

CHRONIC ILLNESS & RELATIONSHIPS

REDEFINE FAIRNESS WHEN CAPACITY IS NOT EQUAL EVERY DAY

Illness can change chores, income, intimacy, caregiving, social plans, and energy. Healthy relationships can adapt without turning care into control or debt.

FAIR IS NOT ALWAYS 50/50

- One person may do more physical tasks while another contributes planning, emotional labor, finances, childcare, or other work.
- Contribution can change across seasons of illness and recovery.

ASK INSTEAD OF ASSUMING

- 'What support would help today?'
- 'Do you want help, company, advice, or space?'
- 'What task is most important for me to take over?'
- Avoid treating the person as helpless.

PROTECT THE CAREGIVER TOO

- Caregivers need sleep, health care, relationships, work, privacy, and breaks.
- Sustainable support may require family, respite, community, paid services, or renegotiated expectations.

INTIMACY MAY CHANGE

- Pain, fatigue, medication, body changes, mobility, hormones, medical procedures, and stress can affect affection or sexual activity.
- Consent remains necessary. Pressure or guilt is not a treatment for disconnection.

PLAN FOR CANCELLATIONS

- Use flexible plans and backup options.
- A symptom flare is not automatically rejection or lack of effort.
- The person with illness can communicate changes as early as reasonably possible without apologizing for existing.

WATCH FOR CONTROL

- Caregiving does not create ownership of money, privacy, friendships, treatment choices, or the person's body.
- Using care as leverage for obedience, sex, money, or isolation is not healthy support.

Healthy interdependence makes room for changing capacity, caregiver limits, autonomy, and connection.