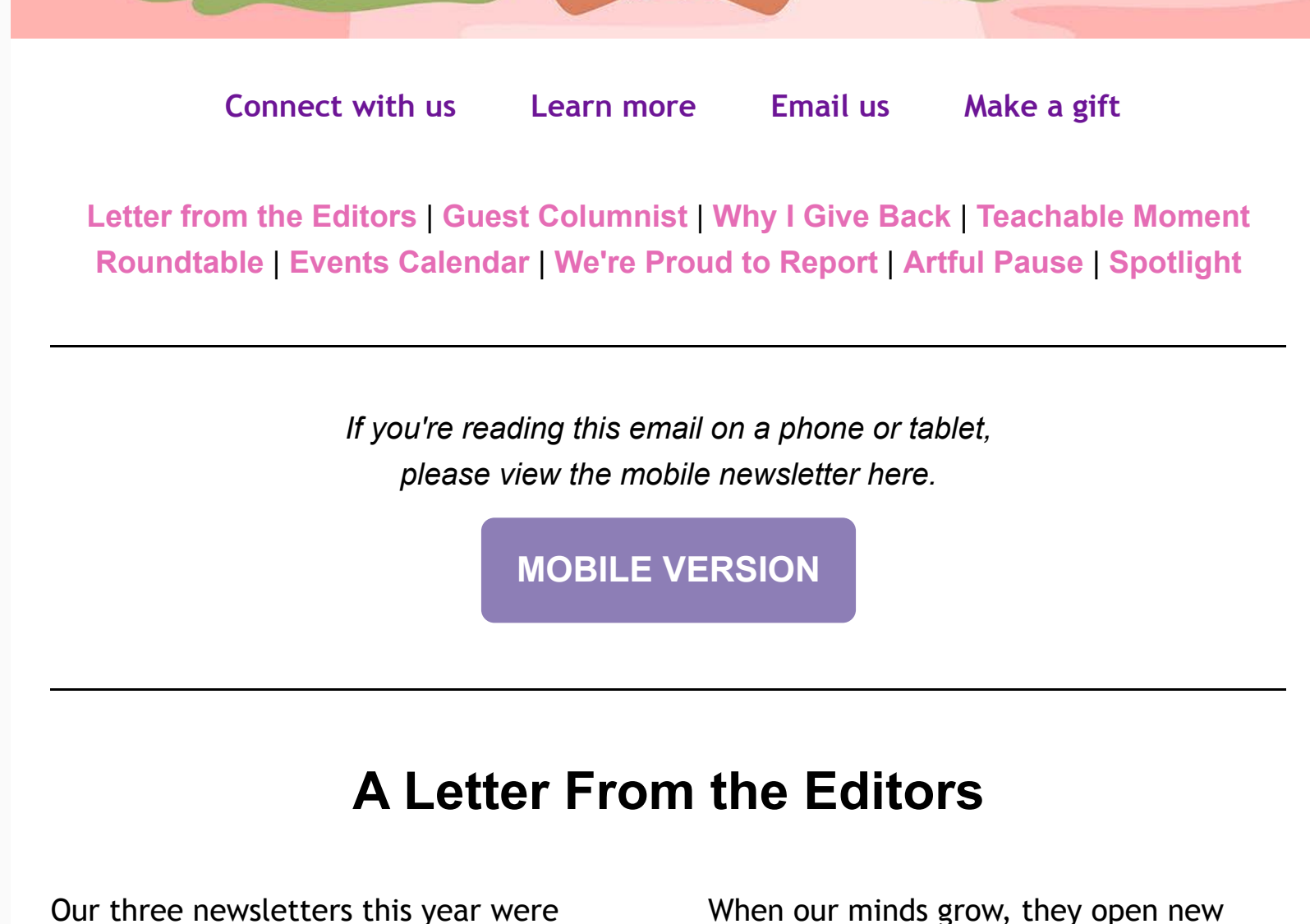


WOMAN TO WOMAN

September 2024 THE FLOURISHING MIND



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A Letter From the Editors

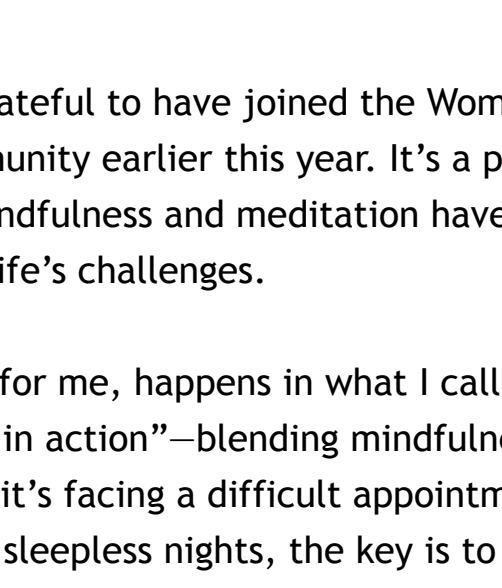
Our three newsletters this year were dedicated to the themes of the body, spirit, and mind. With the September edition, we arrive at our final theme: the mind. As we mark September's Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, it also reminds us how mindfulness propels us to become more aware and present.

This issue highlights the diverse and creative ways we nurture our minds, guided by the inspiring women in our Woman to Woman community who show how subtle yet transformative practices can enrich our days, bring peace, and help us navigate challenges.

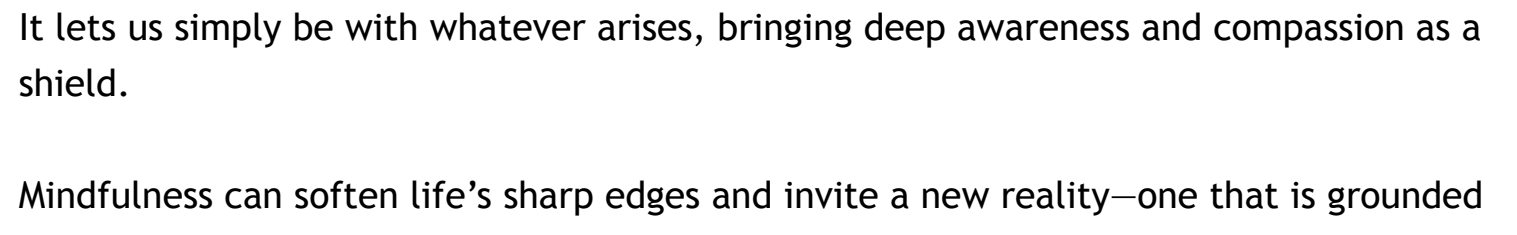
To allow our minds to flourish and remain agile, we practice self-compassion, choose hope, and set goals—both small and monumental. We garden, learn from nature's beauty, and read books to explore new possibilities and share knowledge with others.

When our minds grow, they open new doors of being and seeing. A healthy mind supports a healthy body and spirit. The Woman to Woman group is full of active, inquisitive, and hopeful minds, and we couldn't be more grateful for the collective wisdom that has helped create a thriving, caring community.

- Jilian and Rachel



Jilian Levinson and Rachel Justus, Woman to Woman Program Managers



SEPTEMBER IS
**GYNECOLOGIC
CANCER
AWARENESS
MONTH**

"Guest Columnist"

"Mindfulness Meditation"



Ylfa Edelstein is a mindfulness meditation and yoga practitioner.

"Keep some room in your heart for the Unimaginable."
-Mary Oliver

I'm deeply grateful to have joined the Woman to Woman community earlier this year. It's a privilege to share how mindfulness and meditation have shaped my approach to life's challenges.

True growth, for me, happens in what I call "mindfulness in action"—blending mindfulness and meditation into everyday challenges. Whether it's facing a difficult appointment, navigating tough relationships, or dealing with sleepless nights, the key is to remember that mindfulness is always there. It's a reliable tool, as constant as the sky above or the earth below.

