

Communicating when a Loved One is Sick

When a person you love has a serious illness such as cancer, it can be hard to know what to say. Talking with your loved one can help both of you through this difficult time. Here are some suggestions for communicating with a loved one who is ill.

When You Want to Say:

You will be just fine.

I can't believe this is happening.

Don't talk like that! You can beat this!

I can't see how anyone can help.

I can't talk about this.

We all feel tired sometimes.

What do the doctors know? You might live forever.

Don't give up. I need you here.

You need to get out of the house.

There has to be something more to do.

Don't be sad. You will get well.

Try This Instead:

What do you worry about?

I am so sorry you are going through this.

It must be hard to have this happen.

We will always be here for you.

I am feeling overwhelmed right now. Can we talk about this later today?

I am so sorry you are feeling tired.

How does it seem to you? Do you think the doctors are right?

I want you here and will miss you terribly. But I will get through somehow.

How would you feel about going out? If it is too much for you we can come straight home.

Let's be sure you get the best medical treatments, but let's be together when we have done all we can.

Can I just sit with you for a while?

Gestures

Simple gestures can also convey love and support during difficult times. Simple gestures can include:

- Small gifts that provide comfort and match their personality.
- Provide music, pictures and other items your loved one enjoys to bring happiness to their hospital room or where they are spending their time.
- Arrange for others to do simple tasks such as cleaning or childcare so you can have special time with your loved one.

The social workers on Huntsman Cancer Institute's Patient and Family Support team are a resource for more information about communicating with loved ones.

Our team is available Monday–Friday from 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-213-5699.
huntsmancancer.org/pfs