



## **WII Relationships and Intimacy: Message for the Commanding Officer**

The meaning behind “Communicate to Relate” captures the essential nature of communication in the doctor-patient and romantic partner relationships. Wounded, ill, and injured (WII) service members are impacted by quality of care in their doctor-patient relationship, and quality of life in their romantic partner relationship.

Asking questions and providing information to health care providers can improve service members’ care. Talking with doctors helps build trust and leads to better results, quality, safety, and satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> However, research indicates that doctors do not routinely initiate conversations about intimacy with patients. So, it’s important to put tools in the hands of WII members to help them get the conversation rolling to improve their quality of care.

WII members face many challenges, and sexual dysfunction is fairly common. Their wound, illness, injury, or even treatment can impact their ability or desire to be intimate. In the face of these challenges their hope is communication. Emotional intimacy is the bedrock of sexual satisfaction, which is closely tied to overall quality of life. Empowering WII members to communicate effectively with their partners about their intimacy concerns helps build bonds of trust and emotional intimacy that will aid in renegotiating physical intimacy.

What you can do:

- Encourage WII members to seek the help of medical professionals and counselors for their intimacy concerns; helpful resources are available for them, such as the [4G Doc Talk Guide](#)
- Encourage WII members to have the courage to communicate with their partners; resources are available to help them, such as the [Dare to CARE Guide](#)
- Encourage WII members to choose to ACT: Acknowledge what they are going through, Communicate with their partner, and Talk with their doctor. More information available in the [Choose to ACT infographic](#)



## References

1. Questions to Ask Your Doctor. *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*. 2012.  
HYPERLINK "Questions To Ask Your Doctor: Questions Are the Answer. September 2012.  
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. <http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html>" [Questions To Ask Your Doctor: Questions Are the Answer. September 2012. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html](http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html) . Accessed May 15, 2014.