

How do I go about socializing and finding support after surgery?

SITUATION #1: LOW DIFFICULTY

Imagine that you just had surgery a few weeks ago. You are still getting used to changing your ostomy bag by yourself and you are still not feeling well from the surgery. A friend reaches out to you and asks if you want to go on a walk with them. You have not seen this friend in a long time and it sounds really nice, but you just do not want to today. Sometimes you may not feel well enough to socialize. When this happens, you can politely decline an invitation.

Suggestion:

"I'm so glad you asked, thank you for thinking of me. I'm not feeling well today, but can we try again when I am feeling better?"

Many people talked about how the support from their family and friends helped them. After her surgery, one participant never wanted to leave the house. Her mother did not accept that. She said, "No, we're just going to walk down the street. We're gonna go to Starbucks. There's a bathroom there. By the time we get there, if you need to empty this thing, great. But we're just gonna sit there. You're gonna see these healthy people. And you're gonna just know that you can do your life." The mother knew what her daughter needed. Even though her daughter didn't want to go out at the time, she is extremely thankful now.

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SITUATION #2: MEDIUM DIFFICULTY

After your procedure to get your ostomy, you are afraid to go out in public. What if your ostomy bag leaks? What if you do not have enough supplies with you? What if the ostomy makes a noise? You want to try something small like going to a small restaurant and want to ask a friend to come with you.

Suggestion:

“Hi, I really want to try going to a restaurant to eat. Would you like to come with me?”

Or if you are comfortable sharing more about your concerns:

"Hi, I really want to try going to a restaurant to eat, but I am still a little nervous to go out in public with my ostomy. I am afraid the ostomy bag might leak. Would you like to come with me? I think going with you would help me feel better."

Other participants talked about the importance of being honest with family and friends when they're not feeling positive about their ostomy. One participant said, **“I looked at it like, okay, this ostomy gave me my life back.** Even though there are times I want to throw the ostomy pouch across the room.”