

Tips for Coping with Kidney Disease - for Patients with CKD and Care Partners

"It's not just the patient who lives with chronic kidney disease (CKD). Care partners also must cope with CKD, as with any chronic illness."

As a patient or care partner, use these tips to manage relationship stress and keep the relationship positive.

Keep Communication Open

Talk to each other about your feelings. Are you feeling anxious? Resentful? Overwhelmed? Say what you are feeling. Listen to each other's feelings and be sure to state your needs in clear, simple terms so that the other person does not have to guess what you need.

Are you concerned about finances? Are you concerned about a change in treatment? Write down your list of questions and concerns. Talk about them with each other and make a plan to discuss them with your kidney doctor (nephrologist), nurse or social worker.

Other friends and family members may also have questions about CKD. Encourage them to ask any questions they have and make time to discuss these together.

Write up a Care Plan

When possible, the patient should take ownership of the majority of his or her treatment responsibilities. However, sharing in all the tasks associated with managing CKD as well as assisting at home with non-dialysis-related household tasks is essential. Write down who is responsible for each task and when the tasks need to be performed. Review this plan together from time to time and make adjustments as necessary. Be sure to write down any changes so that you can review these changes the next time you review your plan.

Spend Quality Time Together

It's important to spend time focusing on the other aspects of your relationship aside from CKD to help your relationship stay healthy. Make time to pursue activities you enjoy together. Whether it's going out to a movie or sporting event, planning a vacation or spending time at the park, it's important to keep up with activities that don't center on CKD. Make an effort to explore new interests together to keep your relationship strong.

Practice Respect and Appreciation

Coping with a chronic illness can be challenging at times. Treating each other with respect over the day-to-day details can go a long way towards helping you deal with issues that may arise over the course of your relationship or over the course of CKD.



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“If you are feeling stress and anxiety, talk to your doctor or social worker.”

Make an effort to show your appreciation for each other through thoughtful gestures. Put a flower from the garden in a vase, frame a photograph of a special time spent together, or prepare a favorite meal. If you are the CKD patient, these gestures will remind your care partner of how special the care partner is outside of your care relationship. If you are the care partner, such gestures will remind your loved one that he or she is more than just a patient and that you value his or her role in your life.

Get Support

If your relationship is feeling strained or if one of you is feeling overwhelmed by stress, talk to your doctor or social worker about it. They can help connect you with the tools and resources you need to feel supported.

Resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, for suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or call toll-free: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
- National Family Caregivers Association - www.nfcares.org
- Today's Caregiver - www.caregiver.com
- Medicare Resources for Caregivers - www.medicare.gov/caregivers
- Well Spouse Association - www.wellspouse.org

