

TALKING ABOUT CANCER: A GUIDE TO COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It goes without saying — a cancer journey may be a terrible experience for you and your loved ones. But, sharing your thoughts and feelings can help you feel closer to friends and family and give you much needed support. By drawing on the strength and experiences of others, you can gain a sense of confidence and feel ready to keep fighting.

But...*It's not always easy* ← - - - - -

You might not be ready to talk right away. When you are, you may not know exactly what to say. People may feel nervous about saying the wrong thing, and decide instead to say nothing at all. If you are ready to talk about your experience — start the conversation and remember that the support and help you need is available.

Tips for having a meaningful conversation



BE HONEST

Think about how you currently approach conversations with others. Do you put on a brave face or just stay silent? Well, you don't need to pretend for the benefit of others. In fact, being honest with yourself and others can help you work through your emotions. If you hide how you are feeling, it may get in the way of receiving the help that you may need.



RECOGNIZE YOUR FEELINGS

It's completely reasonable to feel anger and frustration when facing cancer and you may unintentionally take it out on the people around you. Try to understand the real source of your anger.

Are you nervous for your future? Are you worried about your finances or becoming a burden to your loved ones? Talking about strong emotions like these may help you work through them.



CONSIDER SUPPORT GROUPS

It's good to have family and friends but a support group can offer something unique. It will allow you to meet other people and their loved ones who are also living with cancer. They will understand what you are going through which could make it easier to share your feelings and cope with certain concerns you may have.



TAKE YOUR TIME

There's no rush. It may take a while before you and your family and friends feel comfortable sharing. Give it time and work through it together. You may discover that trying some of the tips we have provided here will make talking and sharing with others easier.

Other resources you can visit for helpful ideas for communicating are:

- Savor Health savorhealth.com
- NCI's Facing Forward Series: [Life After Cancer Treatment](#)
- Head and Neck Cancer Alliance headandneck.org
- Cancer Support Websites Mylifeline.org
- Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer (SPOHNC) SPOHNC.org

Even if you are not currently experiencing emotional issues related to your cancer experience, keep this information handy in case you begin to feel any changes in your emotions at a later point; it may be helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, share them with your healthcare team. If you are experiencing serious emotional challenges, it is important to seek help immediately.

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