Article Series Maintaining Connections All

Staying Connected As Your Needs Change Over Time

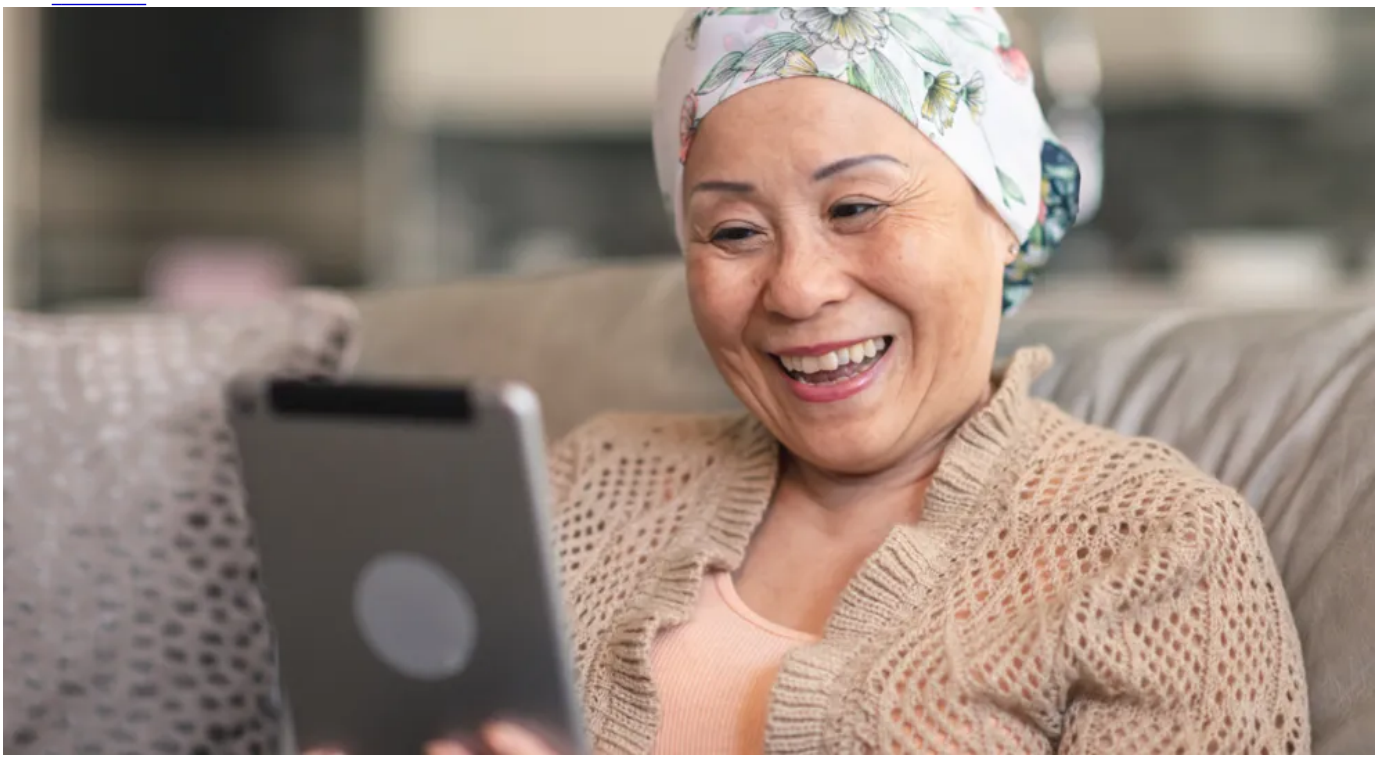
4 min read

Like (0) Likes

Bookmark

Share

Print



All Maintaining Connections

Resize

A A A

Living with cancer is a journey that evolves over time. And when it comes to the support you need along the way, your needs and wants may change, too.

For example, there may be periods when you want support and connection. At other times, you might want to set boundaries or be left alone.

The way people treat you may also change. For example, people who were there for you after your diagnosis may seem to be less present or supportive as time goes on. Some friendships may grow stronger, while others might fade or take on a different shape.

Changes like these may be confusing or hurtful, and if you've faced them, you're not alone. It's not uncommon for people with cancer to feel isolated or forgotten.

Everyone's journey is unique, and there's no right or wrong way to respond to the changes you're going through. These **Microsteps** can be taken to help you reflect on and ask for what you need at different stages of your journey. As always, consult with your care team for the management practices that are best for you.

If you need more support…

Telling people exactly what makes you feel supported.

Sometimes, people want to help you but aren't sure how to do it. Or they may not be sure if their attention and support are appreciated. Try to be as specific as possible about the kind of support you need. For example, letting them know that you'd just like to be listened to, and do not need advice at this time, or that you could use help with meals or transportation.

Joining a support group for people with cancer.

No one can know exactly what you're going through, but there's something powerful about finding a community of people who are experiencing something similar. These groups may provide a space to share experiences and feelings with others who can better understand your journey.

Creating a care calendar.

Try setting up a shared digital care calendar where friends and family can sign up to help with specific tasks, such as cooking meals, taking you to appointments, or just

visiting. This can help organize support and keep your community engaged over time. To make it easier, you can also consider asking a loved one or trusted friend to manage the calendar for you.

Sharing your gratitude for someone whose support makes a difference.

Consider ways to regularly acknowledge and thank your friends and family for their support. Showing appreciation can strengthen your relationships and encourage continued support.

If you need a different kind of support…

Setting boundaries, gently.

If you feel overwhelmed by social interactions, try gently setting boundaries with visitors. Let them know you appreciate their visits but might need to keep them brief or infrequent. You may want to try phrases like:

- "I'm really glad we could spend this time together, but I feel like I need to rest now."
- "Thank you for coming. I’m not up for a long visit today, but I am happy to spend some time with you. We can catch up more soon."
- "It’s great to see you! I'm keeping visits short these days to help manage my energy levels."
- "Your visits mean a lot to me, but I’m not feeling my best right now so I would appreciate it if we could keep the visit brief — let’s say no more than 30 minutes."

If you want to share updates on your journey…

Sending an email newsletter to keep everyone informed.

Updating everyone in your life can be exhausting. Consider sending out a weekly or monthly newsletter to keep your wider circle of friends and family updated on your health, which can reduce the need for repeating the same updates multiple times.

Asking a trusted friend or loved one to share updates.

If you're comfortable, try delegating the task of sharing news and answering questions to someone else. This may reduce your emotional burden and allow you to focus on other priorities.

If you need to have a difficult conversation…

Taking a few minutes to prepare for a tough conversation.

If you need to have a difficult conversation about needing more help or needing space, consider planning what you want to say ahead of time to help make the conversation as clear and effective as possible. If it helps, you can write down what you're planning to say beforehand.

Letting someone know that just being there for you is enough.

If you've just shared a piece of difficult news with a friend or loved one, they may react strongly — with shock, confusion, or helplessness. They may struggle with how to respond, or feel obligated to offer solutions or a message of hope. You may choose to let them know that all you need from them now is their love and support.

Developed with Thrive Global