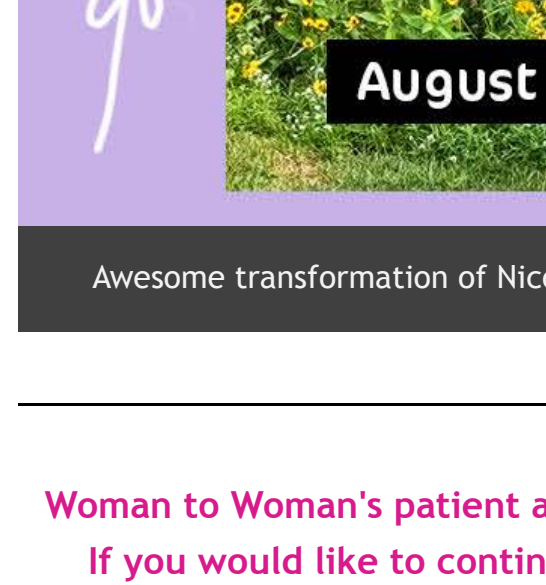
Mindfulness allows us to live in reality, facing each moment as it is, without wishful thinking or denial. As Dr. Jamie Wasserman says, "mindfulness makes you the eye of the storm." It's a powerful way to describe how mindfulness provides calm amidst adversity. It lets us simply be with whatever arises, bringing deep awareness and compassion as a shield.

Mindfulness can soften life's sharp edges and invite a new reality—one that is grounded in the present moment, free from the chaos of our thoughts. Everyone needs a break from their busy mind, and that's what mindfulness meditation offers: a pause from thinking and a glimpse into a more peaceful state. A mindful moment is never a wasted moment.

Ylfa leads a 20-minute "Mindfulness" meditation for the Woman to Woman community every Monday at 10 a.m.

"Why I Give Back"

