Bouncing Back After Cancer...

Be kind to yourself and do not expect yourself to be exactly what you were before — your brain and body have been through a lot.

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Plan B's

One big lesson we learn as cancer patients is to always have a Plan B and to try not to sweat the small stuff. "Small stuff" includes managing our career however, we also like to eat and need to have health insurance and be busy to not think too much about mortality and so on and so forth.

Whether we lose our jobs or take time off or realize our careers are not fulfilling or cause us too much stress to continue, we do need to think about how we can "bounce back" in our careers.

Some ways to bounce back include:

1. Learning a new skill or expanding on a current skill: Keeping our minds active in any way shape or form is important during and after a cancer diagnosis.
2. Be kind to yourself and do not expect yourself to be exactly what you were before — know that your brain and body have been through a lot and adjust your expectations accordingly.
3. Get help from friends and family to review your resume and let you if you can improve it; ask them to submit your resume for any openings they know of that might fit your skills and talents. Ask them not to mention your recent health issue, if possible.
4. Google yourself and see what comes up — it is illegal for a hiring manager to ask about your health issues however ALL hiring managers google potential employees. If you google yourself and your health history comes up then it can be considered "fair game" or you just might not even get the interview and not know why. If your information is out there (perhaps you were interviewed at a walk against cancer or you blog extensively about what happened to you, as I do) then consider changing your blog settings to a "fake name" and/or create a "professional" website that comes up higher in the search engine.
5. Ease back into work slowly — know that you are interviewing the new job as much as they are interviewing you — honor and listen to your gut instincts if you can hold out long enough on your budget/health insurance needs to find something that will bring you joy and not make you stressed.

I hope these tidbits help you get back to work after cancer.

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Lisa Vento Nielsen, MBA, PMP, is an author, speaker, cancer survivor and career expert. She lost her job during treatment and founded a nonprofit focused on helping people who have been diagnosed with cancer (and their families) find meaningful work. Cancer takes a toll on your whole life and the lives of those in your family — working is a big part of getting back to “normal” after going through a cancer diagnosis. Survivorship is all that comes after diagnosis and it needed more resources so Lisa and her team created them.

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