



Difficult Conversations



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Talking to Your Child About Their Disability

- **Start Small:** Information doesn't have to be shared in one big dump, and your child's special needs never have to be a secret. From the very start, give your child a name for the thing that makes some stuff harder and some stuff special. For very young kids, you can introduce a storybook element, a monster or a troll or a dragon with a name like that diagnosis that your child must tame or battle.

Talking to Your Child About Their Disability

- **Tell Stories:** Stories can work in another way, too, as you may find childrens books about your child's disability to share. They can provide you with some good language to use in explaining a complicated disorder, and also prove to your child that other kids wrestle with the same issues. If such a book doesn't exist for your child's particular disability, try creating your own.

Talking to Your Child About Their Disability

- **Find Role Models:** Knowing other people with the same disability makes the diagnosis much less spooky and isolating. While inclusion is important, it can also be valuable for your child to spend time with other kids with special needs, as well as with older kids and adults who provide living answers to the question of "what will happen to me?"

Talking to Your Child About Their Disability

- **Get Your Story Straight:** If Mom and Dad have different ideas as to how the child should be told, work it out between you before you have any sort of talk. Mixed signals may be worse than no signals at all, and your child may pick up any tension between the two of you and interpret as his or her fault. As grown-ups, you have the responsibility to figure this out.

Talking to Your Child About Their Disability

- **Accentuate the Positive:** Though you might wish your child didn't have to deal with disability, don't describe it as a tragedy. Since your child is living with this day in and day out, he or she likely knows what's hard and needs you to shine a light on the brighter side. Be sure to discuss strengths as well as weaknesses, abilities as well as dis-.

Talking to Your Child About Their Disability

- **Follow Your Child's Lead:** There's no one perfect time to talk to your child about his or her disability. Some kids may have questions earlier than others. Some may seek only a simple definition and others may want more depth. Every child and every family is different, and there's no one right way to do this. Keeping the lines of communication open and the topic out in the light will make sure that whenever your child wants to talk, you'll be ready.

Aging and Loss of Independence

- Talking with older adults about new found limitations can be difficult.
- For more information: [Aging and loss of independence](#)

Talking to Your Child About Your Chronic Illness Diagnosis

- **Be honest.** Your children will benefit most when you are honest with them. Explaining the diagnosis will give you the opportunity to discuss how it will change their normal routine and explore their feelings about these changes. What's most important: letting your children know that you are there for them no matter what happens.

Talking to Your Child About Your Chronic Illness Diagnosis

- **Keep it age appropriate.** Simplify complicated medical terms to suit each child's level of understanding. Kid's Health is a great resource for defining medical terms in child-friendly language (www.kidshealth.org). Also, let your children set the pace of the conversation. Young children are naturally inquisitive and may ask many questions, then tire of talking about the diagnosis and suddenly start playing with a toy or change the subject. Older children and teens may need some time to think about what you have discussed before they ask for more information. What's most important: Letting your children know that they can talk to you when they are ready.

Talking to Your Child About Your Chronic Illness Diagnosis

- **Use your resources.** Your children will naturally look to you for information, so know what resources are available to you. You are not expected to be an expert! Write down any questions you and your children may have for your next doctor's visit. This is a great way to involve children in medical care, as well as making sure everyone's questions are answered. What's most important: You don't have to know all the answers, just how to ask questions until you find the answers you need.
- Information taken from <http://www.lebonheur.org/kids-health-wellness/practical-parenting/blog-entries/2014/06/talking-to-your-child-about-a-difficult-diagnosis.dot>

Talking to Your Child About a Disabled Sibling

- Talking to a typically developing child about a sibling with a disability may be a difficult conversation, and one that occurs many times at different stages of development for your child.
- For some general tips, please see the handout compiled by The Sibling Support Project entitled “[What Siblings Would Like Parents and Service Providers to Know](#)”, and visit their [website](#).