

# Life Interrupted

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FILM

- The three women profiled in this documentary—Pat Bear, Debi Wood and Paula Mozen—have different life experiences and grew up in different places. How do you think their varying environments and experiences affected how they were diagnosed with breast cancer and what treatment options they pursued?
- Were you surprised by how many types of breast cancer and how many ways there are to treat breast cancer? Why might it be important to know that there is a not a one-fits-all solution?
- Did Paula’s struggles with the decision to have a mastectomy, and her years-long struggles following the surgeries resonate with you? If so, why? What did that story mean to you?

### QUESTIONS THAT TIE IN WITH

## **ALL OF US**

- Based on what you’ve learned about the *All of Us* Research Program (*All of Us*), how could participating in a research program like *All of Us* improve health outcomes for people diagnosed with breast cancer?
- Why is it important to ensure that participants in research programs like *All of Us* and clinical trials are diverse?

## QUESTIONS THAT TIE IN WITH

# PRECISION MEDICINE

*“Illness is the night side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.”*

— Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*

- What did you learn about the BRCA genes, and how genetic factors contribute to the risk for breast cancer?
- How did Paula’s illustration of her family tree, and her ancestry help explain why she might have been prone to breast cancer?
- On that same note, how did Debi’s diagnosis seem so improbable?
- Paula highlights two lifestyle choices: she has been a vegetarian since she was 11, and has always been physically active. Based on the concept of precision medicine, how do environment and biology affect a person’s health?
- The three women profiled are of varied ages and ethnicity. How does reflecting on these differences help us understand breast cancer’s variability? What were similar experiences between the three women? What were some different experiences?
- Several survivors address hitting a wall in the time period following the end of their active treatment, What did the survivors learn about how to proceed, both practically and emotionally, after their treatments end? What is the value of continued healthcare monitoring?

## QUESTIONS THAT TIE IN WITH

# PATIENT AGENCY

- What are some vocabulary words that were new to you, both in the film and/or in your personal experience navigating the medical jargon that comes with disease diagnosis?
- How did Pat's proximity to medical care affect her decisions when choosing a doctor and treatment path?
- What did you make of Debi's advice to not accept that the first doctor you see will be the one who treats you? She advocated interviewing doctors, asking them how they would treat her, how willing they were to work with her. Why was this important to her, and how did it affect her decisions to pursue treatment in light of possible fertility issues?
- What are some things that Paula did to give her confidence in the care and treatments she ended up receiving?

Did one of the three women's struggles with their breast cancer diagnosis and treatment resonate with you? If so, which one and why? What did her story mean to you?

- All three main subjects in this film identified men – whether they were a father, son, or partner – who either actively supported them during their cancer treatment or refrained from caregiving at their request. Based on the film, what suggestions might you give to the loved one of a breast cancer patient, regardless of gender?

