TELLING OTHERS YOU ARE A SURVIVOR

Some survivors face the question of whether or not they want to tell others that they are cancer survivors. Some situations that may present itself in asking this question are:
- When you start a new job
- When you start dating someone
- When someone asks you about a noticeable scar or physical change.

Some survivors may also ask themselves:
- How do I introduce the new me?
- When do I tell them I am a cancer survivor?
- Will they see me as a victim?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS IT CAN SOMETIMES SEEM DIFFICULT TO TELL OTHERS?
Some of the reasons you may not want to tell others:
- You may feel embarrassed talking about cancers of certain body parts, especially if those physical changes are noticeable.
- Your experience is too painful or upsetting to talk about.
- You may feel like your cancer experience is personal.

Some of the negative reactions you may worry about:
- People you communicate with might feel sorry for you
- You may hear stories of people that did not survive cancer.
- They could possibly reject you.

To make it easier in communicating to someone that you are a cancer survivor you may want to let that person know that you would like to schedule a convenient time to talk with them about something important that is going on in your life; that way it will make the situation more comfortable and convenient for you.

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE TELLING OTHERS?
- Jot down notes of how you feel about being a survivor.
- Stand in front of a mirror and practice having a conversation with someone you would like to tell.
- Prepare yourself for any unexpected responses from another person.
Regardless of when you decide to tell someone you are a survivor, know that the decision is totally left up to you. If deciding when to tell becomes too overwhelming, seek the advice of your healthcare team or a counselor.

Works Cited
Adapted from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
www.fhcrc.org