



MSFriends® Volunteer: Conversation Quick Guide

Topics (Ctrl + Click to go to the section)

Starting a Conversation: MSFriends Helpline	2
Helpline General Greeting	2
Helpline Greeting with Call-Back Option	2
Helpline Frequent Caller* Greeting: 10-Minute Rule	2
Explaining the Helpline	2
Starting a Conversation: MSFriends Paired	2
Paired Greeting	2
Keeping a Conversation Going.....	3
Addressing Boundaries	3
Active Listening Techniques	3
Solutions Focused Conversation Questions.....	4
Follow-up Questions.....	4
Difficult to Understand Callers	4
Other Topics	4
Ending a Conversation: MSFriends Helpline	5
Helpline Frequent Caller Ending: 10-Minute Rule.....	5
Helpline General Ending	5
Helpline Transfer to the MS Navigators during Office Hours	5
Referral to the MS Navigators.....	5
Ending a Conversation: MSFriends Paired	5
General Ending.....	5

Starting a Conversation: MSFriends Helpline

Helpline General Greeting

- “Hi, thank you for calling the MSFriends Helpline. This is <your name>, who am I speaking with?” <Caller introduces themselves.> “Hi <caller name>, what about your MS has you calling today?”

Helpline Greeting with Call-Back Option

- “Hi, thank you for calling the MSFriends Helpline. This is <your name>, who am I speaking with?” <Caller introduces themselves.> “Hi <caller name>, if our call gets disconnected unexpectedly, I can call you back from a blocked number. If you would like this, what phone number is best to reach you at?” <Share phone number> “Thanks <name>. What about your MS has you calling today?”

Helpline Frequent Caller* Greeting: 10-Minute Rule

- “Hi, thank you for calling the MSFriends Helpline. This is <your name>, who am I speaking with?” <Caller introduces themselves.> “Hi <caller name>, I have 10-minutes to connect with you. What about your MS has you calling today?”

*Frequent callers are those who call the MSFriends Helpline several times a day, sometimes calling a handful of times during the same shift.

Explaining the Helpline

- “The MSFriends Helpline is staffed by specially-trained peer connections volunteers who are all living with MS and are here to talk about your experiences and more importantly to listen. We’re available 7 days a week, 9 a.m. to midnight ET.”

Starting a Conversation: MSFriends Paired

Paired Greeting

- “Hi <program participant>, this is <your name>, your MSFriends Paired contact. I’m excited to connect with you for the next <scheduled length of time*>. How has your MS been this past week?”
 - For example: “Hi Jane, this is John, your MSFriends Paired contact. I’m excited to connect with you for the next 40 minutes. How has your MS been this past week?”

*During your first connection with the Paired participant, you two will determine how long and how frequently you two will connect.

Keeping a Conversation Going

Addressing Boundaries

- “This is a topic I don’t share personal information about, but I am here and happy to be a listening ear on this topic.”
- “This is a topic I don’t have personal experience in, but I am here and happy to listen if you want to process your experience with it.”
- “I’m not comfortable sharing about that topic. Can you tell me more about <previous topic you were okay with>?”

If someone requests your personal contact information (full name/phone number/email address)

- Helpline: “I am not able to share that information, but I encourage you to call the Helpline again for any future needs & conversations. I am part of a network of volunteers, so your needs can be easily met regardless of who answers your call.”
- Paired: “I am not able to share that information, but I look forward to continuing to connect with you through the MSFriends Paired program on <agreed upon cadence, e.g. Tuesday evenings>.”

Active Listening Techniques

Restating is repeating what was said in your own words.

- If a person says, “I’m afraid I’m not going to be able to live alone much longer.”
- Restating response: “Are you saying that you’re worried about your ability to live independently?”

Reframing involves restating what has been shared from a different perspective, usually in a positive and supportive manner.

- If a person says, “I have to change everything! I can’t even use the same coffee cup anymore. I need one that is lighter with a large handle.”
- Reframing response: “It is difficult, I know, but it sounds like you are learning to make things easier for yourself.”

Probing is gentle questioning that elicits more information and clarity.

- If a person says, “Sometimes I’m so stiff I just don’t want to do anything.”
- Probing Response: “When does this usually occur?” “What do you do when this happens?” “When did this happen before?” “How was this like the other time?”

Reflecting expresses the underlying feelings revealed in the person's statement.

- If a person says, "I don't want to get a cane; it will make me look funny."
- Reflecting response: "Tell me more about what it means for you to use a cane; you sound upset."

Summarizing is stating what happened during the current conversation, or in past calls, to show how a situation has evolved.

- Summarizing response: "We've talked about a lot of things today: how helpless you feel when you see your children behaving in ways you don't like, but most of all we've talked about how hard it is for you to disagree or speak up for yourself for fear you will lose the people you depend on and care about. Next call we can talk more about this."

Solutions Focused Conversation Questions

- "What did you do differently?"
- "What's been better?"
- "What's good?"
- "What's the best thing that happened in the past week?"

Follow-up Questions

- "What happened next?"
- "What else?"

Difficult to Understand Callers

- "I'm having a bad connection- can you repeat what you just said?"
- "I'm having trouble hearing, could you repeat or speaker <slower/louder/etc.>?"
- "I'm hearing that you're interested in talking about <topic you heard>. What have you experienced recently?" OR "I'm hearing that you're interested in talking about <topic you heard>. What has changed with that recently?"
 - For example: "I'm hearing that you're interested in talking about mobility. What have you experienced recently?"
 - For example: "I'm hearing that you're interested in talking about cognition. What has changed with that recently?"

Other Topics

- [Managing Derogatory, Discriminatory, or Racist Statements](#)
- [Difficult Conversations and Crisis Situations](#)
[Crisis Support Resources](#)

Ending a Conversation: MSFriends Helpline

Helpline Frequent Caller Ending: 10-Minute Rule

- “<Name>, it looks like we are at the 10-minute mark and our time is up for today. I need to go since other callers are calling in reaching out for support. I hope you have a good rest of your day. Thanks for calling the MSFriends Helpline. Bye.”

Helpline General Ending

- “I’m glad we could talk about <main topic> and make a plan for how you can <way to address that problem>. Thanks for calling the MSFriends Helpline today. Bye.”
 - For example: “I’m glad we could talk about your recent heat sensitivity and make a plan for how you can manage the heat at your son’s upcoming soccer game by preparing a cooling vest and umbrella. Thanks for calling the MSFriends Helpline today. Bye.”

Helpline Transfer to the [MS Navigators](#) during Office Hours

- “I’m glad we could talk about the <resources> you’re looking for. The MS Navigators are a great source of information about that. I’m going to transfer you to them now. In case the call gets disconnected, their phone number is 1-800-344-4867. They’re available Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. ET (7 a.m. - 5 p.m. MT). I’m going to transfer you now. Have a good rest of your day. Bye.”

Referral to the [MS Navigators](#)

- “I’m glad we could talk about the <resources> you’re looking for. Like I mentioned, I recommend you call the MS Navigators since they’re a great source of information about that. Their phone number is 1-800-344-4867 and they’re available between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. ET (7 a.m. - 5 p.m. MT). They’re available Monday through Friday. Thanks for calling the MSFriends Helpline. Bye.”

Ending a Conversation: MSFriends Paired

General Ending

- “I’m glad we could talk about <main topic from the conversation>. The next time we talk I look forward to hearing how <plan> goes. Have a good rest of your day. Bye.”
For example, “I’m glad we could talk about how you talk to your daughter about your MS. The next time we talk I look forward to hearing how your conversation goes. Have a good rest of your day. Bye.”