

Support for caregivers and advocates



Caring for someone with ALK+ NSCLC can be stressful, and at times can leave you feeling isolated and angry. You may not know what to do or where to turn to. This support guide provides some tips on how to deal with the situation to give your friend or loved one the best support possible, while making sure you are still living your life well.

Be open, honest and empathetic

It's important to talk openly and honestly with the person you are caring for, whether that be a family member or friend.

Although you may not want to show the person you're caring for that you're upset, talking can help you understand how they're feeling, which is crucial for maintaining your relationship. As well as this, talking together can help you understand exactly how you can help them, and how you can form a

plan together. It can also help you know when to support them, and when to give them space.

You must be prepared to talk to the person you're caring for. They're likely to turn to you first for emotional support and may want to discuss certain things with you. You may not have all the answers (and that's okay), but you can listen and reassure them. Sometimes all it takes is a hug.

Pick the right times and plan beforehand

Planning what you want to say beforehand, or even writing things down, can help keep the conversation on track and avoid it becoming overly focused on emotions.

As well as this, timing important conversations for when you are both feeling calm and relaxed can help prevent any arguments and keep your relationship as normal as possible.

Talk to others

While caring for someone can take up a lot of your time and energy, it's vital to keep a sense of normality and see other people where possible.

Talking to others about how you feel can help make the situation easier to deal with. In fact, people close to you can help support you and ease the pressure of caring.

You may feel that some friends have distanced themselves from you. This may be because some people simply don't know what to say. They may believe you don't want to talk about their diagnosis, and so will avoid bringing the situation up. If this is the case but you do actually want to talk to them, don't be afraid to start the conversation.

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Nurture your relationship

If the person you are caring for is your partner, you may face additional challenges. Being understanding and supportive are key to nurturing your relationship, but there are also other things to consider.

Trying to keep everything as normal as possible can help your relationship thrive. This involves keeping some kind of routine going, and ensuring that you don't change who you are around your loved one.

As well as this, it's good to let your loved one know that they are still in charge; you're just there to support them along the way. Letting your partner know this can help keep them from losing their self-esteem, which in turn can help your relationship.

Look after yourself

When you're caring for someone, you may at times forget to put yourself first – but this is essential. Some tips for looking after yourself are outlined below:

- Don't take on other people's issues. For example, if you are the main caregiver in your family, it's important not to get weighed down by other family members' concerns
- If you are struggling to keep on top of your responsibilities, make a list of things you have to deal with in order of priority (you may find this helps relieve some stress too!)
- Look after yourself and have time out to relax
- Eat well and be active, ensuring you get enough sleep
- Tell your employer about the situation, so that they can make any reasonable adjustments to your role and schedule
- Talk to your doctor; caregiver burnout can become a medical concern for those who are caring for someone, so it's important to seek assistance when you need to