

[TRACK 2: SELF-ADVOCACY]

Linda, oncology social worker: Part I

[Linda]

You can advocate or stand up for yourself for any or all of the following reasons: Advocacy gives you some stability and a feeling of regaining some control of your life. Advocacy builds confidence because it helps you face challenges that may have seemed too difficult to overcome. Advocacy is a way of reaching out to others. It can be as simple as asking your doctor or nurse for the name of someone to talk with who has survived your type of cancer. Advocating for yourself may make the difference that turns hopeless and helpless feelings into feelings of hope.

[Linda]

Cancer survivors often feel that self-advocacy and personal empowerment make it possible to meet their needs for information, intervention, and support. Speaking up for what you need when faced with a diagnosis of cancer, and knowing how to communicate those needs to family, friends, and caregivers are the first steps in self-advocacy.

[Narrator]

You may think that you do not have the skills to be a good self-advocate. Often people have a harder time being an advocate for themselves than they do for others. If you went with your child or partner to a doctor's appointment, would you leave without getting your questions answered? If you felt doubt about the treatment, wouldn't you take your child for a second opinion? If you felt that your partner's medication for pain control was not working, wouldn't you ask the doctor for something else? You can speak up for yourself in the same way that you would for a loved one.

[Narrator]

A basic key to standing up for yourself is to develop a plan of action with specific goals. Let's listen to the situations and decisions of some cancer survivors. First, Donna.