

# Heart Attack, Heart Surgery and Stroke Patient Communication



## Communicating with a heart attack or heart surgery patient

Clinical depression is not uncommon while recovering from a heart attack, heart surgery or a stroke, as it is difficult to adjust to the necessary lifestyle changes. Keeping some special considerations in mind will help when communicating with someone who has suffered a heart attack or a stroke, or a patient recovering from heart surgery.

- Accept that your roles may be temporarily reversed.
- Be supportive in making necessary lifestyle changes to prevent a reoccurrence or complication.
- Expect your loved one to have actively changing emotions along with possible fears of death.
- Allow ample time to adjust.
- Take the time to simply listen to what your loved one is feeling.
- Be sure to express how you feel in return.
- Make future plans and help your loved one start “living” again.
- When speaking, try to use “I” statements rather than “you” statements, such as “I feel frustrated” rather than “You make me feel frustrated.”

*Continued on reverse →*

## Communicating with a stroke survivor

- Keep in mind that it may be difficult for your loved one to speak clearly due to effects from the stroke.
- Accept whatever form of communication works for your loved one, even if it is simply making hand gestures.
- Educate yourself on your loved one's condition through information from the doctor, online resources and support groups so that you better understand what he/she may be experiencing.
- Join a support group, whether that be online or in person, to learn how others have dealt with communication issues.
- Be a good and patient listener.
- If communication is an issue, talk more slowly, not more loudly.
- Never "talk down" to your loved one.
- It is common for stroke survivors to experience strong emotions. Seek help from a professional if emotions become too much to handle.

