

# 12 Keys to Supporting Someone with Cancer

## 1. Don't play the cheerleader role

If you always act cheerful and positive, you make it harder for the patient to express her fears and concerns.

## 2. Honor the patient's wishes, even if you don't agree with them

It's fine to supply information and give your opinion. But it's up to the patient to decide what to do. Honoring the patient's beliefs and decisions is a true act of love.

## 3. What is the first thing to say or do when someone you care about tells you that he has cancer?

Show that you care and will be there to support him. Your presence may be all he really needs.

## 4. Know what *not* to say

It hurts to be told, "I know how you feel" or "Don't worry; everything will be ok." Don't feel that you must say something. Just let the patient know that you care.

## 5. Help your loved one to develop a pleasure list

Help her to list things she finds refreshing and enjoyable - anything from petting her cat to calling a special friend. This puts her focus on what she *can* do - and on what enhances her life.

## 6. Find new and better ways to solve problems

There are many problem-solving techniques available. For example, try listing your options, then evaluating the pros and cons of each possibility, then developing a plan of action. Find the problem-solving technique that works best for you.

## 7. List practical ways you can help

Rent the patient's favorite movies, cook meals and freeze them for later, go on errands, water the garden; the list is endless.

## 8. Improve your communication and listening skills

Learn to listen actively. Learn to sense when the patient wants to talk and when he wants silence. Silent times are natural, and you don't need to fill them in with small talk.

## 9. Realize the effect the patient's illness can have on you; take care of yourself

Set up your own support program. Develop your own pleasure list. When you take care of yourself, the patient will benefit.

## 10. Get other people to stay in touch with the patient

Set up a plan of action. Get the patient's friends to call and send cards on a regular basis.

## 11. Help the patient to start a journal

He can use it to record practical information, such as when he takes his pills; or to develop and articulate goals; or to express his thoughts and feelings.

## 12. Help the patient to set up a coping strategy

Support the patient in developing an attitude of discovery. This will help her to find better ways to solve problems and to make positive changes in her life.