



# PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DISCUSSING YOUR SERIOUS ILLNESS OR INJURY

Your serious illness or injury.

Summoning the courage to share information about your serious illness or injury with your loved ones can be difficult and challenging. Many people are unsure about what to say or what they should include.

The following practical tips have helped people to share news about their illness or injury with those closest to them, whether face to face or via another channel:



## Check your own understanding of the diagnosis.

How sure are you and your doctors about the diagnosis? Is the diagnosis definite, or is it still provisional? If provisional, what needs to happen next so that it can be certain? Many people don't want to worry their loved ones about a health concern that 'may be nothing.' On the other hand, some people find it helpful to share news as they receive it.



## Consider the following while preparing for the meeting with your loved ones:

- **Who** would you like to talk with? Decide whether the meeting will be family only, or if you would like to invite a nurse, social worker, counsellor or other professional with you. Also consider whether it's appropriate to invite young children at this time or at a later date. Alternatively, you might like to tell one person who takes on the role of letting other friends and family know about your diagnosis. They could be the spokesperson for sharing information, fielding questions and providing updates on you and your condition as well as coordinate care arrangements for you. When ready, consider the appropriateness of sharing your news with the wider community. Be it via social media or other channels.
- **What** do you want to discuss? Focus on your illness or injury, specifically the diagnosis you've received.
- **When** are you going to meet? Select a time and date to share the news. Invite and gather those that you want to tell first.
- **Where** are you going to meet? Choose somewhere that's quiet and where you feel comfortable.
- **Why** did you arrange the meeting? The 'why' is unique for every person.
- **How** are you going to tell them? Additional resources can make sharing your diagnosis with loved ones easier. The Fact Sheet given to you by your specialist or doctor could be useful to copy and share with your loved ones so that they can also have a firm understanding of your illness.



**Take the time** to ensure that every person has a shared understanding of the diagnosis, the treatment options and the prognosis. Don't assume that everyone will have the same understanding of your illness experience that you have.



**It's alright if you don't have all the answers.** Have a pen and paper at hand to write a list of questions that you can ask your treating professionals at your next appointment.



**Agree a time limit before the discussion starts.** Having difficult discussions can be exhausting and drain emotional and physical strength. Taking a short break or agreeing to reconvene at another time often can lead to a better outcome in the longer term.

# MY MEETING WORKSHEET

Having some structure prepared prior to the meeting can help ease the pressure and help clarify your thoughts and objectives prior to the meeting. This worksheet could help.

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

My support team: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Key points for discussion

My diagnosis:

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My treatment plan:

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How am I feeling:

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How you can help:

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Next steps/follow up:

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Notes:

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