

Emotional care

Giving emotional care is probably the most difficult part of being a carer. You may find it hard to know how your loved one is feeling and what you can say to help. Here we give you some tips on how to give emotional care to the patient.

Listen to your loved one

When talking with your loved one about their illness, it can be very tempting to try to solve their problems. You cannot change the fact that they are sick, but you can help them to come to terms with it by listening. Listening is a simple but very good way to communicate. Remember listening means focusing on what your loved one is saying and not what you are going to say next.

Tips on how to listen

- Sit down together somewhere private
- Make sure you have plenty of time and let your loved one know you are there for as long as needed
- Put your phone on silent
- Maintain as much eye contact as possible
- Encourage your loved one to talk by asking 'open' questions. Open questions encourage the patient to talk. For example, "How are you feeling today?"
- Try to avoid 'closed' questions. Closed questions normally only require a yes or no answer and do not encourage the patient to talk.
- Focus on what the patient is saying. Try not to think about something else or what you plan to say next.
- Do not interrupt or change the subject. If your loved one stops talking, remember they might be thinking about what they want to say next so give them time to do that.
- Allow the patient to be sad or upset. This can make you feel very uncomfortable but remember that you are helping just by listening.
- Try not to say things like, "It will be ok" or, "Stay positive". This might stop the patient from telling you how they really feel.
- Make sure you have understood what your loved one has said. A good way to do this is repeat some of the words they have used.
- Follow the patient's lead. If they laugh it's ok to laugh with them. If they cry, give them time to do this too. If they look uncomfortable, nod and smile and show them you are there to listen.