

Communication Tips

When a loved one is coping with cancer, communication may be difficult for everyone involved. Stress, anxiety, and depression can make it hard to talk. These suggestions may help:

When Communicating

- Be patient with yourself and others. Allow for mistakes and be forgiving.
- Listen carefully. Be open to other points of view.
- Admit your thoughts and feelings. Be open to having some discomfort. If you feel uncomfortable, you can decide whether to talk about it or let it go.
- Avoid gossip. Speak first-hand and directly with family members.
- Ask permission to vent. If you need to express strong feelings about a situation, make sure those you speak with know you are not blaming them.
- Use “I” messages. Give specific examples such as “I feel... when...”
- Offer regular updates to family members about a loved one’s condition. Use tools such as e-mails, webpages, and the telephone to make information available to everyone.

When Making Decisions

- Include all who will be affected.
- Tell all the important information to help everyone make a good decision.
- Offer time frames when possible.
- Consider both group and individual needs.
- Assume every family member has good intentions.
- Trust family members and close friends.
- Respect each other and praise success.

When Dealing With Conflict

- Stay focused on the present. Let go of issues from the past.
- Listen carefully. Try to see other points of view. This is most important when there is conflict.
- Consider all sides of the problem. Let everyone involved feel their ideas and opinions are valued.
- Avoid judging and labeling right or wrong.
- Try to understand the feelings of people who judge or find fault.
- Take a time-out or suggest talking later if the conflict is getting worse.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help.
- Look for a compromise. If you cannot find a solution, work on letting go.

The social workers of 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.

www.huntsmancancer.org/pfs