

Recommendations
for anyone involved
in a conversation

Talking with young people about serious matters

Communication about difficult topics is not something that can be avoided, but the approach and attitude can make a difference.

#1 BE AT EYE LEVEL

Physically and symbolically.

#2 APPRECIATE

Show willingness to enter the young persons world, try to accept their reality as they see it and hear their fears and their losses as they feel them. Appreciate their points of view – don't judge or underestimate them.

#3 INVOLVE

Give young people a voice: Talk TO, not ABOUT them! Encourage age-appropriate, active participation.

#4 LISTEN

Listen carefully: WHAT is being said HOW? Especially at untypical times & unexpected places.

#5 ADAPT LANGUAGE

Use gentle & careful language oriented to the DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE of the young person. Consider both verbal & nonverbal communication.



e.g. eye contact, personal space

#6 RESPECT EMOTIONS

Take emotions seriously. Name emotions, respect them, don't minimize.



Find more information on: beatcancer.eu



Contact/Notes



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#7 BE SINCERE

Young people expect honest answers to honest questions in order to build trust.

#8 SHOW OPENNESS

Signal that all questions are good & welcome. Be open to discuss difficult topics instead of making them taboo. Pay attention to small signals.

*e.g. What do you already know?
What and how much do you want to know?
What exactly are you worried about?*

#9 ORIENT YOURSELF TO QUESTIONS

Be guided by questions from the young people. They naturally seek the amount of information that is right for them in order to feel safe. Don't over- or underchallenge.

It is okay to be overwhelmed and look for help when communicating.

#10 GIVE SPACE & TIME

Offer a protected, age-appropriate environment. Consider attention span and give time to process. Schedule multiple sequential conversations.

#11 USE TOOLS

Provide books, drawings, applications, visual models, etc. to encourage understanding and processing in order to support informed and shared decision making.

#12 PLAN & ACT

Discuss concrete next steps & plan together to ensure self-efficacy and healthy coping. Give confidence & security.

#13 INVOLVE FAMILY & SOCIAL NETWORK

Open communication has proven to be a protective factor for everybody involved. A trusted person can be a valuable source of support during difficult conversations.

