

25 Ways to Support a Friend with Cancer

(Expanded version)

♡ Be...

- present.
 - when you are with your friend, be fully with them, set aside thoughts or devices that may distract you.
- a confidant.
 - Be there to listen, yet it's not your story to tell to others, unless your friend gives you permission to share.
- selfless.
 - This is a hard time for you too. Yet your friend needs you to be focused on them while you're with them. You will have your own processing to experience. Choose to pour love towards your friend and find someone else to share your heart with, unless your friend invites you to.

♡ Listen...

- to hear their heart.
 - Listen with the intent to understand what is being said, and without preconceived thoughts of what you want to say next.
- without trying to fix anything.
 - Although we want to, we can't fix the situation yet we can be a good listener to our friend.
- to preferences/requests.
 - Be sure to hear what your friend's preferences, requests and needs are, and do not impose what yours are on them.

♡ Offer...

- to go with them to appointments, scans, treatments, or a support group.
- to take notes at appointments.
 - Those first number of appointments are information overload, so offer to go in so your friend can listen, and you can be the notetaker so that later if needed, your friend has them to go back and refer to.
- to organize meals.
 - Listen to what they really want, the types of food, the number of times they want meals per week. See if they are okay with a cooler being left outside for the meals to be dropped off in. Also, Be sure meals are dropped off in containers that do not need to be returned.

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- to organize text and email chains.
 - Rather than your friend keeping everyone updated, you can start a text/email chain so information gets passed along to every person. Also, using a website, like caring bridge, is good way to keep people informed as well.
- to clean their home and run errands for them.
 - You can help clean or find a local organization that provide cleaning services for people going through cancer treatments. Also, you can collect money from friends and hire someone to clean for them.
- to have playdates and/or drive their kids to school/activities.
 - Lending a hand to help with the kids can give your friend time to rest when necessary and keep the kids engaged in their activities.

♡ Give...

- your time.
 - Being available to your friend to listen, simply be beside them, help them, etc., is a precious gift.
- thoughtful gifts.
 - Give gifts without the expectation of receiving something in return.
 - Gift cards - grocery, gas, restaurants, cleaning, lawn care services, hotel points, etc.
 - Cozy items such as a blanket, prayer shawl, robe, slippers, socks, etc.
 - Inspiring and encouraging words in cards, books, magazines, notes, journal, scripture, etc.
 - Other practical items lotion, chapstick, beverages such as water/ginger ale/protein shake/tea, favorite snacks, etc.
- productive advice/feedback, when it's asked for.
 - You are there to be beside them, not tell them what to do. Be present and listen and when asked for your advice, share it. And if you aren't asked, ask if they would like it and listen to their reply, even if it's not the one you want to hear.
- permission to not reply or not send a thank you note.
 - When sending a text, card, gift or meal include a note that says "no reply" or "no thank you" needed. You are giving from your heart, not to get something in return. Doing this can free your friend from internal pressure of having to respond to you, or send a thank you note your way, while they are healing.

♡ Honor and Respect...

- physical and mental space.
 - It's human nature to want to help, yet, be aware of when your friend needs space physically as well as from engaging in conversations in person or online. Silence and solitude at times may be what they need.

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- desire for normalcy.

- Your friend may keep doing things you think they shouldn't. Let them live and keep life as normal as possible, if this is what they need, and choose. You can always offer to help yet respect their answer.



- decisions, whether you agree or not.

- You may or may not agree with every decision that is made. Listen, learn and give your input when asked, and honor your friend's decisions, however easy or difficult it may be.

Pray...



- for your friend.

- for their family.

- for the doctors, medical staff, care team, including yourself.

- Pray for yourself and for guidance on how to best support your friend during this time.



Remember...

- it's not about you, it's about them.

- Sometimes we say and do things to make ourselves feel better but it isn't about us feeling better but about being the friend your friend needs beside them.

- to acknowledge their loved ones too.

- Your friend's loved ones are also processing all of this. Be there for them too. You can send them notes, cards, gifts, games, care packages, meals, experiences, prayers. etc.

- stay in touch with them once treatment ends.

- When the treatments end, a different journey begins. Stay in touch. Check-in. Offer to go to follow up appointments, scans, support groups, etc. Continue to walk beside them as they heal and process all they went through.