

Talking to Someone with Cancer

For those of us supporting a loved one or a coworker with cancer, it can be difficult to know what to say. These tips will help you feel more comfortable speaking to them. But always remember, the most important thing is to be present, listen, and follow their lead.

Do

Show your concern.

Try: *"I'm sorry that you're going through this."* Or: *"If you need to talk, I'm available."*

Empathize, but avoid pity.

For example: *"I'm sure this is tough to deal with."*

Worry less about what to say and focus more on listening. It's the best way to get information without worrying about what you can and cannot ask.

Don't

Don't try to cheer them up. It's natural to want to say, *"You'll be OK."* But you don't know if that's true.

Don't brush off feelings by telling them not to be scared or anxious.

Don't tell the person you understand how they feel. You don't know — even if you've had cancer. No two cancer journeys are the same.

Don't share stories. Sharing other's stories shifts attention away and minimizes what they have to say.

Don't say: *"Let me know how I can help."*

They are too overwhelmed to manage you. Instead, offer specific suggestions, such as delivering meals, running errands, or driving them to treatment.

If you are managing an employee with cancer

It's your job to find out how their illness will affect their job performance.

Without asking specific questions you can clarify ability to work. For example: *"How might your treatment impact your work?"*

Make the point that you're a team and open to their suggestions.

You might say: *"Let's take a look at what's on your plate and how we can handle it."*

If you see changes over time, it's best to address them gently but directly.

For example: *"I know this is a very difficult time. Let's talk about how I can better help you with your workload."*

If you are facing a cancer diagnosis or supporting a loved one with cancer, Navvisa will guide you on this journey with expertise from a dedicated oncology nurse. This service is **provided to you at no cost.**

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