

February 2024, Issue 35

Dallas YACS-A-LOT Newsletter



This month, Leticia opens with a tidbit from her recent trip to west Texas, and shares her love of the outdoors and the benefits that it brings.

Spending time outside hiking can have numerous benefits for our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It allows us to connect with nature, breathe in fresh air, and enjoy the beauty of our surroundings. It provides an opportunity to disconnect from the digital world and immerse ourselves in the present moment. For some, spending time outside can be a form of meditation, allowing the chance to slow down, clear our minds, reduce stress, and find inner peace.

Our first ever visit to Palo Duro was a huge success- lots of trails, stunning

sights, and wonderful memories were made! We had been wanting to visit this park since Joey and I started dating and were thrilled to have the opportunity to visit the park and enjoy it in cooler weather. Every NYE we visit a new park and spend a few days away recharging and enjoying nature. To say it's healing is an understatement!

As a kid, I frequented McKinney Falls in Austin with my grandmother and enjoyed being within walking distance of the park. Many a bluebonnet photo was taken there, as well as picnics, holiday gatherings, and hangouts with friends later in high school. My love of and appreciation for the outdoors has only increased since then, and I'm so grateful for the memories I have from each park I've had the privilege of visiting.

As we dive into 2024, I encourage you to spend time outside as able-whether it's a brief walk around the block, a hike with a loved one, or checking out a nearby park. Don't forget your water and sunscreen!

Announcements

Be Part of the YACS Directory

This is a completely voluntary survey to gather contact info to share with group members. You do not have to answer all questions, and can quit any time. We'd love to know you better!

<https://forms.gle/RChQQwh6UhwP8kfr7>

Directory: Dallas YAC Directory

Call For Newsletter Committee Members

We need one to two more members to help put this growing and changing publication together. The committee is still in its infancy and finding its feet. We're looking for members that can stick around long-term. Quite simply, the more people we have, the simpler it becomes to put the newsletter together. Ideally, you'd have one section a month and/or come up with some new ideas.

If interested, email us [here](#).

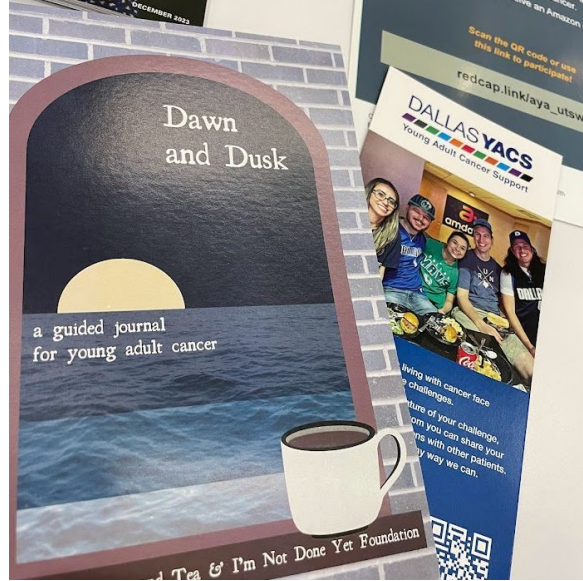
Knowing the Group! Meet, Tia, Our New Service Dog



Tia arrives on Valentine's- that couldn't be more appropriate because we know she will steal all of our hearts! Tia has been training in Wyoming and is now ready to get to work at the Cancer Center. She will be onsite daily and at every YACS meeting and event. Tia gives hugs on command, can retrieve medical equipment and dropped items, can help patients mobilize and balance, will offer deep pressure therapy for anxiety, and will welcome participants to our support groups. Join us at Grrrowler's in the Colony later this month to meet her in person and reach out to Alex if you'd like to see her at an appointment.

Reflections through Expression

By Mollie Ripple



YACS co-hosted Elephants and Tea's magazine release party last month! It was an insightful day full of reflection, writing, art, community and storytelling, which for me brought about many feelings, but mostly notably gratitude.

The day began with a writing session where we reflected on questions such as "What do you need to let go of and what do you need to hold onto today?" Many of the meditative questions throughout the guided journal relate to the idea of an ocean, bringing in new waves as old ones depart from the shore. This urges its writers to consider what things are important and worth valuing in life, and what things may be weighing them down instead. Since I am in a season of waiting, having recently finished radiation and am next approaching a PET scan, I do at times worry about results, next steps of treatment and an unpromised future. While I know that is a valid feeling, on this day I chose to let that weight go, and instead, hold onto friends and hobbies that bring me joy. As I looked around me in this workshop, I was happy that that came in the form of YACS.

Next, we attended an art workshop led by Marianne Gargour. The project included making a bold, busy design, then taking ample time to round out the edges and fill them with rich colors. This was a metaphor for the mounting stresses which can be smoothed out and made a bit more beautiful if taken the time to address them. It allowed for open expression, relaxing strokes, and served as a reminder of the importance of creation without expectation. I often go into art projects feeling like I must have a plan or end up frustrated when the final product doesn't come out how I anticipated, but what I love about Marianne's workshops is her ability to create presence through her pre-project meditation and emphasis on freedom by letting creativity guide your hands. I always leave feeling lighter.

