



How to Talk to Your Loved Ones about Your Facial Pain

Facial pain can be incredibly isolating. When pain forces you to cancel plans, miss important events, or step back from the people you care about, it's easy to feel like you're letting others down — as a friend, parent, spouse, or partner. But living with facial pain is not a reflection of your commitment to the people you love. No one should have to face that journey alone.

Think about Alternative Ways to Communicate

If talking hurts, there are many non-verbal communication styles you can try. Just because you can't speak doesn't mean you don't have a voice — you just need to find new ways to communicate. Try writing on paper or in your phone, or encourage your loved ones to learn sign language with you.

Think About Your Loved Ones

This can be difficult to hear, because it might feel like it is de-centering your experience with facial pain, or that you always have to think of others before yourself — but this is not the case.

When you understand how your facial pain affects your loved ones, communication, collaboration and boundaries become easier. Your facial pain is something your whole family and social circle experiences.

When talking to your loved ones, validate their feelings. Validating does not mean agreeing — it simply means you recognize their emotions and understand what they are saying.

Place emphasis on saying how you feel, recognizing the other person's emotions, creating collaborative plans, working within the limits of your facial pain, and setting flexible boundaries where everyone feels they have the right to say "no" without fear of an argument.

What Not to Do When Talking to Your Loved Ones

Don't lash out in anger and frustration. It is understandable that you are in pain and feel isolated — but anger and harsh words won't help the people who care about you, and can cause conversations to spiral into accusations on both sides.

Don't assume that your loved ones don't care about you just because they are upset, or don't understand your pain. We are all human, and it's natural to make mistakes and feel strong emotions, facial pain or not.

Discuss Caregiver Roles

No facial pain patient wants to have a conversation with a loved one about that person becoming the primary caregiver if facial pain becomes severe enough.

It can feel like a loss of autonomy for the patient and creates anxiety around the response from the loved one about taking on a large responsibility.

However, it is better to have these conversations before facial pain becomes severe and it leaves both parties in a state of panic and disorganization.

Only you can decide when and where you need to have this conversation with your loved one. As with all conversations, make sure to leave room to listen and talk in a calm environment where both of you feel comfortable setting boundaries and communicating expectations. Make sure to end on a positive note about your appreciation for your loved one's help.

Make Room for Quality Time

Making room for quality time with your loved ones when you have facial pain can be difficult.

You might want to do activities to bond with your loved ones and find that they are complicated by your facial pain. Facial pain is not something you can turn off when you want to have a good time. This can lead to feeling demoralized and unmotivated to connect with others.

You are worthy of love and connection, even when you have facial pain. Make sure you continue to make room for quality time with others — it will benefit your mental health, build trust and connection with others and help you remember:

You are more than your facial pain.

