

How to Help an Ailing Friend or Family Member

(ARA) - When someone you care about is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, offers of assistance can be overwhelming in number and wide-ranging in scope. Each person's needs are different, but there are certain things you can do to make sure that your loved one's needs are being met without causing the additional stress of responding to each offer of assistance.

"Try to streamline the network of support," says Denise Pozen of So Tell Me, a personal health organizer. "Have one person talk to the patient or family members to develop a list of needs and corresponding tasks." This person can then coordinate assigning volunteers/friends to address the tasks and do the follow up. Having one designated person communicate with friends and relatives on the patient's progress is also very helpful.

AREAS IN WHICH SUPPORT IS OFTEN REQUESTED AND APPRECIATED INCLUDE:

- Transportation - providing a means of getting to and from medical appointments can relieve the stress and burden for the patient and other family members.
- Errands - doing the grocery shopping, picking children up from school or transporting them to and from sporting events and activities will lend a great deal of support.
- Cooking meals - preparing some favorite dishes frees time to focus on other priorities. Some meals can be prepared for immediate use, and others can be frozen for future use.
- Bill paying - staying on top of finances, including the increased number of medical bills and insurance claims will reduce stress.
- Household chores - cleaning and keeping up with the laundry as well as yard work and gardening will provide a feeling of normalcy and lessen the impact of the illness on daily routines.
- Dog walking and pet sitting - taking on this responsibility if the patient is admitted to the hospital for any extended period will provide peace of mind. Assistance with some of the daily pet care activities may also be appreciated.
- Letter writing - allowing the patient to keep up communications with those they care about will give them a sense of control and will keep relationships current.



No matter what type of assistance you can offer, offering it with an organized and coordinated network of support can be one of the best ways to make a difference when a friend or family member is diagnosed with a serious illness.

Courtesy of ARAcontent