

COMMUNICATION IS A KEY

Living with a medical condition means you may need extra support from the people in your life. Good communication helps improve overall social and emotional health.

But while the idea of communicating with your support system might seem simple, asking for help or talking about your needs can be difficult—you could be uncomfortable discussing the topic, uncertain about how to bring it up, or you just aren't sure who is the best person to talk to. These are all common concerns that can make it hard to have conversations about your needs. Using this guide may help you get more out of your conversations so you can get the support you need.



Step 1 – Start with what you need

When you're looking to have a conversation, it's important to ask yourself what you need from it—what kind of support are you looking to get?



Do you need to ask for a favor? For example, you may need help with day-to-day chores, like folding laundry. If you need to ask for assistance, you can work on being as straightforward as possible when describing what you need help with.



Are you looking to share important news or details about your condition? Sometimes just asking someone to listen can be hard. Keeping in mind what kind of support you need helps you determine how to talk about it or even who to talk to.

Defining *what* you need is one important part of asking for support.
Next, you'll learn how to think about *who* can provide it.



Step 2 – Think about who you're asking



Think about the people in your life and how each of them could provide you support. What you talk to them about probably depends on how close you are. Depending on the relationship, there may be boundaries you want to consider for how you communicate, or even how much you want to share. It's perfectly OK not to open up to everyone.

For example, let's say you want to discuss how your condition is affecting you. Here's what you might consider when having the conversation with these particular people in your life.



YOUR INNER CIRCLE

- Consider this person—whether it's your best friend, spouse, or close family member—as a partner or part of your team when you're discussing your condition.
- Your teammate is here to help share some of the stress and burden of your condition and treatment.
- Consider inviting them to appointments and helping them learn about the details of your condition.



YOUNG CHILDREN

- Whether it's a family member or the curious child of a friend, try to be honest and keep it simple.
- Try to explain that you are sick and seeing a doctor who will do what they can to make you better.



MANAGER

- You may want to tell your manager the facts about your condition so they can understand if your schedule needs to be more flexible.
- You can ask them not to discuss it with others.
- Consider going over your job responsibilities with coworkers and making plans for coverage when out of the office, such as asking them to take notes in a meeting or covering for you if you have to miss work.

Remember, you're the expert on how you are doing. It is up to you to decide who to talk to and how much you want to share. Next, you'll learn about a few communication tips to help you keep your message clear and to the point.



Step 3 – Get your message across

Making small changes to how you communicate can make a difference in how conversations go. Below are 3 common challenges to good communication paired with simple, effective tips to help get your message across.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES



STRESS AND EMOTIONS TAKE OVER

Feeling overwhelmed or stressed can often keep us from sending a clear message. We might unintentionally come across as aggressive or accusatory.

COMMUNICATION TIP



USE "I" STATEMENTS

Use "I feel" or "I need" when you're expressing how things are affecting you. Saying "this conversation is stressful" is different from "I'm feeling stressed during this conversation." Instead, saying "I'm feeling so stressed" lets the listener not feel attacked by the statement but invited to help you through it.



LACK OF CLARITY

Sometimes we make the mistake of assuming people know what we mean. Or we are too general in what we ask, so the helper doesn't know the specific action to take, which might keep us from the result we're hoping for.



BE SPECIFIC

Be specific about the kind of help you need. For example, include the what, when, and where in your statement, like "I need help with a load of laundry tomorrow morning at my house." This allows the other person to know the best way they can support you and prepare for the actions they need to take.



MIXED SIGNALS

Our posture, our tone of voice, how much eye contact we make—these are ways we communicate without even saying a word. If your nonverbal communication is misunderstood, it might be tough to get the right message across.



TAKE A MINUTE

Emotions, like stress, may influence this nonverbal communication. If you feel you might be sending mixed signals, think about ways you could help yourself relax before your next conversation.

When a conversation isn't going how you want, try using "I" statements, being specific, and using nonverbal communication skills. Finally, let's tie everything together and figure out the details for the next time you need to ask for support.

Now put it all together

Once you've figured out what kind of help you need, think about who you should talk to, and how to fix common communication problems using new tips. Think about a conversation you might have, and then go through the activity below.



WHAT do you need?



WHO can help you with this?



HOW will you talk about it? Remember to use the communication tips you learned earlier to help you.

As you plan for conversations, you can also use these tips to help guide you to get the support you need.



Imagine what you need to say beforehand and practice—what you want to say in your head can be different from your natural way of speaking.



If possible, write it down so you can put your words together and retain information.



Schedule time to communicate, and consider what the ideal place is for the conversation: in person, over the phone, or email.

Support starts with good communication

If you have any questions, a Kyowa Kirin Cares nurse is just a phone call away at 833-KK-CARES (833-522-2737) Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 8 PM (ET). For more information, visit www.kyowakirincares.com.



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