



## COMMUNICATING AS A CAREGIVER

For both patient and caregiver, a cancer diagnosis means the beginning of many new relationships—with doctors, nurses, and other members of the treatment team. It can also change relationships you already have. These tips can help you openly communicate with the people in your life.

### Talking to your loved one's treatment team

#### **Bring a List of Questions to Appointments**

Before appointments, prepare a list of questions for the treatment team. It's easy to get distracted during an appointment and forget a question or concern. Remember that every question is valuable.

#### **Take Notes During Appointments**

Bring a notebook and pen to help you remember information from your appointment. Or ask your treatment team for permission to record the appointment with a phone or audio recorder. Repeat back what you have written down to make sure it is correct.

#### **Make Sure the Team Knows What Your Treatment Goals Are**

It is important for your team to know about you and your loved one's treatment expectations. What are your goals for treatment? Are they the same as your treatment team's goals? Open communication will ensure that your loved one's wants and needs are honored.

#### **Connect with Mental Health Specialists**

Ask the doctor or nurse how to connect with the social workers, psychologists, and other specialists on the treatment team. At first, you may not feel you need their services, but this may change over time. It is never too late to ask.

#### **Address Financial Concerns**

If you have questions or concerns about financing treatment, contact your hospital's financial counseling office or consult the National Cancer Institute's financial resources fact sheet at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

### Talking to your loved one

#### **Discuss Your Relationship Openly**

Be honest and say what is on your mind and invite your loved one to be open with you. Let them know you are always there to listen. Be kind and patient with each other.

#### **Empower Your Loved One**

It is important to give your loved one space to make their own decisions about their treatment and day-to-day life. It can be helpful to discuss who will make each medical decision ahead of time. In every instance, make sure your loved one's intentions and preferences come first.

#### **Be Understanding of Changes in Physical and Emotional Intimacy**

Treatment may affect your partner's body, emotions, and their interest in sex. Social workers can help you communicate openly about changes in your intimate relationship.

### [Specific Resources at Mass General Cancer Center](#)

#### **Maxwell V. Blum Support and Education Hub**

The Hub, located outside of Yawkey 7B, is the home of the Blum Cancer Resource Program. Recognizing that cancer can affect your mind, spirit, and soul as well as your body, the Hub is designed to meet a range of patients' and caregivers' unique needs: emotional, social, spiritual, informational, and practical. Here, you have access to an experienced cancer care team. An Oncology Social Worker, Nurse Educator, and Health Educator will welcome you to a caring community and guide you towards available Cancer Center programs and services to help you maintain balance and well-being.

You are welcome to drop by the Hub Monday-Friday, 10am – 4pm.



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### **Oncology Social Work**

At Mass General Cancer Center, free oncology social work services are provided to patients and caregivers. Oncology social workers provide support, counseling and information about helpful resources. They also lead diagnosis-specific support groups. To reach out to a licensed counselor with experience working with cancer patients and their families, ask your care provider to connect you with the social worker on your team.

### **Spiritual Care**

Private and confidential services are provided to patients and caregivers of all traditions and backgrounds who are seeking spiritual support or connection. There are also Spiritual Wellness workshops offered at various times in the out-patient setting. For more information, ask your care provider or call 617-724-4018 to speak with our Oncology Chaplain.

### **Patient Experience (Px)**

The Cancer Center's patient experience website is designed to guide you and your loved one through the treatment process and connect you with all the resources available to you, from maps of the hospital's campus to support and educational services and integrative therapies. For more information, go to [massgeneralcancercenterpx.org](http://massgeneralcancercenterpx.org)