



**Be Uplifted Inc
Breast Cancer Charity**

Helpful hints for supporting your friend or family member after a cancer diagnosis.

Being told you have cancer is the most life changing thing that you will ever possibly be told.

Things you can do that might be helpful

- ▲ Ask your friend if she would like help. (Not everyone will want the same level of support).
- ▲ Women who are single or do not have a good family support may need more assistance than those who have a partner or supportive families.
- ▲ Accompany your friend to her appointments (take notes or record the information).
- ▲ Cook her favourite meal for her to freeze.
- ▲ Organise a cooking group and provide a week's worth of meals and just drop them off. (Remember, it may not be convenient to stay).
- ▲ Do her washing or ironing or other household chores.
- ▲ A quick text to ask if she needs anything when you are at the shops, i.e. chemist, paper shop can be helpful to pick up forgotten or unexpectedly needed items.
- ▲ Help her set up a SMS service with her chemist to keep up to date with all her medications
- ▲ Offer to pick up or drop off the children to school. You could take them home to your house to play if that is appropriate.
- ▲ Flowers are little reminders that tell her she is not alone.
- ▲ Get her to pick a code word that you all know like SUPER so when you ask "how are you feeling today"? If she says Super then you all know it's not the time to talk about cancer/her cancer. She is still your friend but now she needs to fit cancer into her already busy life.
- ▲ When undergoing treatment (especially Chemotherapy), at different times, people become unable to resist germs and viruses. So it is very important to delay visits if you are unwell. A text to let her know would be great.
- ▲ Cards and uplifting notes can lift her spirits.
- ▲ Invite her to have a coffee with you.
- ▲ Sunlight and fresh air is good for the soul. Does she have a favourite park or place? Offer to go with her.
- ▲ Organise someone to mow the lawn and water the garden.
- ▲ Organise one person to update others about test results and other info. You could even set up a special closed facebook page if you are savvy with internet, etc.
- ▲ Offer to help her deal with emails.
- ▲ When she is feeling low remind her that she can talk to a counsellor on the phone or at Cancer Council offices for free. 13 11 20. Sometimes she will need to hear from someone who has been there before her.
- ▲ Paperwork can be overwhelming- is there one person in your group of friends who loves this? Recruit them.

- ▲ It is a good idea to keep a running record of medical expenses as they may be tax claimable. Offer to set up a spreadsheet or print out some hard copy pages so she can keep a record.
- ▲ Offer to get some of her favourite books from the local library.
- ▲ A little kit of hand cream, lip balm, Panadol, tissues, a pen and note book is handy to put together.
- ▲ Does your friend belong to a faith community? Offer to take her. If you don't want to stay, drop her off and offer to pick her up. Why not join her if you don't normally go. Most faith communities are very welcoming.
- ▲ Encourage her to write down things she needs as she thinks of them (Chemo affects your memory).
- ▲ Remind her that saying "thank you" is all the payment you need.
- ▲ Allow her to talk and try to listen (this is often the hardest but best gift of all).
- ▲ If you have to postpone helping-try to organise someone to take your place.
- ▲ Remember it is ok to not know what to say at times. Just be honest and tell her " I don't know what to say right now".
- ▲ She will appreciate you not trying to fix her.
- ▲ Sometimes a hug says much more than words.
- ▲ There is a multitude of services that can assist cancer patients in many ways.
- ▲ Google is your friend.

Things to avoid as they may not be helpful.

- ▲ Your friend may find it difficult to accept help. She won't want to be a burden. So try not to give her all the details that you need to plan in your own life to help her out.
- ▲ Try not to overstay - treatment can be very tiring.
- ▲ Try not to offer advice about having cancer if this has not been your experience.
- ▲ Try not to tell stories of other peoples cancer experiences.
- ▲ Don't ask her "how long she has got" (i.e. her prognosis) or other prying questions.
- ▲ If your friend is feeling low- don't try and tell her all the reasons why she shouldn't feel this way - just try and listen to her.
- ▲ As much as you can try not to be intrusive. It is a fine balance between helping and intruding.
- ▲ Try not to take things personally if your friend is a bit short or angry.

Be yourself.