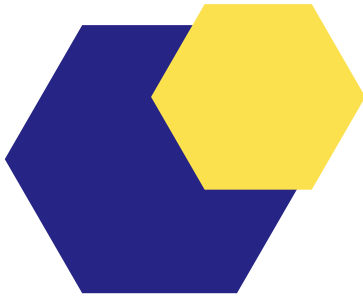


"How Are You?"

Those three words contain a pretty loaded question. After being diagnosed with cancer, it can seem impossible to explain how you're feeling. When people ask, "how are you?" it's hard to know how honest they want you to be. Even when people want to show that they care, they don't always know how.

The awkwardness can lead to a lot of conversations that look like this:



"How are you?"
"Uhh, I don't know, sick?"



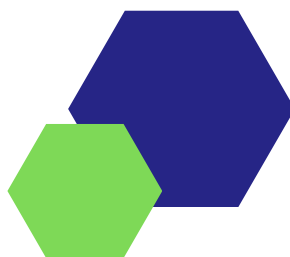
After a while, this can get old, and sometimes it may feel easier to avoid answering. Everyone is different, but here are a few things that teens often wish others knew about how it feels to have cancer:

"Unless I'm feeling super sick, I just want to be treated like normal."

"The sad things are *really* sad, and the scary things are *really* scary."

"It's overwhelming to have cancer, and it's exhausting to feel like you have to be strong."

"It's hard to struggle or need help with things that used to be easy, like walking around at the mall or spending a whole day at school."





If any of those thoughts are true for you, it may be hard to share them with others. Nobody likes to have their struggles ignored, but having people focus on how sick you are can feel like being in a fishbowl.

So what can you do?

First, consider what you want. Some options include:

- Normal conversation
- Space to vent
- A fun distraction
- Time alone

Then comes the hard part: asking. Although some people may not show up in the ways you'd like them to, asking for what you want can make it more likely to happen. And, thanking people who seem genuine in wanting to support you can help them feel more comfortable continuing to reach out.



Ideas for responding to, "How are you?"

Thanks for asking.
I could use a
distraction today.
Has anything funny
happened at school
lately?

I'm feeling more
down than usual. Are
you up for listening
to some venting?

Things are weird, and
I've been pretty
bored, but I'm ok.
How are you?

A lot of people have
been asking about
cancer, and I'd rather
just talk about
regular life. What
have you been up to?

I'm actually about to
take a nap, but I'm
really glad you
texted me!