

to
My
Soul

Building a Support Network

(Family, Friends, and Caregivers)

02

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Help patients effectively communicate their diagnosis and build a strong support system with family, friends, and caregivers.

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can feel isolating, but it's important to remember that **you don't have to go through this alone.** Your support network is essential to helping you navigate the emotional and physical challenges of this pathway. It's not just about asking for help — it's about creating meaningful connections with those who care about you.

The Importance of a Support Network:

A strong support system can provide emotional strength, practical assistance, and companionship. Whether it's **family, friends, or caregivers,** these individuals can help you feel less isolated and more empowered. **Their presence** can also reduce stress and contribute to a more positive outlook on your treatment and recovery. →

family
+ my friends



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TYPES OF SUPPORT

Emotional

This includes listening, offering empathy, and simply being there when you need to talk to or be with someone.

Physical

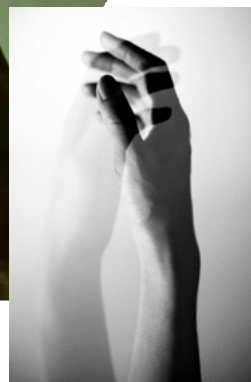
Help with daily tasks, transportation, or accompanying you to appointments can alleviate the burden of treatment-related activities.

Practical

Managing finances, arranging meals, or helping with household chores are ways others can help ease your physical load.

Social

Connecting with others who understand your experience can be vital. Support groups or online communities offer shared experiences and provide an additional layer of emotional comfort.



ask for it!!

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be clear!

HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS

CLEARLY EXPRESSING YOUR NEEDS IS KEY TO BUILDING A NETWORK THAT TRULY SUPPORTS YOU. DON'T BE AFRAID TO LET OTHERS KNOW WHAT YOU NEED, WHETHER IT'S SOMEONE TO TALK TO, ASSISTANCE WITH DAILY TASKS, OR SPACE FOR REST. IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR SPECIFIC KINDS OF HELP, SUCH AS:



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"I need someone to come with me to my next doctor's appointment."

It would help me a lot if someone could cook me a meal."

Can you help me organize my treatment schedule?"

It's important to be clear, but also compassionate in how you communicate—your loved ones may not always know what you need unless you tell them. If you're used to managing everything on your own, asking for help can feel difficult or even uncomfortable. However, it's essential to remember that reaching out is not a sign of weakness, but rather a way to share the load and allow others to support you during a challenging time.

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NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

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Talking about your diagnosis with family and friends can be tough. You might feel vulnerable or worry about their reactions. Consider having a „**safe person**“ for these conversations — someone you trust who already knows about your diagnosis. Whether it's a friend, family member, or colleague, this person **can provide emotional support and help guide or navigate discussions** with others, making these moments feel less overwhelming. Here are some strategies:

Be honest, but take things at your own pace.

Share as much or as little as you're comfortable with.

Prepare for mixed reactions.

Some people may feel helpless, unsure of what to say, or even react in ways that feel unpleasant. It's important to remember that these reactions are often not about you, but about their own fears—fear of loss, pain, or the challenges of dealing with illness. Setting realistic expectations and providing space for others' emotions can help. If you can, try to „normalize“ these conversations, understanding that the reactions of others reflect their own struggles, not your value or worth.

Create a safe space for open dialogue.

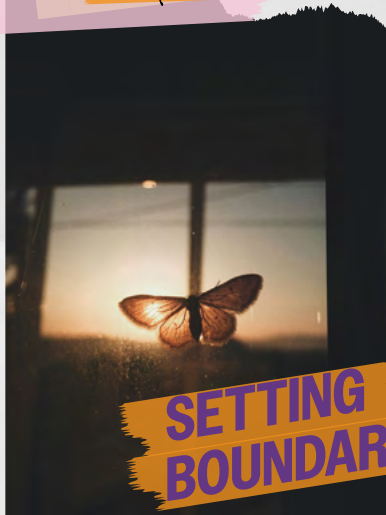
Once you're ready, encourage your loved ones to ask questions and share their feelings, but don't be afraid to set boundaries if conversations become overwhelming.



more for
strong reactions!

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let them know!



Setting boundaries is essential to your emotional well-being. You may need time for yourself or specific kinds of support that **others may not realize**. Be clear about what you can handle and what you need.

Physical boundaries

Let people know if you need rest and space, especially during intense treatment periods.

Time boundaries

Let your friends and family know when you need support or time alone, and don't hesitate to ask for breaks.

Emotional boundaries

It's okay to limit the emotional weight of certain conversations. If a topic feels too overwhelming, feel free to redirect it.

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

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Caring for a loved one can be **incredibly rewarding**, but it can also take a physical, emotional, and mental toll. It's important to **recognize** when you need **support** and to allow others to step in when needed. Here are some more tips to help you maintain balance:

REMEMBER, TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF ENSURES THAT YOU CAN CONTINUE TO BE THERE FOR YOUR LOVED ONE WHEN THEY NEED YOU MOST.



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Set boundaries.

Understand your limits and communicate them clearly. It's okay to say no when you need to take care of yourself.

Delegate tasks.

Share caregiving duties with family members or seek professional help to ease the load.

Practice stress relief.

Find activities that relax you and recharge your energy, such as reading, meditation, or exercise.

Acknowledge and accept your emotions.

It's easy to slip into autopilot, focusing only on the tasks at hand and pushing your feelings aside. But your emotions matter, too. Ignoring them can lead to frustration, stress, or even physical health issues—and it might leave your loved ones feeling unseen or disconnected. Take a moment to acknowledge what you're feeling, whether it's sadness, anger, or even peace. Giving yourself permission to feel isn't a weakness, it's a way to stay connected both to yourself and to the person for whom you're caring for.

Stay connected.

Keep in touch with friends and engage in hobbies, and interests that bring you joy to avoid isolation. It's important to recognize that caregivers often experience feelings of guilt when taking time for themselves or stepping away from their caregiving role, even briefly. However, prioritizing personal well-being through hobbies, social connections, or activities is not a luxury—it's a vital part of sustaining the ability to provide care. If caregivers haven't had hobbies before, this could be an opportunity to discover something new that recharges their spirit. Taking personal time helps caregivers maintain their energy, sense of self, and emotional resilience, ultimately benefiting both them and the person for whom they are caring. Remember, self-care is not selfish—it's a cornerstone of compassionate caregiving.

Seek professional guidance.

Don't hesitate to talk to a counsellor or therapist if you're feeling overwhelmed. It's important to have space to process your emotions.



Affir- ma- tions

I am open to receiving support from those who care about me.

It is okay to ask for help and communicate my needs.

I can set boundaries to protect my energy and emotional well-being.

I am building a network of love, understanding, and support.

I am grateful for my family, caregivers and loved ones who are with me on this pathway.

