

STARTING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

CHRONIC ILLNESS OR INJURY

What do you do when a friend or family member has been diagnosed with a chronic health condition or become disabled as a result of injury? Saying that you understand, may not always be appropriate. So what do you say?

What do you do? It is important to remember that chronic illnesses and injuries affect everyone differently. Some people spend each day struggling to move forward with life as illness takes away many aspects of the lives they once knew; others strive to make the best of each day, capitalizing on every opportunity and remaining optimistic about their futures.

TIPS ON STARTING THE CONVERSATION AND PROVIDING SUPPORT

- Check in: reach out and check in with that friend or family member just to let them know you care (text, call, email, Facebook messaging).
- Listen: try not to relate by using examples from your own life in a way that marginalizes their current pain, challenge or victory. Do not give unsolicited advice, testimonials, and judgments.
- Be flexible: remember, it is not what you do, but who does it with you. If your friend or family member is no longer able to do the things he/she used to do, be flexible.
- Learn about the illness/injury: know what triggers flares, how typical symptoms present, warning signs, complications, and coping strategies associated with their illness or disability.
- Do not join the pity party: instead, offer words of encouragement. Help practice positivity for each day and eliminate negative self-talk.
- Support versus enforcement: support healthy habits that aid the illness/injury; quickly let go of the “not so good choices” without criticism, and move forward.
- Be present: show up in person to spend time versus an online presence. Attend appointments if possible.
- Acceptance and change: accept who they are now and that who they used to be has changed as far as physical abilities and lifestyle habits, but their heart is still the same.
- The long haul: chronic illness is chronic and physical disability/injury is permanent; be aware and be available for the duration.

REMAIN POSITIVE

“...there is one aspect of the self that even my disease cannot touch and that is the soul. I remain spiritually whole, comfortable in the knowledge that my life still matters both to the patients I treated, the family I have raised, and the family I have, by second marriage, adopted. And that is where hope lives; not a naïve hope that I will, by some miracle, have my former self restored, but hope that tomorrow, and the day after, can still be days from which a measure of joy and meaning can be derived. And from hope springs optimism that, even with great limitations, there is life to be lived.” - Dr. Thomas B. Graboys

SUPPORT & RESOURCES

www.HealingWell.com
<https://invisible disabilities.org>

