

Talking to teenagers

Considerations when approaching difficult conversations



Supporting you...



Teenagers like to know

You may be worried about telling your teenage children about the diagnosis, your instinct being to protect them from being upset. You may also not feel quite ready to talk about it yourself. However, evidence shows that everyone, no matter what age, likes to know what is happening. People will always sense that something is going on otherwise and this can cause them to feel insecure or frightened.

Trust them, help them feel safe

Explaining the situation shows you trust your children with important information. It could also help to make you both feel closer. Try to talk to them as soon as possible, and allocate enough time and space to really talk, and so that they can voice their fears and worries and ask questions.

Make them feel safe; share your feelings too and be open and honest. Talk to them like an adult and invite their questions. Teens can look for information themselves and will ask other people, search the internet and read stories and case studies, which will all be different and possibly confusing. Being clear about your unique situation may help to make things feel less unsettling. Be available to answer questions at any time.

Understanding responses

Try not to have expectations of how your child 'should' respond. Whilst we all react differently to news, teenager responses may seem particularly strange - they may react with anger or seem distant or disinterested, they may think it's not okay to cry or find it embarrassing or too painful to express emotions.

Teenagers may also feel guilty that they want to just be with their friends or go out and have a good time. Explain that this is okay but also keep life as normal as possible by sticking to normal routines.

Give them time

Be patient and just give them time to process the new information. You may find that they find it easier to talk to their friends or with another adult, than with you. If there is another adult in their life (grandparent, uncle, close friend etc) that they trust, ensure this person is aware of the situation and encourage them to also support your child.

Read more...

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School, college or university

Teenagers may not want to be seen as different from their friends, but it may be important that certain people outside the family know, like school or further education teachers. This may be particularly key if they are doing exams or difficult coursework. Being aware of the situation can help teachers understand possible changes in behaviour or performance, be understanding and provide extra support.

However, before approaching their school or college, speak to your teenager first. They may not want people to know, as this may be a place where things still feel 'normal'. Asking them will make them feel that you are telling them everything and including them.

Needing to know more

As teenagers will naturally research and seek out information and answers, it can help to point them in the direction of trustworthy resources from the start. If you are asked a question that upsets you or you don't know the answer, just say you need to think about it and come back to it later. But make sure you do!

A sense of normality

Not everything should change. Make sure your teens are keeping up with their friendships and usual activities as much as possible and give them time and space to be themselves. However, try to stick to normal routines, rules and limits – these can create a sense of stability and be even more important now than before.

Explain that you may need, and would be grateful for, extra help with things like cooking, tidying up or looking after younger children. Be specific and write a list. Letting them help shows that you need and trust them. However, be careful to not over load them with too much. Reassure them you do not expect them to do everything, and that people will care for them too. Make sure how they appreciate them.

Useful resources and help

What to say: <https://hopesupport.org.uk/parent-resources>

Free support: Brain Tumour Support offers a FREE support service, including one-to-one emotional support, counselling and support groups.

**We are here
to help you**



Contact us: 01454 422701
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