

Conversation Starters For Your Sharsheret Teal or Pink Shabbat Dinner:

1. It has been proven that not only genetics, but lifestyle can impact one's risk for cancer. What kinds of things can we do to live a healthier life?

Guided Responses

This means something different for each person. It can mean kicking it up a notch, recommitting to a healthy lifestyle, or taking the first tentative steps. Don't try to do everything at once.

Commit to incorporating small steps into your lifestyle.

- Get moving
 - Join a gym, take a local exercise class, stand more during the day, walk during lunch or after dinner several times a week, commit to a 5K, join Team Sharsheret and take advantage of the free training.
- Eat healthier
 - Limit fast food, when eating out immediately box half your portion for lunch the following day, eat more fruits and veggies and whole grains, limit snacks to items such as nuts, proteins, fruits and veggies, be aware of portion size, try to maintain an appropriate weight.
- Reduce Stress
 - Consider engaging in yoga or mindful meditation, keep a gratitude journal, schedule social time with friends, and remember to keep a work/life balance.
- Commit to well visits
 - Learn what is normal for your body and don't ignore troubling symptoms. Don't wait until you are sick, schedule annual well visits with your doctor.

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2. I'm sure we've all had family members or friends who have needed help dealing with or recuperating from an illness. How have you been able to support and assist them? What strategies have you found to be both appreciated and helpful? What could you do for colleagues or more casual acquaintances?

Guided Responses

Being ill can be a scary and alienating experience. Your support of a friend, family member or colleague is important. Your level of support should be commensurate with your relationship prior to the diagnosis.

- Say something. Acknowledge the diagnosis. It is ok to simply say 'I am thinking of you.'
- Do something. But please, don't ask them what they need. It gives the person who is ill another thing to have to deal with. Offer specific things, such as 'Can I drop off dinner on Thursday?' or 'I am headed to the store. Can I drop off some magazines?'
- Don't be upset if the person isn't up to a visit or turns down your offer of help. Try again another time.
- Check in to let them know you are thinking of them. End your text or email with 'No need to get back to me.'

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3. Asking personal questions about someone's health history can be awkward, even if they are your parents or grandparents. Have any of you approached your family about their genetic and health history?

Guided Responses

Discuss how you approached the topic, the reaction of your family and if you acted on the information you learned.

If you have not yet approached them, do you have ideas on how best to do so?

- Acknowledge the fact that they're probably uncomfortable, too! It might make it easier for everyone.
- Ask your mom and dad if anyone in your family has had breast, ovarian, or any other related cancer, and if anyone has had genetic counseling or knows that they're a carrier of the BRCA gene mutation or any of the other genetic mutations. There isn't as much research about Check2 and PalB2, but it's good to know that there are genetic mutations aside from BRCA that are linked to an increase risk.
- Keep your family history up to date as you learn more. Holidays and reunions are good times to ask other members of the family to get as much information as possible.
- If, while having The Talk, you discover a family history of breast or ovarian cancer, please get in touch with Sharsheret for a free consultation with a genetic counselor.

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4. Some people prefer not to know if they have a genetic predisposition to cancer. Have you thought about whether you would or wouldn't want to know?

Guided Responses

Although it is a personal decision, it is important to keep in mind that if you carry a genetic mutation that increases your risk of breast, ovarian and related cancers, there are things you can do to lower your risk or catch any diagnosis earlier. Knowing there are actions you can take (beyond surgery) to protect yourself may impact your decision to commit to genetic screening. Knowing your mutation status allows you to be proactive about your health.

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5. Have you considered using a DNA ancestry test to learn more about your genetic makeup?

Guided Responses

On the surface, these tests seem really cool and exciting. But it's important to remember that you're better off if a professional helps you understand the results. Sometimes, these tests will report false positives or negatives and the implications of test results can impact more than just your own health. Make sure you think about what you will do with the information before collecting it!