



Possible Conversation Starters: COMMUNICATION

Conversations With Your Friends...

- "I know you find my MS symptoms confusing. Would you like to come to the neurologist with me or watch a Can Do MS webinar to learn more about what's going on with my MS?"
- "What you see when you look at me is just the tip of the MS iceberg. Most of my symptoms aren't visible but I would be happy to explain them or give you reading material to help you understand what's going on."

Conversations When You Feel Uncertain, Embarrassed...

- "I'd really like to be able to make eye contact with you while we're talking. Looking up from my wheelchair gets really tiring. Would you mind sitting so we can have a really good conversation?"
- "I hate to slow everyone down, but I really enjoy being with you. Would you mind slowing down a bit so I can keep up? And next time I'll plan to bring my scooter so we can go fast together!"

Conversations When Time is Limited...

- "Our conversations are really important to me – they help us stay connected. Could we set aside a few minutes every morning or evening to check in with each other?"
- "I'd like to make sure we talk about the things that are really important to each of us – so maybe we could keep a running list on the nightstand to help us remember?"

Conversations When Managing Difficult Emotions...

- "I think we're both getting pretty emotional about this. Could we take a short break to chill out and then come back in an hour or so?"
- "I know we're both really frustrated by this situation, but we seem to have different solutions in mind. Maybe we could jot down a list of possible solutions and then figure out the best way to compromise."

Conversations When You Don't Have a Lot of Time...

- "I'm concerned that I may not be able to continue working much longer. Could we schedule an additional appointment to discuss my application for Social Security Disability?"
- "My partner and I have experienced some changes in our intimate relationship. We're not sure what's related to MS and what isn't, so we'd like to schedule an appointment to discuss that with you."
- "I'd like to make sure we take time today to talk about my memory. It's really gotten worse lately and I need to figure out what to do."

Conversations When You Feel Dismissed or Unheard by Your Healthcare Provider...

- "I have several other questions I need to ask you. Could we please schedule another appointment or phone call to go over them?"
- "You're giving me a lot of important information, but I just can't take it all in. Could you repeat it more slowly please or write down the key points for me to take home? Perhaps next time I could bring a friend to take notes, if that would be OK with you?"
- "Changing my medication is a big decision for me. I'd like to get a second opinion before we take that step."