

Maintaining Healthy Relationships

How to communicate with loved ones involved in your life.

*** Chapter 13 in Spinal Cord Injury Reference Manual***

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Goals for Today:

- ▶ *How to clearly and respectfully communicate your needs to others*
- ▶ *To understand there are different processes people go through with life altering situations*
- ▶ *To maintain a strong, healthy support system in your life*



Why are healthy relationships important?

- ▶ *Develops a strong support system for both you, and the other person*
- ▶ *It fulfills a basic human need to be close to others*
- ▶ *Communicate needs and wants*



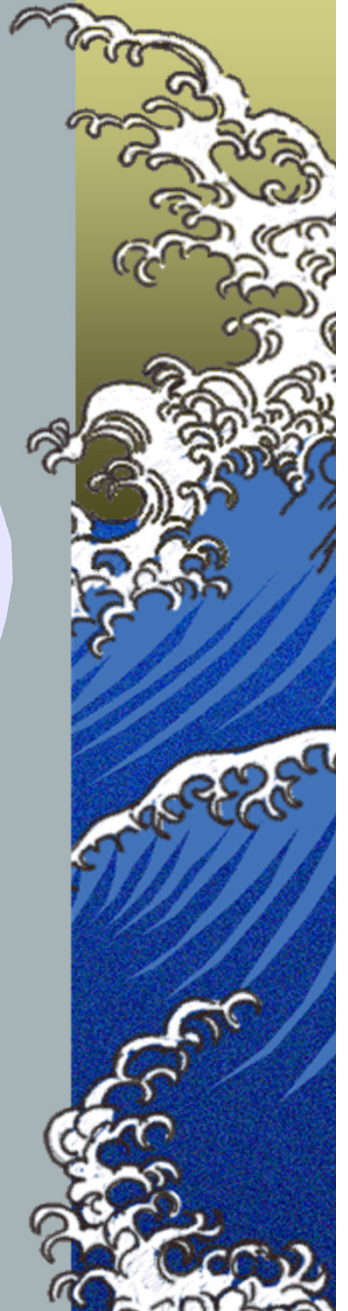
What does a healthy relationship look like?

- ▶ *A true sense of caring in another's wellbeing*
- ▶ *Open and honest communication*
- ▶ *Mutual give and take from both people (needs, activities)*

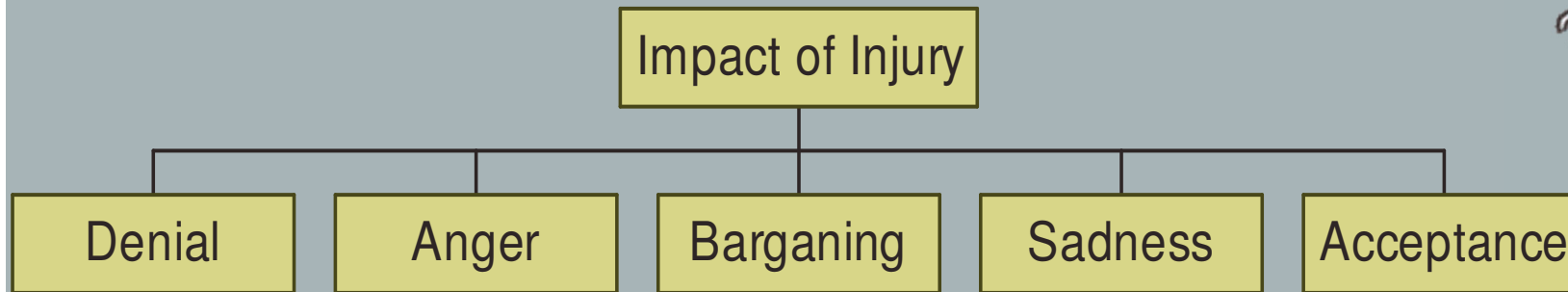


Family and friends roles in your life.

- ▶ *How does your injury impact yourself and others?*
- ▶ *Who does what in each relationship? (what's the 'role of each person)*
- ▶ *What happens when people's roles change in each others lives?*
- ▶ *Do you embrace or distance yourself from others, after the injury?*



5 Stages of Grief and Loss



The grief process

- ▶ *It is not a step by step (linear) process, it is fluid*
- ▶ *Everyone will go through the process differently*
- ▶ *Talk about where you are at and let others explore their own emotions and needs in their own way and in their own timeframe*
- ▶ *There is no right or wrong way, all have a unique way of working through the impact of the injury*



How do you maintain a healthy relationship?

Communicating needs and feelings:

- ▶ *When you__ I feel__*

Talk about future goals and challenges:

- ▶ *Ensure you have a game plan that is agreeable with all people involved (the 'what if's')*

Break down stigma's and misconceptions:

- ▶ *Education others on your injury, connect with peers*



Maintaining relationships cont...

Pick your battles

- ▶ *Is it really worth the 'fight'?*

Acknowledge that others have the right to feel what they are experiencing

- ▶ *Not everyone will feel the same thing at the same time*

Really listen and attempt to understand each other

- ▶ *Respond to others in a way they feel you have 'heard' them (sympathy versus empathy)*



Important Tips About Healthy Relationships

- ▶ *Family/friends to have a role outside of being a caregiver (respond to relationship requests), versus asking for physical assistance when you truly need it*
- ▶ *Fosters independence*
- ▶ *Get involved in activities*
- ▶ *Use humor*
- ▶ *Challenges are day to day*
- ▶ *Recognize what you can change and not change*



Case Scenario I

You have experienced a spinal cord injury and have discovered the relationships you once had with family and friends have changed. You believe people are reacting to your injury in ways that are hurtful, demeaning, and insensitive. How would you approach this situation?



Case Scenario II

You have returned home after your rehab goals have been met at GFS. You live with other family members, and although very supportive and loving, you believe you can do things independently that they are assisting you with or doing for you. How do you begin a dialogue about your goals and needs?

