

# Help someone you care about Demand More from life with MS.

If you've arrived here, it's likely you have someone close to you who is living with multiple sclerosis. It's in your nature to help and push them to do something about their MS, because you care. But when a subject is so personal, how or when you say something is as important as what you say.

Use this simple guide to help someone you care about Demand More from life with MS.

## Step 1. Setting up the discussion

- Ask for permission

### Checklist

**Ask for permission to talk about their MS**

MS is personal, and it is therefore important to ensure your friend is willing to discuss it with you.

**Agree on a time and place for the planned conversation**

Choose a place that is private and free from distraction, where your friend will feel comfortable.

### Do's



**Do...** Reassure them that you only want to listen so you can understand how they feel.

### Don'ts



**Don't...** Talk about their MS during this conversation. Remember, you're only asking for permission to have a conversation later.

- Ask the right question

### Checklist

**While you're setting a time and place to talk about their MS, ask them to think about one question before you meet: "where do you see yourself in 8 years' time?"**

The question is carefully designed to help them really think about the future.

**Don't give in to the temptation to talk about their answer right away**

Because it's an emotional subject, it's important to give your friend time to prepare their thoughts.

### Do's



**Do...** Ask the question exactly as it's worded.

### Don'ts



**Don't...** Get drawn into a conversation about their MS before the time you've arranged.

- Really listen

## Checklist

- Ask for permission**  
This enables you to slow down the conversation and begin in an organised fashion.
- Ask the question again**  
This is how you start the dialogue. While they're talking, don't speak, just listen.
- 'Mirror' what they say by repeating it back to them**  
Repeating back what they've said ensures you understand each other accurately.
- Ask for permission to share how hearing their feelings made you feel**  
Always asking for permission builds trust.
- Record what they've said by taking notes**  
Especially in the case of the question "where do you see yourself in 8 years' time?", this will help you to set goals later.

## Do's

- Do...** Always ask permission.
- Do...** Just listen without offering opinion or judgement.
- Do...** Keep 'mirroring', repeating back until they confirm you've accurately understood what they meant. Even if it takes multiple attempts.
- Do say things like...**  
"Are you still OK to talk about your MS?"  
"Is it OK if I share how that made me feel?"  
"What I heard was... Did I get that?"

## Don'ts

- Don't...** Offer your own opinion or judgement on what they've said. What matters is understanding how they feel.
- Don't...** Interrupt them, allow them the space to talk freely.
- Don't say things like...**  
"I don't think that's right"  
"You shouldn't feel like that"  
"Well I think that's wrong"

## Step 2 Setting Goals

### Checklist

- Agree on the outcome your friend wants to achieve, starting by slightly adjusting your previous question and ask "where would you like to be in 8 years' time?"**  
Setting a goal will help make sure you're both focused on a long-term outcome, rather than distracted by the day to day. Again, use 'mirroring' to make sure you accurately understand how they feel.
- Work back to today**  
To get to their goal, break the journey into small steps. Otherwise it can be easy to feel daunted by a seemingly difficult task.
- Go through the plan together carefully**  
Make sure the steps are clear and actionable, and that you both feel comfortable with the plan.



#### Explore the idea of research

Identify if additional research is needed to move through some of the steps.



#### Set a time and place to share your findings

Setting a time and place ensures you keep the ball rolling.



#### Decide whether an appointment with their neurologist is needed

If it's determined an appointment with a neurologist or another healthcare provider is needed, make the appointment now, and schedule rehearsal time to prepare for it.



#### Finalise the plan of action

After agreeing on the goal, the steps needed to get there, and your research, you should then formalise the plan.

### Do's



**Do...** Agree on a goal; don't be afraid to be ambitious.



**Do...** Divide up the journey into small manageable steps, working back to today.



**Do...** Share the research burden, so there is mutual accountability.



**Do...** Help guide the discussion toward a specific action. For example, if your friend has identified 'feeling better' as a goal, help translate this into what that means for them.

### Don'ts



**Don't...** Leave the research time open-ended, setting a deadline keeps things moving.

## Step 3 Rehearsing the appointment

### Checklist



**Set a time to rehearse appointments with medical professionals**



**Verbalise the critical points and rehearse both the best and worst case scenarios**

This will help your friend feel confident about the key points they want to bring up during the appointment, and make sure that they are well prepared for whatever's said.



**Offer to attend the appointment with your friend, or suggest they bring someone else along**

It's often easier to stay focused with support, and useful to have someone there to take notes for reference later.

### Do's



**Do...** Positively reinforce the right of your friend to take control and Demand More from their life with MS.



**Do...** If you attend an appointment, help ensure the conversation stays on track by reminding your friend of any unanswered questions.

### Don'ts



**Don't...** Rehearse just the best case scenario.

