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## PRODUCT NEWS

# Heartfelt messages from spa industry 'flourishing in adversity' panel

04 MAR 2021 BY KATIE BARNES



Clockwise: Host Sallie Fraenkel, panellists Dr Daniel Friedland, Corinna Yap, Marina Efraimoglou and Ophelia Yeung, and panel co-ordinator Julie Bach / Professional Beauty Group

Leading spa figures Marina Efraimoglou, Dr Daniel Friedland, Corinna Yap and Ophelia Yeung, came together in an inspirational virtual panel on 1 March to share their experiences of fighting cancer and to shine a light on an increasingly important area for the global wellness industry.

"When we've spoken about cancer in the past, we've typically spoken about clients or other people, and I think it's really important for us to talk about it within our own tribe and to learn from members who've leaned on wellness during times of adversity," said Julie Bach, who helped put the panel together.

Bach is the founder of Wellness for Cancer, a highly-regarded cancer therapy training provider, who's been calling for spas to **stop turning away people** who've been affected by the devastating illness.

During the panel, viewers heard heartfelt stories about the personal adversity which our loved industry colleagues have experienced, or are still experiencing, what they've learned and what wellness professionals can do better to help serve guests who are facing difficult circumstances.

“ People don't want a cancer treatment at your spa, they want the same treatment as everyone else, so spas need to explain what therapies can be adapted ”  
- Corinna Yap

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Efraimoglou was in her late 20s, and a successful banker in Greece when she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. This started her wellness journey, "I asked 'how can I share this gift of life I was given'," she said, "I learned to open up and to share and receive a lot of love that, for me, was healing."

In 2018 she opened **Euphoria Retreat**, a sanctuary for healing and personal transformation. "When people come to us, they're almost defined by what they're going through - cancer, a break-up, death. There's a delicate point between acknowledging what they've been through, listening, but making them see that they're not just 'that'," she said. "Being a holistic retreat, Euphoria has the tools - not just massage but emotional wellness, food and fitness - to work with and to help them shift their identity."

Yap, another panellist, said: "I was a big advocate for Julie [Bach's] Wellness for Cancer training when I was at Como Shambhala even before I had breast cancer. There were situations where people would come in, you'd find out they had cancer and face difficult issues with treating them."

Yap, an independent wellness and wellbeing specialist, had an operation and radiotherapy for a rare form of breast cancer in 2019. She added: "The important thing for wellness professionals is to really listen - fully - to care for clients and make them feel like an individual... And to love them. I know that scares people, but I told my team they need to love everyone who comes in. But as a spa therapist and manager, it's also about knowing your limits and to link guests with specialists if they need to know more."

"It's also important to not 'other' people - people don't want a cancer treatment at your spa, they want the same treatment as everyone else so spas need to explain what therapies can be adapted for different conditions. This is all a learning process for our industry and it's an interesting time to see how they navigate this."

For Yap, it was the unexpected anxiety and depression she faced after treatment that caught her off guard. Yeung, who went through eight months of painful treatment and recovery for cancer of the saliva gland five years ago agreed. "Physical pain can debilitate you, really pull you down, it's tiring. But your mental reserve is all the more important," she said.

Yeung, an economist by background, has worked on important research projects in the wellness industry for the last 12 years. Most recently, she co-led the Global Wellness Institute's (GWI) research on defining mental wellness and measuring the **mental wellness economy**. "Mental wellness is a resource that helps us to think, feel and function and there are many aspects to it - emotional, cognitive, socialisation and just getting your life together to be able to function," she said. "Mental wellness is also a process... and if we have the resources to grow, and survive, we can grow and flourish."

Dr Daniel Friedland, a popular industry motivational speaker, is the founder and CEO of executive coaching company Super Smart Health. He described how his life changed in November when he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. "It's been the greatest joy and blessing of my life," he said, "instead of questioning 'why me, why now?', I questioned 'what matters most,' which led me to the answer of 'making every moment count!'"

Friedland has set up a YouTube Channel - Living Well From Within - where he's documenting the journey he and his family are on with a focus on transforming challenges into healing, growth and flourishing wellness. He also shared details of a new GWI initiative he's co-chairing with Sallie Fraenkel and Wendy Bosalavage. The Living Well From Within Initiative will focus on "awakening conscious leadership by unlocking the appreciative exchange methodology," he explained, adding that his overall drive is to "live a loving life".

The panel, which was hosted by Fraenkel, was part of the World Spa & Wellness Online Conference by the Professional Beauty Group.

As well as being the founder of Wellness for Cancer, Bach collaborated with Professional Beauty in October to launch the Cancer Aware Directory, a not-for-profit initiative that offers a free listing to any spa/wellness business or any therapist/practitioner, anywhere in the world, that treats cancer patients and has a qualification to do so.

This follows the separate launch of the **Standards Authority for Touch in Cancer Care** spearheaded by industry icon Sue Harmsworth last March.



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