

Tips for Communicating with your Partner

Internet version of this handout with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/partner-Peoria>

Your spouse or partner may feel just as scared by your cancer as you do. You both may feel anxious, helpless, or afraid. You may even find it hard to be taken care of by someone you love. Nearly all couples feel more stress than usual when cancer occurs. You and your partner may feel stress about:

- Knowing how to best support each other and how to communicate
- Dealing with new feelings that come up
- Making decisions
- Juggling lots of roles (such as childcare, housekeeping, work, and caregiving)
- Changing their social life
- Changing daily routines
- Not feeling connected sexually or dealing with sexual dysfunction

It helps to know that people express their emotions in different ways and react to stress differently. Some like to talk things out or focus on other people. Others like to focus inward by doing things, such as washing the dishes or fixing things around the house.

Ways to Improve Communication Some couples find it easier to talk about serious issues than other couples. Only you and your partner know how you feel about this. The sections below may help you think about ways to communicate that work for both of you.

Share the Decisions Including your spouse or partner in treatment decisions is important. Together you can meet with your doctor and learn about common symptoms, your treatment choices, and their side effects. This will help you plan for the upcoming weeks and months.

Your Treatment Site may have on site resources, support groups, counselors, or other team members who can help support you and your partner individually or together.

Adapted from National Cancer Institute <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/adjusting-to-cancer/spouse-or-partner>

Help Each Other You may have always been the "strong one" in your family, but now is the time to let your loved one help you. This can be as simple as letting the other person fluff your pillow, bring you a cool drink, or read to you. And in turn, make sure you help your partner. Expressing gratitude lets them know you understand it's a tough time for them too.

Be Open about Stress Some things that cause stress for you and your partner can't be solved right now. And yet sometimes talking about these things can be helpful. Look at the issues that bother you such as dealing with the unknown or feeling a strain between you. You may want to say up front, "I know we can't solve this today. But I'd like to just talk about how it's going and how we're feeling." Getting things out into the open may help you both.

Be a Team You and your partner may need to be a team now more than ever. It may help to think things through together. Talk about what decisions you should make together and which ones you should make alone. You may want to decide what tasks to share and if other people in your life could help with them.

Make Dates Many couples find that it helps to plan special occasions. Some days may end up being better than others, depending on how you or they feel. Be okay with last-minute changes. A date is about spending time together such as watching a movie, going out to eat or for an event, or looking through old photos. It can be whatever you both like to do. You can also plan these dates to include other people, if you miss being around others.

Local Organizations providing support for anyone impacted by cancer:

UnityPoint Health Cancer Support Services	Downtown Peoria	https://www.unitypoint.org/peoria/services-cancer.aspx	309-672-4224
OSF St. Francis Cancer Support Services	Downtown Peoria	https://www.osfhealthcare.org/saint-francis/services/cancer/cancer-support-services/	309-308-0200
Hult Center for Health Living	Central Peoria	https://www.hulthealthy.org/	309-692-6650

Resources for Additional Information:

- [American Cancer Society](#) (800) 227-2345
- [LIVESTRONG](#) (855) 220-7777
- [LIVESTRONG, Communicating With Your Partner](#)
- [Stanford Medicine, When Your Spouse Has Cancer](#) (videos)
- [CancerCare, Online Caregiver Support Group – Spouses/Partners](#)
- [Well Spouse Organization, Support, Sharing, and Social Community](#)
- [NIH, Facing Cancer with Your Spouse or Partner](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Talking With Your Spouse or Partner](#)
- [National LGBT Cancer Network](#)
- [Imerman Angels](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Caregivers and Family](#)

Información Española

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Enfrentar al cáncer con su cónyuge o su pareja](#)