

Family Communication

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
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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)