

TALKING TO YOUR ADULT CHILD ABOUT THEIR DIAGNOSIS

No one wants to hear bad news and certainly no one wants to hear bad news about their adult child. Finding out that your child has a serious illness like breast cancer or ovarian cancer is difficult. It is hard to accept that you cannot control your adult child's cancer. However, how you react to this challenge and how you support your child is very much in your control.

There are three areas that influence positive communication with adult children to assure that you will be accepted and not misunderstood. These important areas are self-awareness, boundaries, and practice saying it right.

SELF-AWARENESS

The best way to increase the effectiveness of communication with your adult child is to better understand how your child hears you. If you have not done so, consider thinking about how you are coming across to others.

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries between parents and their children change as the child grows up. The pull towards independence and the opposing desire to be cared for require new skills for both parent and adult child. There are various challenges that a parent may face when helping their child through an illness, such as getting used to not being the first to know everything, no longer being the next of kin legally, and not receiving all the health information. Asking for permission to help and deferring to a spouse or partner are essential.



TALKING TO YOUR ADULT CHILD ABOUT THEIR DIAGNOSIS

PRACTICE SAYING IT RIGHT

Talking is not the same thing as communication. Communicating implies listening and understanding which can be tough in a tense situation. Practicing what you will say will help in stressful situations and your approach to communication will determine whether your input is accepted, tolerated, or rejected. Three important communication skills that are essential to understanding this are: a soft approach, silence and listening, and dependability.

A Soft Approach

- Lead with a positive comment
- Say what you mean clearly
- Paraphrase what your child has said to check you understood

Silence and Listening

- Listen without offering advice and without interruption
- Listen fully and with attention to show caring and respect
- Pay attention and do not think about what you are going to say next

Dependability

- Show up and be present. If you say you are going to do something, follow through
- Your presence is comforting and builds trust; when your presence can be relied upon, worry about things can be shared