



Cancer Care & Kindness Guide:

**What to say, what not to say,
and 21 simple ways to
show you care**

When a family member, loved one or friend you love or care about, has cancer, it can be hard to know what to say or do. You might worry about saying the wrong thing, asking too many questions, or making an already difficult time even harder.

Sometimes, that uncertainty causes us to pull away when the person we care about may need us most. You don't need perfect words or grand gestures. Often, the most meaningful thing you can do is just listen, stay in touch, offer practical help and keep showing up.

Say this:

- "I'm here. You don't have to talk if you don't want to."
- "What would be most helpful for you this week?"
- "Would you like me to listen, or would you prefer some company and a distraction?"
- "I'm thinking of you. There's no need to reply."
- "I don't know exactly what to say, but I care about you."
- "It's okay if you don't feel positive today."

Try to avoid:

- "Everything happens for a reason." Even when well-intended, words like these can minimise what someone is going through.
- "You have to stay positive." People living with cancer shouldn't feel responsible for being cheerful or optimistic for others.
- Sharing frightening stories about other people with cancer. Every person's experience is different. Respect their choices and allow them to decide how much they want to discuss.
- Unasked-for medical advice or miracle cures.
- "Let me know if you need anything." Instead, offer something specific: a meal, a lift, some shopping, or simply your company.

Cancer can leave people feeling isolated. You don't need perfect words, grand gestures or lots of money to make a difference. Listen. Offer practical help. Respect their choices. And, above all, keep showing up.



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Caring for someone with cancer can feel heavy. As you offer simple words, practical help and steady presence, may this guide strengthen you to share the load with gentleness and love.

21 Small Ways to Show you Care

1. Send a message without expecting a reply.
2. Deliver a simple meal.
3. Offer a lift to treatment or the doctor.
4. Do the shopping.
5. Collect medication.
6. Walk the dog or help with feeding pets and vet visits.
7. Help with school runs.
8. Sit with them during treatment.
9. Bring them something to read.
10. Help with housework.
11. Check in with their caregiver.
12. Remember important treatment dates.
13. Send a voice note instead of calling.
14. Offer to make phone calls or appointments.
15. Help with paperwork.
16. Visit – but ask first.
17. Talk about ordinary things too.
18. Keep inviting them out, even if they often decline.
19. Check in weeks and months after diagnosis.
20. Respect their need for privacy and space.
21. **Keep showing up.**