Lastly, YACS and Elephants and Tea headed to the main event, a storytelling soirée. Elephants and Tea's magazine is written by and for AYA cancer patients, survivors and their caregivers. It allows these individuals a chance to tell their story in their words. From prose to poetry, four individuals took to the mic to share their journey as it relates to cancer, life afterwards, their careers, hobbies and values. Provoking teary eyes, listeners were able to reflect on their own cancer experience. One story that stood out to me highlighted the things one cancer survivor struggled with during treatment such as hair loss, nausea, and extended time spent in hospital rooms. She compared these to the delight it now brings her to celebrate their opposites, like in a short dance before each meal she can now enjoy nausea-free. It was a wonderful reminder to not take even the

most mundane activities for granted. Since then, when I've struggled to get up to my blaring alarm far too early in the mornings, I have been repeating to myself, "It is a privilege to wake up today and get to go to work."

This week, I'd like to challenge each of you to set aside some time to reflect on something you want to hold dear, something stressful you can either smooth out or let go of, even if just for one day, and to celebrate a small win. If you feel compelled, write about it or express it creatively in a way that feels right for you. My hope is that you, too, can look at the people around you, skills in you and tasks upon you with a newfound sense of gratitude.



Taylor's Comedic Turf

"What do you call a fish wearing a bowtie?"

Dallas YACS Calendar

LOTS of Upcoming Events:

Saturday, February 10th at 2pm - Our YACS/ Mavs Collab is back! We will have a limited number of tickets to the Mavs game. Limit 2 per person. RSVP by email to Alex, and include your t-shirt sizes. We have some cool t-shirts, but sizes will be limited.

Sunday, February 18th, 3pm- 5pm - Meet Tia, our service dog, at Growler's in the Shacks at the Colony. We will have human and dog treats to celebrate! 5800 Windhaven Pkwy #100, The Colony, TX 75056

Tuesday, February 27th, 6pm - YACS Yoga at the Cancer Center

Tuesday, February 27th, 7pm - Support group at the Cancer Center

February Birthdays:

Sherrell Watson 2/8

Shayna Vincent 2/14

Alex Huffman 2/25

February Milestones:

Kristin Ornstein Breast Cancer 2/3/2021

Patty Ruiz Aplastic Anemia and PNH 2/8/2011

Taylor Roth Brain Tumor 2/23/2011

Sunday, March 3rd, 5pm- Texas Outlaws Indoor Soccer game. Meet local soccer legend Tatu and watch the Outlaws take on the Sidekicks! We might even take a few photos on the field! Email Alex to RSVP. Family and friends are welcome to attend.

Saturday, March 16th through Sunday, March 17th - Our first YACS tent camping excursion!!! More details to come.

Alex's Meditation Moment

We are more likely to know how emotional safety feels than what it is exactly. Think of the last time you hung out with your best friend. You knew you would be able to be yourself because this is a person who values you, accepts you and believes in you. When you be seen, heard, and noticed for who you genuinely are, this creates a foundation for vulnerability.

Conversely, when we don't feel safe, our bodies don't want to engage, connect, or provide the emotional warmth our relationships need to thrive.

Emotional safety is the seed from which vulnerability grows. There is causality and interconnectedness between the two. Emotional safety does come from within us. It is the "knowing" of what we're feeling; the ability to be able to identify our feelings and then take the ultimate risk of feeling them. When we apply mindful awareness to emotional safety, we can respond to our feelings with compassion, kindness, and support. We can give ourselves compassion not to feel better, but simply because we feel badly. That's when things really start to change! We are able to experience more satisfaction in life, find motivation, form fulfilling and meaningful relationships, and experience less anxiety and depressive symptoms. There's a strong tie to emotional safety and the resiliency needed to cope with stressful life events. Emotional safety does not safeguard us from difficult life events, it does help us regulate to be able to navigate those events in healthy ways.

In short, without emotional safety, you can't love well or even live well.

To tap into emotional safety, try this S.A.F.E practice. Create a silent, healing space around you. Begin by taking couple of long, deep breaths all the way down into your diaphragm. Inhale, hold it, and as you exhale, let go of the tension. Letting go is possible because you are S.A.F.E. Take another deep breath all the way in, and allow all the tension to move into your lungs, and then let it go. If you still feel tension, repeat the breath work a few more times before beginning the prompt.

When you're ready...

Soften – When a vulnerability arises, whether it's a feeling of sadness, anxiety, grief, anger, or shame, take a moment to gently soften awareness into that area of the body. At this point you are just resting your awareness into this area. If it helps you can say, "Breathing in, I am aware of this vulnerability, breathing out softening into it."

Allow/Accept– We're not striving to change this feeling, or make it any different, we're just allowing and letting be. Acceptance doesn't imply that you are okay with it or want it there, it's simply acknowledging the reality of its existence. Here you are just saying to yourself, "allowing, allowing, allowing."