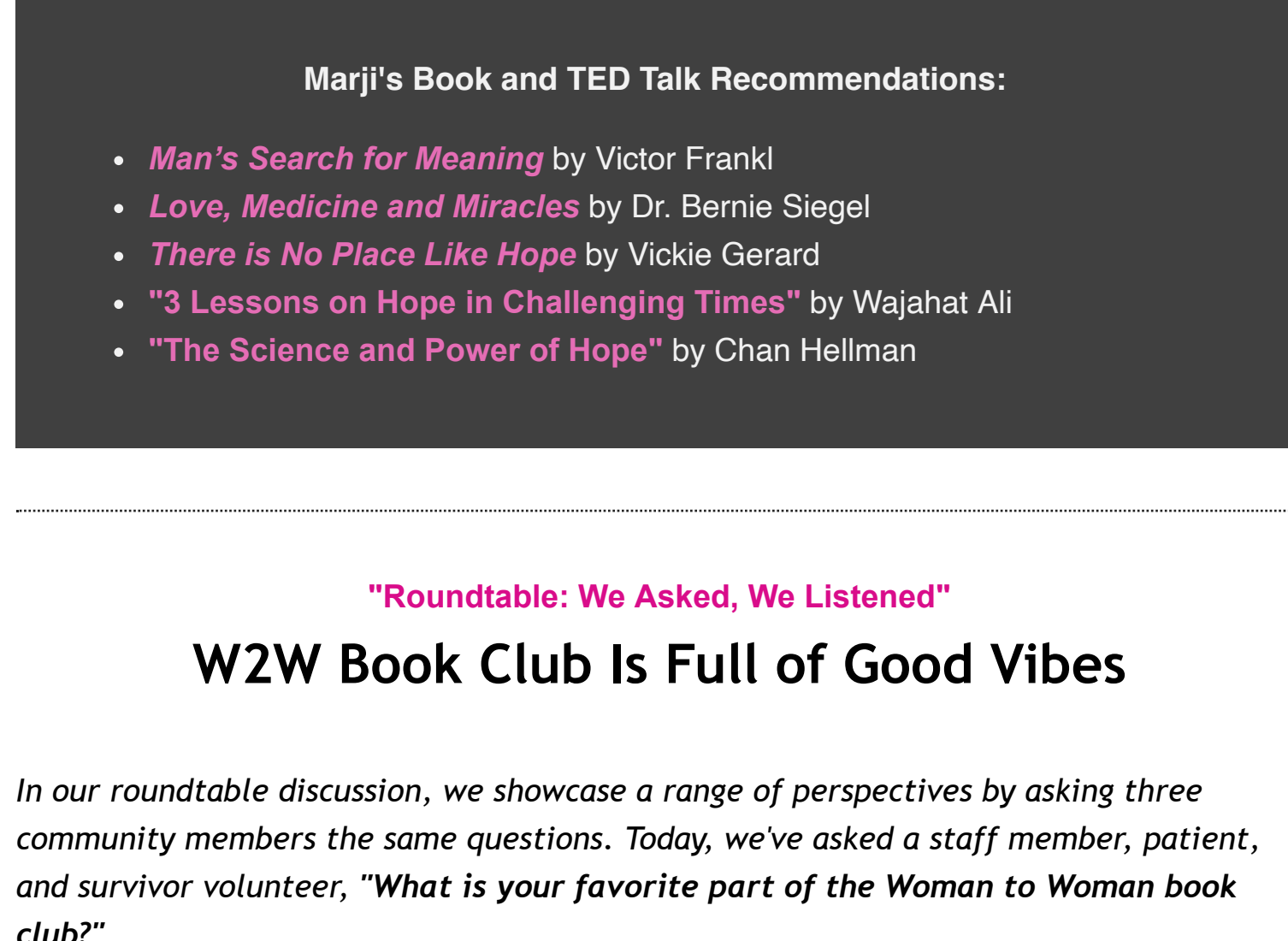
Nicole's Garden of Lessons



Nicole Theodore, a survivor volunteer, has been an integral member of the Woman to Woman program for many years. Diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2016 while still in her 20s, Nicole joined the group in 2018 after relocating to New York, where she began receiving care at Mount Sinai.

When Nicole and her husband bought a house in Mattituck, Long Island, last year, she immediately envisioned transforming the uncultivated land around their new home. She also saw an opportunity to connect her passion for gardening with her commitment to Woman to Woman. She decided to sell the flowers she grew at the local farmer's market to raise funds and awareness for gynecologic cancer. "I thought it would be a beautiful way to give back to both the program and the environment," she explains. Her goal is also to provide information on prevention and screening at her stall.

This summer brought Nicole the first glimpse of the garden's potential with sunflowers that grew even taller than her. But she sees the next summer as the real beginning of her mission. Reflecting on her journey, she says, "Gardening has taught me patience, resilience, and, when things are complicated, the importance of pausing to do research." Nature's ability to rejuvenate has also served as a potent metaphor. "I learned that you have to cut things back in order to allow new growth. It reminded me a lot of cancer and survivorship."

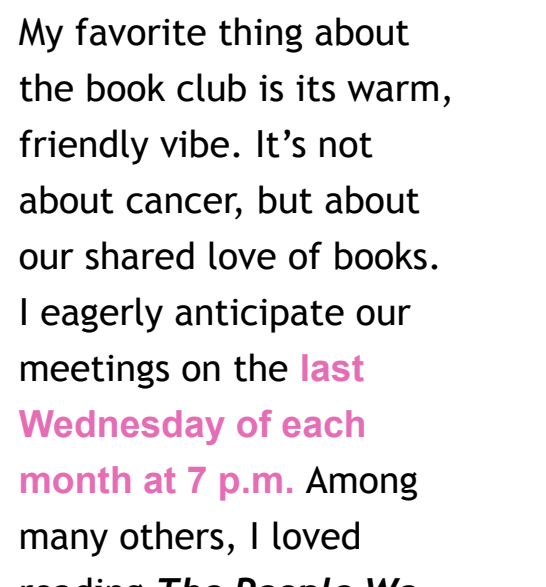


Awesome transformation of Nicole's garden from an unruly plot to a luscious, vibrant meadow.

Woman to Woman's patient assistance fund is completely philanthropically funded. If you would like to continue our 21-year legacy of support, please click here.

"Teachable Moment"

Marji Shapiro on Why We Hope



Marji Shapiro is a hope advocate.

"Hope is a decision. We don't find it, we create it. I see it as a possibility for growth," says Marji Shapiro with conviction. "Hope and fear can't occupy the same space, so you have to invite one to stay." Her belief that hope is a verb, and that by putting it into action we can create real change, has inspired many.

