

# THIS IS **LIVING WITH CANCER**™

## *Talking it out*

Cancer can be a difficult topic to discuss with the people in your life. These topic starters can help make tough conversations more effective and focused. You may feel a little uncomfortable at first, but **having candid conversations may help you strengthen your relationships** and feel more confident bringing up important topics.



### EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Talking about specific feelings that you're experiencing can be tough. You may avoid going into detail if you think people might treat you differently, feel stressed out or believe that you're being too negative. **But getting these emotions out in the open can help make a difference.**



### SPEAKING YOUR MIND

**Labeling and explaining your emotions may help the people around you better understand what you're going through.** This approach can also help the conversations feel more productive and focused.

- **"To be honest, I'm feeling..."**
- **"This is hard for me to talk about, but I'm feeling..."**
- **"I feel [anxious] when [we talk about the future] because [the uncertainty scares me]."**
- **"I feel [sad] when [I'm unable to do some of the things I used to do]."**



## DISCUSSING HEALTH CHANGES

Cancer adds a new factor to your health that can be hard to talk about. You may not want to upset the people in your life. You might be dealing with your own feelings about it, which can make it tough to talk to others. While the news might be hard to take in at first, **you and your loved ones can share how you're feeling** so you can move forward together.



## MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Keeping others in the loop about your health can help them understand what you're going through and how to best support you. **Sharing tough information can help you better adapt to changes over time** and make you feel less alone moving forward.

- "The cancer makes me feel..."
- "My symptoms make it hard to..."
- "My doctor gave me some news yesterday..."
- "Would it be OK if I told you about a conversation I had with my doctor?"



## DAILY TASKS

You may feel uncomfortable asking friends and family for help with everyday jobs, like errands or chores. Maybe you don't want to add to their regular responsibilities. But chances are, **there are people in your life who want to help however they can**—and it's OK to let them.



## HELPING HANDS

Consider who can best support you with your daily tasks. **Explain exactly what would help**, and redirect them if they've offered to do something that you've got covered. And remember to acknowledge your loved one's effort—so they know what their support means to you.

- "I could really use your help with..."
- "I'm having a hard time keeping up with everything. It would help if you could..."
- "Thanks for offering to *[make us dinner]*. I'm actually all set with *[meals]*, but I could really use *[your help with some things around the house]*."



## FEARS AND WORRIES

It helps to have others who understand your perspective and that includes your concerns. You might be hesitant to share your fears about cancer with the people you love, such as your significant other or close friends. **But you may lessen the fear by talking through your feelings.**



## LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING

It helps to be up-front about your feelings when you're discussing them with the people in your life. **Explaining how you feel can help other people see where you are coming from.** You can even invite others to share a time when they felt similar emotions.

- "Something that really scares me is..."
- "I don't want to worry you, but I'm scared that..."
- "I know it's normal to feel this way, but I'm worried about..."
- "I'm feeling kind of [*sad*]. Perhaps you could tell me about a time you also felt this way."



## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Cancer comes with unexpected emotions, for you and the people around you. Asking for emotional support can be tough when you're worried about upsetting or stressing out your loved one. But sharing your emotions with your significant other or close friends can actually **help strengthen your relationships, encourage cooperation and relieve stress.**



## STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Talk to the people who are best suited to support you emotionally. **Explain what would be most helpful and ask how they feel about it.** You can even let others know that you just want to be heard—they don't have to respond.

- "I'm dealing with a lot of emotions. It would help if I could talk to you about..."
- "Can I talk to you about how I'm feeling?"
- "How does what I'm saying make you feel?"
- "I don't always need a response. Sometimes it helps to be heard. Is it OK if I talk about how I'm feeling with you?"

## *Put your communication skills into action*

**Plan ahead:** Ask your loved one about their schedule to help you decide together when and where to have the conversation.

**Use your imagination:** Before the conversation, spend time imagining what it might be like. What will you say? How will you say it? This can help you feel more comfortable about starting the conversation.

**Say “I”:** Use “I” or “we” instead of “you” when you’re talking about your feelings. It helps you express yourself without making assumptions about your loved one’s perspective.



### **KEEP PRACTICING**

Remember, you can use any of the tips we’ve shared to talk with the people in your life. It’s all about finding what works best for you and your loved ones.