



HEALTH AWARENESS

Supporting A Friend Who Has Cancer



(NAPSA)—When a friend is diagnosed with cancer, it's natural to want to provide support and encouragement. It's not always easy to know how to do that or where to go for information. PLWC.org, the patient information Web site of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, offers practical suggestions about supporting someone living with cancer and is a great resource with answers to some of the most common—and sometimes difficult—questions.

PLWC.org suggests checking in with your friend on a regular basis. Purposefully make plans for the future to give your friend something to look forward to. When with your friend, allow time for fun and laughter, but don't shy away from sadness and reflection. Talk and interact with your friend as much as possible in the same way you did before the diagnosis. Let your friend know it is okay to turn down a call or visit—that you'll be there the next time when it's more convenient.

It can be difficult to find the right words when a friend is facing a serious illness. Know that it is okay to say "I am sorry this happened to you." PLWC.org recommends avoiding saying things

such as "I know how you feel," or "I know just what you should do."

Don't be afraid to directly ask your friend how you can help. Keep in mind, however, that a friend coping with cancer may find it difficult to ask for help. Offer to help with practical, everyday tasks that may seem routine to you but can be challenging for someone with a cancer diagnosis, such as running errands or cleaning the house. If your friend has children, offer to babysit or drive the kids to and from school and evening activities.

PLWC.org also suggests driving your friend to doctors' appointments. If it is an exam, you can help by taking notes so your friend's time can be spent interacting with the physician. Sitting with your friend during a chemotherapy session can also provide great comfort.

Remember that your friend's needs may change frequently due to treatments, symptoms and side effects. Be flexible and, most importantly, make time to be there for your friend when you're needed.

Be sure to check www.plwc.org frequently for doctor-approved cancer and coping information as well as creative ideas about how to provide support.