Communicating as a family can be difficult when your child has cancer. The following techniques are designed to help reduce stress and conflict when communicating with family members.

**Improving Assertive Communication:** Using assertive communication techniques can help each family member express his/her rights and needs in a way that validates others. In order to communicate assertively, try speaking in CODE:

- **Clarity:** Be clear and specific
- **Own the message:** Use “I” statements
- **Direct your communication:** Deliver your message to the person for whom it is intended
- **Evaluate:** Ask for feedback

**Communicating with Children about Cancer:**
- Provide information when asked
- Acknowledge difficult situations
- Accept their emotions

**Communicating with Partners about Cancer:**
- Involve them in decision-making
- Acknowledge stressors
- Encourage coping strategies

**Identifying Problematic Communication Patterns:** Certain communication styles can lead to family conflict.

- Criticisms (ex. “you never do ______”; “why are you so _______.”)
- Insults (ex. name calling, jokes or sarcasm at the other person’s expense)
- Making Excuses (ex. “it’s not my fault that ______.”)
- Cross-Complaining (ex. responding to another person’s complaint with a complaint of your own)
- Stonewalling (ex. giving the silent treatment or avoiding a person or conversation)