



Princess Alice
Hospice

Remaining close while being ill



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Relationships are complex. Not everyone is able to talk freely and honestly about what they need. This leaflet is intended to help you think about how you can keep your closest relationship close. Reading it together may help you begin that conversation.

Illness can affect every part of a person's life, including being close to the person you love most. You might have been told that illness can mean having less energy, or feeling sick or in pain. But illness can also affect the way you feel about yourself, and the way you feel about your partner. It may even affect the way your partner feels about you. You may find you feel less connected than you used to. Intimacy is an integral part of a relationship. Keeping intimacy alive is an important key to keeping our relationships strong. And it's just as important during illness.

Let's be clear, talking about intimacy is not just another way of talking about sex. Intimacy is about feeling completely comfortable with someone; it's about accepting them and knowing that they accept you. Intimacy is about being close with someone you love.

Illness can get in the way of being intimate. It can make a person dependent and often turns a partner into a carer. The demands of managing an illness, with its associated treatments and worries about what may lie ahead, can take over your thoughts. You might suddenly find that it's been a long time since you just spent time being together with your partner. Somehow, being close just got forgotten.

Recreating intimacy

Realising that your times of just being with each other have been squeezed out or forgotten is a good place to start. Recreating that lost intimacy might take a little planning, and you might actually need to set some time aside to be together.

Take time to remember the things that you used to enjoy doing together: watching a film; going for a walk; eating out. Ask your partner what they think would be a nice way to spend some time together. It may be as simple as just sitting and holding hands.

Reconnecting with each other can be physical, but could be an emotional or mental connection. You may want to try something different, like reading aloud to each other, or writing a letter or poem and sharing it. You could choose some music to listen to or perhaps even dance to. The possibilities are endless, and as individual as your relationship.

These times don't have to involve 'deep and meaningful' conversations. They can simply be times to be yourselves; times like you used to have before the illness; times for 'being' rather than 'doing'. In this way they can be special times to reconnect and to rediscover the love that brought you together and that has held you together, and times to remember that, despite the changes illness has brought to your lives, you are still loved and still able to love.

If you would like to talk about how the illness is affecting your feelings or your relationship, a member of our team will be here to listen. Please feel able to speak to us.

“ There's nothing more intimate in life than simply being understood. And understanding someone else. ”

Brad Meltzer, The Inner Circle

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