



Kathy Kelley, Founder and Chief Executive Officer
www.hystersisters.com

Kathy Kelley is the founder and CEO of HysterSisters, an online community providing woman-to-woman support for GYN medical and emotional issues surrounding the hysterectomy experience. Every day thousands of women use HysterSisters to find and share information about hysterectomy procedures, alternative treatments, hormone replacement therapy, and about personal experiences with gynecological illnesses.

When Kelley, a former school teacher, introduces her company she often adds this disclaimer: "We help women go through their hysterectomies, but I'm not recruiting." Kelley knows personally the heartbreak that hysterectomy can wreak both emotionally and physically.

In 1998, Kelley, then 41, underwent a hysterectomy she'd been anticipating since she was 26, when her mother died of ovarian cancer. Using family history as their guide, doctors advised Kelley and her sister to consider hysterectomies with oophorectomy by age 40. Without the guidance of modern genetic screening, Kelley made the brave decision to have a preventative hysterectomy.

"I didn't want to live my life wondering if my ovaries were going to betray me," she says. The night before her hysterectomy, she climbed into a warm bath and in her words, "cried like a baby."

After her surgery, she went looking for information about her new body and turned to the Internet. Offline, information was fragmented, anecdotal and sometimes, contradictory. Online, she discovered, it was practically non-existent.

So in August 1998, Kelley – a self-described "Internet junkie" – created her own web site, convening a group of women she had met on AOL who'd had hysterectomies to discuss their recoveries and share information. She dubbed her virtual club "the hystersisters," and she led and monitored the conversations, always encouraging women to go back to their doctors and nurses for medical advice.

As her site's popularity grew, she established her own domain, www.hystersisters.com, in 1999. Web site traffic continued to surge, and in 2004, Kelley retired from the classroom to lead the HysterSisters enterprise. As the site's chief administrator, she remains an active "hyster sister" while leading a small staff and more than two dozen volunteer "hostesses" who monitor the site's discussion forums.

From the site's soft colors to its supportive and matter-of-fact tone, the HysterSisters community is the result of Kelley's own warm and direct personality. Her 2008 booklet, "What 100,000 Women Know About Hysterectomy," is provided by doctors around the country to help patients learn about their hysterectomy choices. With more than 174,000 registered members and 10,000 plus unique visitors each day, HysterSisters continues to meet the growing demand for hysterectomy information.

After leading HysterSisters for over 11 years, Kelley believes that women need second and even third opinions before scheduling any surgery. At the same time, she champions the technological advances that are improving hysterectomy procedures and its alternatives. She is always committed to giving women plenty of information and providing steadfast support for their decisions.

"After being a mother, HysterSisters is my life's work," Kelley says. "I could be replaced in the classroom as a teacher. HysterSisters is the most important thing that I do."