

Heart-to-Hearts:

Post-Heart Attack

Conversation Starters

Family and friends can be great sources of support after a heart attack. But sometimes, it's hard to know how to talk about what you're going through, and it's even harder to ask for what you need.

KEEP A FEW THINGS IN MIND:

- It's common to have a lot of different emotions after a heart attack. There's no right way to feel.
- Your loved ones may not know how to support you. They also might be struggling with their own feelings about your health. You know they care about you, but their concerns might add stress, too.
- Communication is key to making sure you balance your emotions with those of your loved ones and get the support you need.
- No matter what you say or how you say it, make sure it comes from the heart.

Use these starters to begin honest conversations.

When you need a cheerleader:

After my heart attack, I've decided to make some changes, like _____

I have a plan, but I might need to reach out when I get frustrated or lose sight of my goal. Can I call you? _____

If you need help making new habits:

One of my goals is to [add your habit here: stop smoking, start walking daily, etc.] _____

Will you help me stick with it? I thought of you for this because _____

For someone who causes you stress:

As I recover, it's important that I limit stress. I want you in my life, but I often feel stress around you. Can we find a common ground?

When you need emotional support:

My heart attack brought up a lot of big feelings. Sometimes I feel:

[fill in here: anxious, depressed, lonely, etc.] _____

Would you be willing to listen when I need to talk? _____

To encourage two-way communication:

Yes, I had a heart attack, but it's not all about me.

I still want you to share what's on your mind.

Don't hold back because you think you're going to stress me out or be a burden. I'll tell you if it's too much for me.

For someone who's not supportive:

My heart attack really scared me. I'm making changes so I can live a better life, and I need all the support I can get. Can I count on you?

For someone who gives you advice often:

You always have good suggestions, and I appreciate that.

I get a lot of direction from my health care team, and I'm focused on that right now.

If you're up for it, I could use some encouragement in these ways: _____

To clarify communication:

I'm grateful you're concerned about me. I'm keeping friends and family posted on my progress through:

[fill in here: my blog, social media, email, text, etc.] _____

Do you mind if I add you to my list? _____

Or:

I'm grateful you're concerned about me. I've decided I would like to keep details about my health private. Thanks for Understanding.

If honest conversations aren't helping you our loved ones, think about seeing a counselor or therapist for extra guidance.