

Emotional Needs of Cancer Patients

Understandably, cancer patients need a great deal of emotional support. They are dealing with feelings of anxiety, fear, isolation and depression to name a few. In addition, they may feel guilt for burdening their family and friends with their care. By being sensitive to these needs and looking for ways to meet them, cancer care ministers can bring much needed comfort to a difficult journey.

Someone to hold their hand at the hospital

Most people feel intimidated by doctors and afraid of hospitals, even when in the best of health. Imagine the overwhelming anxiety and despair that makes it difficult to comprehend a cancer diagnosis or description of treatment options. It is so important to show support for the patient by being with them at the hospital. Even when they say it is not necessary, it is an invaluable comfort.

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

– Proverbs 17:7

- Listen and take notes at the doctor's office.
- Be a companion to drive them to the appointment.
- Stay with them at the hospital during chemotherapy.
- Relieve family members who stay at the hospital after surgery.

Someone to bring joy to their world

When a person is diagnosed with cancer, suddenly their world goes dark. Often, the people around the patient are so overwhelmed with the seriousness of the situation that they can hardly smile let alone laugh or sing. Yet, science and the Bible agree that a positive outlook is necessary for health.

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

– Proverbs 17:22

Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.

– Proverbs 12:25

- Find out what brings them pleasure and share it with them
 - Poetry, music, art, hobbies, etc.
- Laughter fights fear. Share appropriate jokes and humorous stories.
- Bring flowers, a potted plant or something beautiful to remind them you care.



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different

Someone to help them remember good things

Bring comfort to cancer patients by helping them remember and hold onto the things in their life that are blessings.

Light in a messenger's eyes brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.

– Proverbs 15:30

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.

– Proverbs 27:9

- Ask them to tell you about their family: spouse, parents, siblings, children, grandchildren.
- Help them make a scrapbook of happy memories.
- Ask them about the best moments in their life: college, traveling, wedding, parenthood.
- Help them look beyond the cancer by talking about future plans.

Someone to cry with them

Cancer patients are going through the most difficult trial of their lives, and it can feel so lonely. In an effort to be strong and put on a brave face, sometimes friends and family members withhold expressing their grief in front of the patient. In truth, genuine tears and shared sorrow is one of the greatest communications of love and concern for the person who has cancer.

Although laughter and joy is something that cancer patients need, they will also have moments of deep grief. It is important to be sensitive to their mood and to allow them to be honest about their emotions. In these moments, resist the temptation to tell them everything will be alright and downplay what they are feeling. Without giving in to despair and pessimism, being a shoulder to cry on and crying with them can be a tremendous comfort.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

– Romans 12:15

Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on a wound, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.

– Proverbs 25:20

- Do not act as though their tears embarrass you or make you uncomfortable.
- Carry tissues with you for unexpected tears.
- Let them know that it is okay to cry and to feel sad.
- Hold their hand.



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