

Script – Broadcast – Living after cancer

There are more than 18 million cancer survivors in the United States.

Jill Deno is one of them.

Four years ago, Deno was diagnosed with breast cancer. After surgery and treatment, including chemo, Deno came through her experience with a greater appreciation for many aspects of her life. Just as important, she found a heightened purpose in her job of helping other cancer survivors as an oncology nurse navigator for OSF HealthCare.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Across the country, stories will be shared, fundraising walks will be held, and just like every month, more women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. For survivors, it's also a time of reflection and continuing to live 'a new normal,' post cancer.

SOT: Jill Deno, oncology nurse navigator, OSF HealthCare

"I don't think that anyone who's been through cancer will ever spend another minute or day of their life not thinking about cancer. It becomes very much a part of you, no matter what, and so it's always there. And me personally, I haven't minded offering those people support who needed it, that have questions, that need help to just kind of sort through what's next and 'how do I tackle this mountain?'" (:30)

Support groups are helpful for survivors currently going through treatment. But they are also invaluable for people post-cancer. Deno says newly-diagnosed patients can learn significant lessons sitting alongside other survivors who are years removed from their own diagnosis.

SOT: Jill Deno, oncology nurse navigator, OSF HealthCare

"I feel like it's important for newly-diagnosed patients to share those emotions with people who have already been through their journey. Because for me personally, it's actually uncovered a lot of emotions that I just kind of boxed up and put away and didn't deal with. I think everybody brings valuable aspects to a support group, whether brand new diagnosis, or a 20-year survivor." (:28)

Deno also encourages survivors to embrace key milestone dates. While some survivors might want to put their cancer experience in the rearview mirror, there's nothing wrong with acknowledging where you've been and how you fought to survive your cancer diagnosis.

SOT: Jill Deno, oncology nurse navigator, OSF HealthCare

"I think it's a celebration. For me personally, I am cheering myself and everybody else – Look what I did? For instance, on November 16, will be my four-year 'cancer-versary,' the day that I was diagnosed with cancer. May 2 of this year was my three-year cancer-free anniversary. I

think it's important to celebrate all of those milestones. It's a huge part of how we got to where we are." (:25)

Some people will adapt slowly to life without any more appointments or treatments – which Deno calls a safety net for survivors, many of whom have been involved in active care for weeks, months or longer. So what now? Deno encourages survivors to stay busy, whether that's returning to work or finding new activities such as hobbies, exercise, or re-entering social circles you were a part of before your cancer diagnosis.

And continue to accept support that comes your way.

SOT: Jill Deno, oncology nurse navigator, OSF HealthCare

"No one fights alone. There's always support. There's always someone to reach out to. Whether it's a fellow survivor, a nurse, a doctor, your family, your family wants to help you more than anybody wants to help you, and it's really kind of a helpless position that they're in. They can't do anything for you besides meals, clean your home, rides, things like that. Take the help that's offered to you. It's not only helpful to you, it's helpful to the people who want to help you." (:28)

For more information on cancer care, including treatments, patient education and support services, click [here](#).