



Do you know someone who spends time providing physical, emotional, or practical support to a family member or friend? Many caregivers feel alone, helpless, confused, unprepared, tired, and unable to provide for the needs of their family member or friend. Often, people caring for another need help and do not know how to ask for it.

How to Support Someone Caring for Another

Ask the caregiver how they are doing.

Let them know you respect their privacy, but care about them and want to offer support and a listening ear.

Reach out to caregivers with a touch, a hug, or other physical expression or support.

Supportive human contact is important and can be very meaningful to someone who is giving important care and experiencing the many losses that accompany being a caregiver. (However, it is always important to check to make sure they are okay being touched.)

Spend time with the person who is seriously ill.

Family caregivers are often the only link the care receiver has with the outside world. Offering to spend time with the person can be a gift to both the patient and the caregiver. Bring a book or newspaper to read aloud, a game to play, photos to share, or just a friendly ear for conversation.

Offer specific help.

Saying "call me if you need me" is vague and may not appear to be a sincere offer of help. Often caregivers do not want to be a bother or may not feel they have the time to make a call, as it is one more thing for them to do. Be specific, ask the caregiver if you can go shopping, run an errand, make a phone call, cook a meal, or sit with the person who is ill. By offering to do something specific, you are communicating that you are really willing to help the caregiver.

Tell the caregiver it is okay to take a break from the caregiving role.

You can let them know that it is okay to take time to renew themselves; they deserve it and need to care for themselves in order to continue providing care. Routine breaks are much like putting fuel in a car so it will continue to run.

Adapted from information provided by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

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