



Communication skills with children

What should we tell our children when a family member is diagnosed, and their treatment no longer works? Here below are a few suggestions:

1. Honesty is the crucial

You will need to provide your children an accurate and honest description of the person's health conditions, based on the extent they know about said disease and treatments. If you have more than one child, you can first tell your older child about the news, so they can help explaining it to your younger children.

2. Children process information differently than adults

Regular communication is essential for helping children comprehend the information. Don't be concerned if your children request to play or engage in activities after hearing the news. It is entirely normal for children to react this way, and it does not necessarily indicate a lack of understanding regarding the situation.

3. Bravely stating the name of the diagnosis

It is important to be open and honest about the specific diagnosis with your children. They may come across the name of the diagnosis through various sources and explaining it to them will help them feel more connected to the family and build trust.

4. Letting your children understand the current health condition of the individual

Keep your children informed about any updates regarding the individual's health condition, even if you don't fully understand it yourself. Sharing information, within their capacity to comprehend, can provide them with a sense of inclusion and help them navigate the situation.

5. Addressing their questions

If your children ask you a question to which you don't know the answer, be truthful with them. Let them know that you will do your best to find the answer they seek.

6. Including them in treatment plans

Depending on the age and maturity of your children, you can involve them in discussions about treatment plans. This can help them feel included and allow them to provide input or support in ways that are appropriate for their age and abilities.

7. Removing their worries through telling the truth and related experiences

To alleviate their concerns, consider inviting your children to medical centers or hospitals to learn more about diseases. You can also find online videos related to the topic, allowing them to mentally prepare before visiting such places.

8. Discussing the cause of the disease

Assure your children that they are not responsible for causing the disease and that it is not contagious (if applicable). Help them understand that it is not their fault and that they cannot "catch" the illness.

9. Encouraging questions

Older children and teenagers may have questions they'd like to ask medical and healthcare professionals. Encourage them to express their curiosity and seek answers from reliable sources.

10. Giving them space to process emotions

Let your children know that you are willing to discuss and share your thoughts on anything. Guide them on appropriate ways to express negative emotions and provide a safe space for open communication.

11. Expressing your own emotions.

Setting an example for your children by expressing your own emotions can help them understand that it is normal to have different feelings. Show them how to express emotions appropriately and cope with difficult situations.

12. Encouraging them to talk with trusted individuals

Some children may feel apprehensive about discussing their feelings with the patient or worrying them. Encourage them to seek support and talk to people they trust, such as family members, friends, or child life specialists.

13. Maintaining a regular daily routine

Sticking to a regular daily routine can provide a sense of stability and security for your children. If there are any changes to the routine, communicate those changes clearly, such as informing them that Grandma will be picking them up from school for the week.

14. Allow children to play

Assure your children that they can still engage in play and carry out their daily activities, even when a family member is facing a severe diagnosis. Play and age-appropriate activities can be a source of comfort and normalcy.

15. Promise your children that no matter what happens, they will be cared for

Promise your children that they will be cared for, regardless of what happens. Make arrangements for their safety and well-being when sudden hospital visits or caregiving responsibilities arise.

16. Let your children help you out

If necessary, involve your children in handling some aspects related to the disease. However, be mindful not to burden them with excessive responsibilities or tasks beyond their capabilities.

17. Observing behavioural changes

Pay attention to any changes in your children's eating habits, hobbies, or sleep quality.

18. Informing the school

Inform the school about the family situation, as it may impact your children's performance and well-being. This allows teachers and staff to provide appropriate support and understanding.

19. Connecting with others who have similar experiences

If possible, help your children connect with peers who have gone through similar situations. This can help them realise they are not alone and provide a support network.

20. Be prepared to talk about difficult topics

Be prepared to discuss challenging topics, including death. Children may ask questions about mortality, and it's important to keep an open mind and provide honest answers. For instance, you can explain that while some people do die from certain illnesses, many patients also recover. If you have a terminal illness, you can explain short-term changes in your health and assure them that you will keep them informed.

Source: [Wonders and Worries](#)