

## *Living Well After Brain Cancer Treatment*

# Supported Communication Strategies



- **Reduce distractions.** Have the conversation in a quiet place that is free from other auditory or visual distractions, as much as possible.
- **Introduce the topic.** Rather than jumping directly into questions, signal the start of a new topic of conversation by saying, “I’d like to talk with you about \_\_\_\_.” This gives everyone time to switch their focus to the topic, which may reduce confusion and irritability.
- **Write key words.** As you begin your conversation, have a piece of paper in front of you, and write down key words, starting with the topic at the top of the page. This visual cue helps with both focus and comprehension. Refer to these key words throughout the conversation.
- **Use visual cues.** For example, if discussing dates, pull out a calendar to show the date.
- **Draw and/or encourage your partner to draw.** When you don’t have a visual cue to refer to, you can draw it, either to explain or to express a concept that you are having difficulty verbalizing.
- **Gesture and/or encourage your partner to gesture.** Just as with drawing, gesturing with your hands and body is a good way to communicate at times when word-finding is difficult.
- **Ask for a choice.** Rather than answering an open-ended question, ask for a choice. For example, if you are asked a question like “What movie would you like to see?” you can say, “Please give me a few to choose from.”
- **Ask for yes/no questions.** As with choice, a yes/no response takes the strain and pressure off of expressing a complex issue or having to remember a specific word. For example, “Are you too tired to go?”

If you are experiencing communication difficulties, there are many strategies that can support you in having smoother conversations. You can also share these strategies with your family or loved ones.

