KEEP TALKING
about genetic testing with your family

TESTING DOESN'T ALWAYS FIT RIGHT NOW.

When a family member says "No" to genetic testing, "No" might actually mean "Not now."
Respect a relative's decision not to get tested, whether or not you know their reasons.
But those reasons are often temporary. After months or years, circumstances shift. Obstacles resolve themselves.



ANXIETY

A person may be nervous to get bad news or news that requires them to make more choices. A change in their support system, or time to digest information, can make decisions less overwhelming.



COST

When testing is unaffordable, improved income or health insurance can make it possible. In certain situations, financial help is available. Learning about this help can put testing within reach.



AVAILABILITY

A person may have so much going on that they have no room for testing. A few years later, life could be less busy. Testing may feel more manageable after a job promotion or a child's graduation.



PRIVACY

Some people are wary that others may get access to their genetic data. But the culture of privacy and data storage is always changing. As it changes, a relative's attitude about personal information may change, too.



INSURANCE

Someone could be worried that they will be denied life insurance if they test positive for a disease-causing variant. After they successfully purchase insurance, they may be ready to get tested.



RELEVANCE

A younger person may think that genetic testing is not relevant. As time goes by, they may notice signs of aging that could be confused with illness symptoms. Knowing their disease risk may help them interpret what's going on.



LOGISTICS

Practical barriers may prevent testing. A relative may not have access to needed technology. They may have difficulty making or traveling to appointments. Changes in circumstances may open these roadblocks.



VALUES

Some reasons not to get tested are less changeable. Choices based on personal values can be permanent.

In some cases, you can do something to overcome a reason for saying "No." If your relative's concerns are logistical, ask if you can help.
But if a family member's reasons are personal and not within your control, don't feel frustrated that you can't change their mind or life.

WHEN LIFE MOVES ON, THE CONVERSATION CAN, TOO.

You won't know if someone is ready for genetic testing unless you talk to them.
Your reminders could be just what a family member needs to start the process.



TAKE TIME

Every discussion doesn't have to be about disease. Bring up the topic about once a year. If talking about genetics causes tension, let the subject rest longer. If "No" was casual and you see a good opening, the time might feel right sooner.



BE ORGANIC

Start with a relevant topic. Talk about your recent screening. Ask if they saw an article about an innovative treatment. Congratulate your cousin on a new job—then mention that their benefits may cover the test.



BE USEFUL

Say that genetic test results are not just "good to know." A person's doctor can change their screening schedule or offer preventive treatments. The results could even be useful for children and siblings to take to their doctors, too.



JUST NUDGE

If you've already explained your family's disease risk, just ask, "Have you given any more thought to genetic testing?" If the answer is "No," leave it at that. They still have their reasons. Asking the question is enough for the moment.

Find resources for talking to your family about genetic risk at connectmyvariant.org.