Marji, who teaches the practice of hope to audiences ranging from cancer survivors to corporate executives, found her calling after working as a Holocaust educator. Initially, she hesitated, fearing the work might be distressing, but it became one of the most enriching experiences of her life. One of her favorite pieces of wisdom, shared by a Holocaust survivor, is a simple yet profound shift in mindset: "What if it all works out?" This small change in perspective can transform how we approach challenges.

When Marji was invited in June to be a guest speaker for the Woman to Woman's "Thriving" series, she witnessed firsthand how community fosters hope. "Having a place to discuss your fears and experiences can make a huge difference," she explains, linking the courage to be vulnerable with the intention of creating hope, both individually and collectively. She also emphasizes that hope is about setting goals and taking action. "It's easy to let despair have the last word, but what's the alternative? Being hopeless? That's not going to work either." Marji firmly believes that hope flourishes when we take control of how we respond. "We can choose what we think, and that choice holds the power to impact our thoughts."

Marji's Book and TED Talk Recommendations:

- *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl
- *Love, Medicine and Miracles* by Dr. Bernie Siegel
- *There is No Place Like Hope* by Vickie Gerard
- "3 Lessons on Hope in Challenging Times" by Wajahat Ali
- "The Science and Power of Hope" by Chan Hellman

"Roundtable: We Asked, We Listened"

W2W Book Club Is Full of Good Vibes

In our roundtable discussion, we showcase a range of perspectives by asking three community members the same questions. Today, we've asked a staff member, patient, and survivor volunteer, "What is your favorite part of the Woman to Woman book club?"



Jilian Levinson
Woman to Woman Program Manager

My favorite thing about the book club is its warm, friendly vibe. It's not about cancer, but about our shared love of books. I eagerly anticipate our meetings on the last Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. Among many others, I loved reading *The People We Keep*, *The Frozen River*, and *The Women*.



Robin Findling
Survivor Volunteer

"I love the camaraderie. It's a stress-free space where we engage in thoughtful conversations, leaving the outside world behind. *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid is a woman realizing too late that money can't replace love, friendship, and honesty, and it hit home."



Myrna Schimmel
Gynecologic Cancer Patient

"For me, the discipline of reading a book I wouldn't normally choose is incredibly enriching. The club members are warm, insightful, and open to sharing their thoughts. I enjoyed *The Silent Sister* by Diane Chamberlain. It's about the importance of family and forgiveness and is a page-turner to the end."

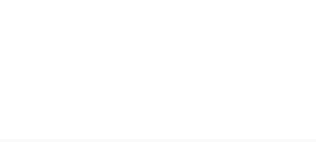
Don't Miss It: Our Events Calendar

Our monthly events calendar is online, and getting it easier than ever to attend a virtual class, join a support group or book club, and make involved with our Woman to Woman community. Be a part of online and in-person opportunities for learning, healing, celebration, and connection.

Bookmark our calendar and stay up-to-date on Woman to Woman events.

We're Proud to Report...

The behavioral health grant is part of the Woman to Woman program, providing mental health support to gynecologic cancer patients. This year, the behavioral health grant has covered \$9,346 in mental health care costs for 31 women. The program aims to destigmatize mental health, offer financial assistance, and connect patients with the most suitable therapist from a team of eight clinicians with diverse expertise.



Nancy Bourque is an oncology social worker and one of the clinicians through Woman to Woman's grant program. "Cancer patients endure so much—the emotional rollercoaster, loss of self, and confronting their own mortality," Nancy explains. "It's an honor to provide practical techniques for managing anxiety and recurring negative thoughts, as well as fostering gratitude. I'm proud to be part of a team that supports these women."

Questions about our programming or resources? Please email womantowoman@mountsinai.org if you would like more information.

Artful Pause

"The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles" (1996) © Faith Ringgold

This lithograph by the incomparable American artist Faith Ringgold depicts a fantasy quilting bee comprised of celebrated African American women—each a trailblazer of integrity and a great mind: Madame C. J. Walker, Sojourner Truth, Ida Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Ella Baker.

Spotlight

In June, Woman to Woman hosted a live "Mind & Body in Harmony: Fitness-Therapy Fusion" session in Central Park! The outdoor event beautifully combined the park's vibrant energy with holistic mind and body exercises, expertly led by fitness trainer Robin McFadden.

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