

Tips for Care Partners: Getting the Conversation Flowing

Open-ended questions will give you much more information than yes/no questions. Try asking questions like:

- ♦ “What’s going on with your diabetes care now?”
- ♦ “What are you most concerned about this week?”

Reflective comments help someone know that you are really trying to understand what they’re saying and encourage them to tell you more. You are really focusing on them and trying to put yourself in ‘their shoes’. Reflecting your partner’s statements doesn’t mean you agree, but it gives you both a chance to make sure you are understanding what the patient is trying to tell you. You might try using phrases like:

- ♦ “It sounds to me like you're feeling...”
- ♦ “Let me know if I’ve got this right, you tried to...”
- ♦ “It seems like you thought that it was really difficult to...”



Marcus Aurelius (photographer). Lovely Couple Smiling [Digital image]. Retrieved from [//www.pexels.com/photo/lovely-couple-smiling-while-looking-at-each-other-6787758](https://www.pexels.com/photo/lovely-couple-smiling-while-looking-at-each-other-6787758)

Tips for Care Partners: For a Positive and Helpful Conversation

One of the best things you can do to help is to LISTEN. It may not seem like much, but listening to your partner can often help them to be clear about what they are feeling. Sometimes just being able to talk with another person (like you) can help a person with diabetes think through what they need to do.

Listening to your partner can help them see what steps they can take to improve their health, and it can help you realize how you might help them.

It's sometimes easy to be critical if your partner doesn't follow through with their plan, or doesn't change in ways that would help them manage their diabetes better. However, if you criticize, judge, or ridicule someone with a chronic illness, that can make them feel discouraged. Having diabetes can be frustrating, so it's important that you do your best to encourage your partner whenever you can.



Kampus Production (photographer. Bench Man. [Digital image]. Retrieved from // www.pexels.com/photo/bench-man-couple-love-6838536

Try to accept that your partner is the one responsible for their diabetes care choices and actions. People tend to be more successful at living healthier when they feel that their motivation comes from within themselves, and they are free to choose what they feel are the best ways to stay healthy.

DO:

- ◆ Ask for your partner's ideas for ways to solve problems before offering your own.
- ◆ Offer your ideas as choices, instead of telling your partner what to do.
- ◆ Congratulate your partner for trying to change, even if they are not successful.
- ◆ Congratulate them for the changes they do make, no matter how small.
- ◆ Acknowledge that managing diabetes can be frustrating when they are having difficulties.
- ◆ Try to really understand what they are feeling and going through before offering any suggestions of things they might do.



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DON'T:

- ◆ Don't criticize or be judgmental – your role is to listen, to encourage, to be available, to help remember, to troubleshoot, to be regular and consistent, and simply to be involved!
- ◆ Don't “take over.” Sometimes you may feel that it would be easier if you did things yourself, rather than allowing your partner to take action. But this won't help your patient-partner in the long run. The best strategy is to be a helper, not the boss.
- ◆ Don't tell your partner what to do – make suggestions, but ultimately it's their decision.

Examples of Supportive Care Partner Comments

DO express empathy and concern

- ♦ “I appreciate how hard it is for you to think about walking again today.

DO offer choices

- ♦ “Would you like me to help plan the menu for this week?”
- ♦ “What are some ways that you think might help you remember to take that evening dose of medicine?bout walking again today.

DO acknowledge accomplishments, even small ones

- ♦ “It’s great that you tried. Remember, even small steps can get you where you need to be over time.”

DO help with problem solving

- ♦ “This is the second time that you have run out of that diabetes medication. What ideas do you have about how to keep that from happening again?”

When you suggest changes, explain why

- ♦ “Remember, the doctor explained that sugars going up over a short time means that you may be getting sick. When your sugars are that high we need to call the doctor’s office to let them know. They may tell you to take extra insulin or check your sugars more often until they are back to normal.”

AVOID language that is controlling, criticizing, or guilt provoking

- ♦ Say: “Your doctor said that checking your sugar every day is an important way to keep track of your health. How are you feeling about that?”
(NOT: “You know the doctor told you to check your sugar every day! I don’t know why you won’t do what he says!”)