

A GUIDE FOR OTHERS

TWELVE WAYS TO HELP YOUR LOVED ONE WITH CANCER

- 1 Offer your support. They may be reluctant to ask for help, but it's support from people like you that can make all the difference.
- 2 Offer to help with a specific task, even if it's simply to sit with them during or after treatment. Sometimes, the most important thing you can do for someone is to be there.
- 3 Listen. Allow them to express what they're going through without judging them, telling them how they should feel, or trying to put a positive spin on everything. If you struggle knowing what to say, remember that a warm hug or a tender touch can say a lot.
- 4 Educate yourself about the illness but don't give advice unless you're asked. The more you know about the diagnosis and treatment, the better prepared you'll be to help. But that doesn't mean you should tell the person what they should or shouldn't do, unless they specifically ask for your opinion or want to know what you've researched.
- 5 Treatment decisions are ultimately always up to your loved one, so be supportive even if you don't always agree.
- 6 Stay connected. Some illnesses can involve lengthy treatment, so it's important not to just provide support at the time of diagnosis and then let your attention lapse. Your support can be just as important after treatment as it is before.
- 7 When you can't visit in-person, let your loved one know you're thinking of them with a call or text, or by sending a card.
- 8 Don't tell the person you know how they feel or compare their situation to someone else's. Everyone's circumstances are unique.
- 9 Don't tell them that "everything will be fine." Such platitudes can just make it harder for them to talk to you about the challenges of their situation.
- 10 Don't say that your loved one needs to "stay positive" or "look on the bright side." Rather than pressuring them to behave in a certain way, make it clear that they're free to express how they really feel.
- 11 Take things personally if the person doesn't want to talk or is angry or upset.
- 12 Try to keep your relationship as normal as possible. That can mean sharing a joke or a laugh when appropriate.