

Nearly all couples feel more stress than usual when a cancer diagnoses occurs.

You both may feel anxious, helpless, or afraid. Your partner may feel just as scared as you by your cancer. You may even find it hard to be taken care of by someone you love.

People express their emotions in different ways, react to change and stress differently. Find what works for you and your partner, ask for help if you are finding it hard to talk. Some couples find it easier to talk about serious issues than other couples. Some like to talk things out or focus on other people. Others like to focus inward by doing things such as dish washing or fixing things around the house.

Common Communication Challenges:

- Knowing how to best support each other and how to communicate
- Dealing with feelings around decision making
- Juggling roles (such as childcare, housekeeping, work, caregiving)
- Changes in your social life
- Changes in daily routines
- Not feeling connected intimately or dealing with sexual dysfunction

Content adapted from websites below.

Tips for Communicating with your Partner

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/partner>

Tips that may help you and your partner communicate better:

- **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.
- **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:

Cancer Wellness Center	Northern Suburbs	Cancerwellness.org	847-509-9595	Programas en Español
Gilda's Club Chicago	Chicago	Gildasclubchicago.org	312-464-9900	Programas en Español
Living Well Cancer Resource Center	Far West Suburbs	Livingwellcrc.org	630-262-1111	
The Cancer Support Center	South Suburbs	CancerSupportCenter.org	708-798-9171	
Wellness House in Chicago	Northwest & West Suburbs	Wellnesshouse.org	630-323-5150	

Access an interactive map of these local resources at: <http://cancer-help.me/communitycancerresourcecenters>

Resources for Additional Information:

- [LIVESTRONG, Communicating With Your Partner](#)
- [Stanford Medicine, When Your Spouse Has Cancer](#) (videos)
- [CancerCare, Online Caregiver/Partner Support Groups](#)
- [Well Spouse Organization, Support/Social Community](#)
- [NIH, Facing Cancer with Your Spouse or Partner](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Talking With Your Spouse or Partner](#)
- [National LGBT Cancer Network](#)

➤ [Triage Cancer, Using Communication to Build Stronger Relationships](#)

➤ [American Cancer Society, When Someone You Know Has Cancer](#)

Recursos en Español:

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

➤ [Cancer.Net, Diálogo con su cónyuge o pareja](#)