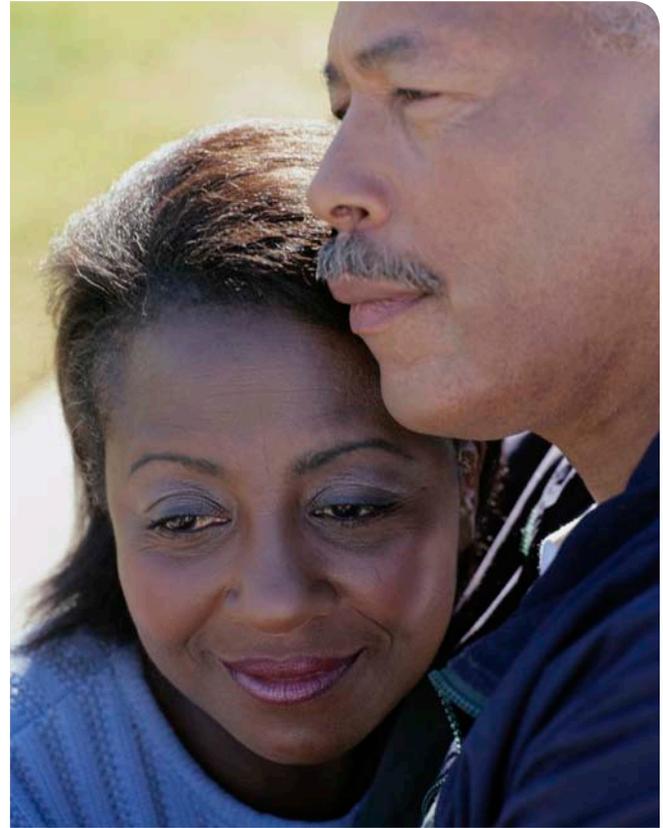




How Should I Communicate with Heart and Stroke Patients?

When someone has a heart attack, heart surgery or a stroke, they need special consideration while recovering or adjusting. They're likely to have emotional ups and downs. Sometimes they may become clinically depressed. Often, roles of the survivor and caregiver are reversed.



How do I communicate with a heart attack or heart surgery patient?

- Expect emotional ups and downs, crying for no reason, nightmares and fears of death.
- Give yourselves time to adjust and freely express your emotions to one another.
- Encourage your loved one to start making the necessary changes to prevent further events or complications.
- Accept the fact that your roles may be reversed, at least for now.
- Encourage your loved one to get back into life and make plans together for the future.
- Even though he or she is sick, remember that you still deserve to be treated with respect.
- Be a good listener. Your loved one may need to openly express how he or she is feeling.
- Use “I” messages rather than “you” messages.

- When you feel angry or frustrated, say “I feel angry,” instead of “You make me angry” to express your feeling without blaming others.

How do I communicate with a stroke survivor?

- Remember that many stroke survivors may have damage that makes it hard for them to communicate well.
- Accept whatever communication form they have, even if it's just making signs with their hands.
- Learn everything you can about their condition so you can be more understanding and helpful.
- Join support groups and learn how others have managed to break down communication barriers.
- With aphasia, it's not necessary to talk louder, just more slowly. Avoid talking down to your loved one, and be a good and patient listener.

(continued)



- Stroke survivors may have many emotional ups and downs. Get help for your loved one if these become severe or last too long.

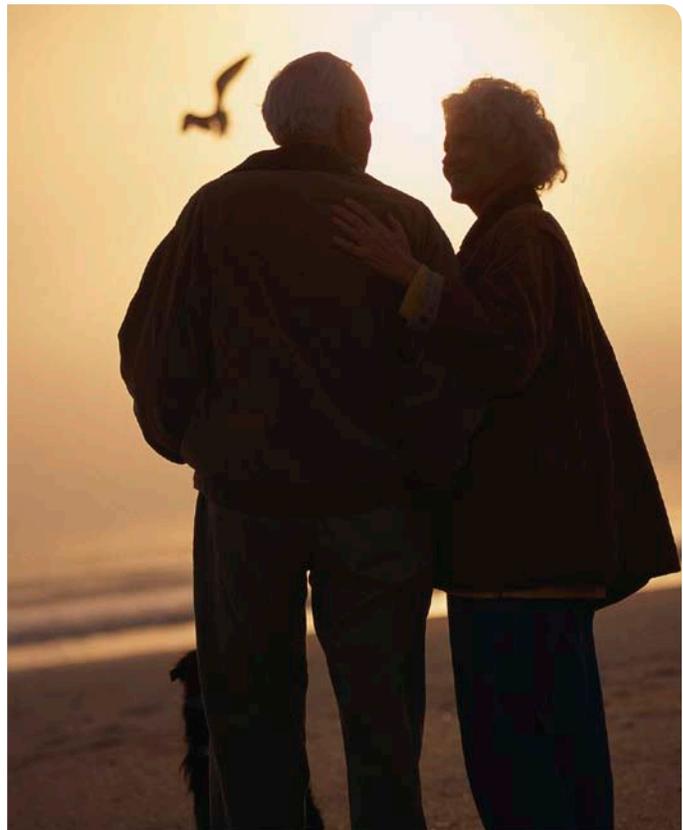
How can I help my loved one after a heart attack or surgery?

- Understand that they have gone through physical and emotional trauma.
- Be patient and let them talk to you about their fears and feelings.
- Learn as much as you can about their condition and help them get back into life.

How can I help my loved one after a stroke?

Stroke can change a person's life forever. Your loved one may be disabled or have difficulty communicating. It's important for you to:

- Get support.
- Be patient.
- Be prepared to create a different way of life for you and your loved one.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Since my loved one's stroke, we can no longer talk together. How can we communicate with my loved one's disabilities?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.