Feel into it with kindness– Now we have the opportunity to deepen our awareness and investigate the feeling. You may choose to put your hand on your heart or wherever you feel the sensation in your body. This applies love or kindness to the feeling which may shift it all by itself. The brain also has to map the sensation of the touch with is inversely correlated with mental rumination, turning the volume down on negative thinking.

- As you feel into it you might ask, "What does this feeling believe?" Does it believe you are unlovable, unworthy, or perhaps that if you allow it to be, it will consume you?
- Ask the question, what does this feeling need right now? Does it need to feel cared for, to feel secure, to feel a sense of belonging?
- Whatever the answer, see if you can wish that for yourself. For example, May I feel loved, may I feel secure, may I feel a sense of belonging. Make this personal to whatever your needs are.

Expand awareness and wishes to all people– Whatever your vulnerability, it's important you know you're not alone. Feeling vulnerable is part of the human condition and millions of people struggle with the same source of vulnerability that you experience. But when we're feeling vulnerable with anxiety, depression or shame, it becomes all about us, we need to also impersonalize the experience and get out of ourselves.

- Now is the opportunity to make that realization real by imagining all the other people who struggle with this same feeling of vulnerability and to wish them all the same prayers that you just wished yourself.
- For example, May we all feel loved, may we all feel a sense of safety and security, May we all feel that sense of belonging, etc...

Then see what you notice.

Take this with you and play with it as an experiment, letting go of expectations and opening up to curiosity to see what you notice.

You are an active participant in your own health and well-being. You can feel S.A.F.E, you can feel whole, let the past be the past and enter into the security of the present moment.

Joke Answer



"So-fish-ticated"

Prompt of the Month by Dr. Sam Dean



When the Light Seem to Fade

The winter landscape can mirror the emotional terrain for those living with cancer – bare, bleak, and sapped of former vibrancy. Shorter days may dredge up feelings of isolation as friends continue with their lives while our vitality lies dormant under treatment's deep freeze or depression's gray fog.

Use this prompt to give language to emotional struggles that chill evokes as a young person paused mid-journey. First, detail the specific losses winters

now represent – abilities, stamina, identity, and a sense of belonging. Then shift to imagining the small points of light still able to pierce the fog – moments with friends where the old you resurrect, simple comforts like blankets and tea reviving body and soul, feeling the underlying current of resilience within you carrying you through detached days.

What simple self-care rituals can you engage to actively kindle inner light when the winter gloom threatens to overwhelm? As the natural world pulls inward to reset and restore, write a commitment to offer yourself the same – no matter the season's ceaseless demands or others' expectations blind to cancer's burden. The light still lives in you, waiting to ignite again when spring eventually stirs and renews frozen ground. For now, actively nurture the glow as best you can in this hibernation, trusting its return.

If you'd like your response featured in next month's newsletter, simply included it in an email to the group at dallasyacsalot@gmail.com.

Cooking with Chris!



What's up Dallas, YACS?! Hope you guys are staying warm. For this month's recipe, I'm featuring Chicken Alfredo- perfect to enjoy with your significant other on Valentine's Day!

Ingredients:

1 box of dried fettuccine pasta

1/2 gallon Milk any kind is fine

Minced garlic(you can find this in the produce department of the grocery store)

1 bottle Grated Parmesan cheese (this is usually in the pasta sauce section of the grocery store)

2 lbs chicken breast

1 box of Butter in the dairy aisle of the store

Garlic powder

Onion powder

White pepper

3 tbsp flour

Directions :

Begin by boiling a pot full of water about 4 cups. Once water boils, add a tsp of salt.

Cook your chicken breast while leaving the water boiling. You can grill, pan fry, or sauté your chicken- however you wish. Season it add salt, pepper, onion powder and garlic powder. Once fully cooked, set aside.

Grab your fettuccine pasta (about half the box), and break the pasta in half with your hands. (This will cook faster, but I know some Italians frown upon it!)

Cook your pasta for about 15 minutes, stirring every 5 mins so it won't stick. Once your pasta is tender, run it thru a strainer under cold water then add some oil and a pinch of salt. Set aside.

Now we make our Alfredo sauce

We're gonna start by making a roux then transition into a veloute.

Melt 4 tbsp of butter in a sauce pan, add 1 tbsp of flour, and whisk vigorously. When you start to see foam, that's when the magic is happening!

Add 1 cup of milk while whisking, set to medium high heat. Keep whisking until you notice the roux is slowly turning into a veloute. Add 3 cups of milk, 2 tsp of white pepper, 2 tsp of onion powder, and 1 tablespoon of garlic powder. Whisk thoroughly then add 2 tsp of minced garlic. Keep whisking while adding 2 cups of Parmesan cheese.

Add one more cup of milk, and whisk.

Voila you have Alfredo sauce! Grab a spoon, and check your consistency. When it coats the back of your spoon, you're ready to serve.

Grab your pasta, and combine with the Alfredo sauce. Once pasta is hot, add your chicken, and let it all heat up.

Garnish with grated Parmesan.

Enjoy!



Feedback?

If you have anything you'd like us to know that isn't covered in the newsletter, tell us [here](#).

That's it! You've reached the end of our newsletter. Until next time...



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