Article Series Caregivers All

Three ways to help your loved one during cancer treatment

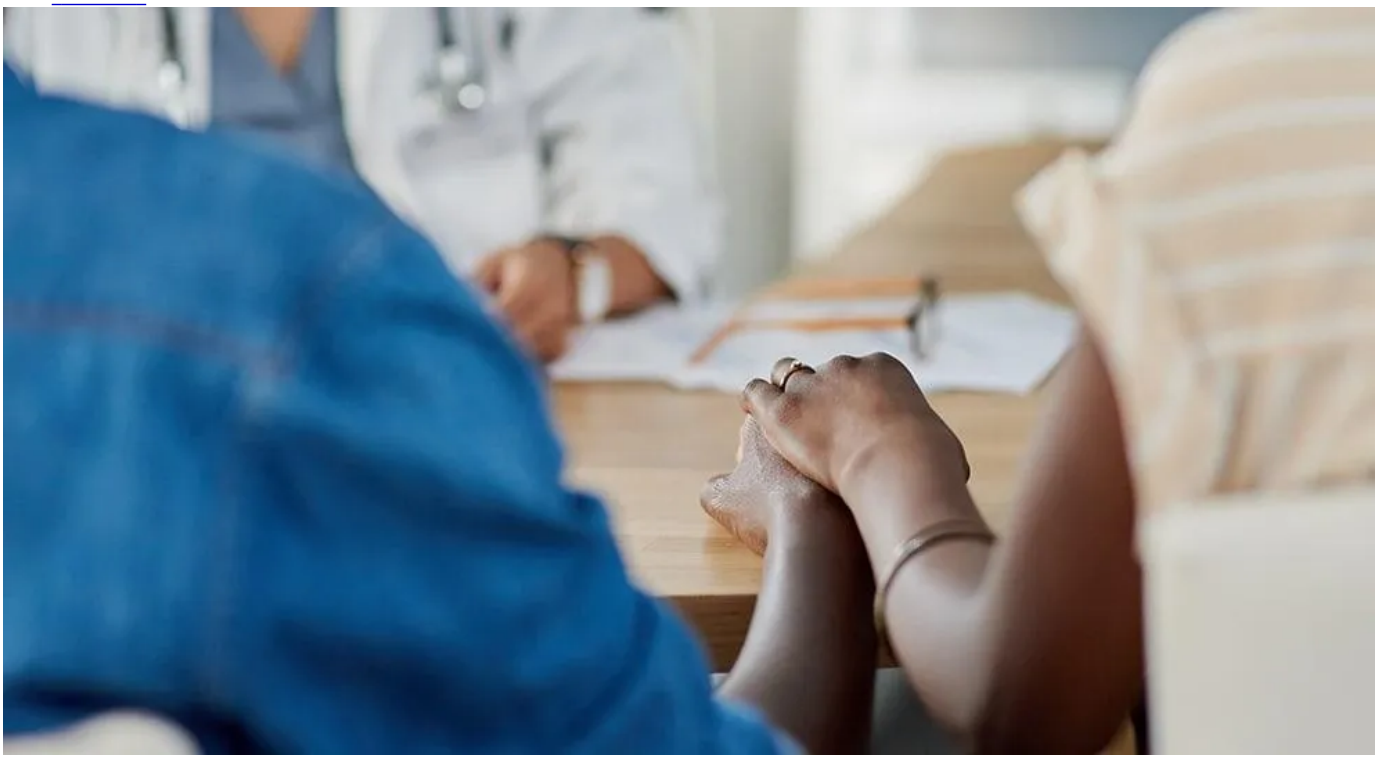
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All Caregivers

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You may not think of yourself as a caregiver. But anyone can be one. A caregiver is someone who’s there for a loved one, providing emotional care and practical help in their time of need. A caregiver may have many roles. And those roles will evolve as your loved one’s needs change over time.

As a caregiver, you may have noticed your loved one going through a wide range of emotions. While this can be difficult for both of you, your willingness to listen and

offer support can make a big difference.

There are different types of support you can provide:

Emotional

Try to be there to listen to problems and offer support as your loved one makes decisions. This could also be an opportunity for you to strengthen your relationship.

Practical

Taking care of small everyday tasks can help your loved one in a big way. Certain jobs may be great to share with others who want to help.

Tips for offering emotional support

It can require thought, care and empathy to be there for someone facing cancer.

Below are a few ideas that may help.

- **Listen**

Sometimes all your loved one needs is someone to listen and hear what they're going through.

- **Communicate thoughtfully**

Remember that people communicate in different ways. Respect your loved one's need to share or remain quiet. They may also want to talk to another person about some of the challenges they may be facing.

- **Ask how to support your loved one**

Everyone needs different kinds of help and emotional care. Ask what you can do for your loved one. They may have unique ideas and needs.

- **Speak from your heart**

It won't always be easy to find the words to say to them. But it's important that you and your loved one have open communication.

- **Make decisions together**

When choices need to be made, stay engaged as you explore options together. And when it comes time to take the next step, remember to support one another along the way.

- **Take time to solve problems**

Remember that problems can't always be solved with one conversation. Many concerns and questions can come up along the way, and conversations may get complicated.

- **Be generous with gestures**

When words fail, a heartfelt gesture can make all the difference. Giving a hug and a shoulder to lean on can sometimes be more comforting than anything you say.

Tips for offering practical support

If you focus on things that are out of your control, it may leave you feeling helpless. Instead, try to focus on the specific things you can do to help your loved one.

Help with daily tasks

There are lots of small tasks you can take on to help your loved one. Here are a few ways you could help:

- Shop for necessities, like groceries and household supplies
- Help with household chores
- Organize paperwork, like bills and insurance forms

A free app designed to help manage life with cancer

LivingWith® is a free app, developed by Pfizer Oncology, designed to help you manage the care of a loved one living with cancer.

Visit ***ThisIsLivingWithCancer.com/living-with-app*** to learn more.

Three ways to help your loved one in treatment

1. Work with your loved one's healthcare team

You can play a valuable role in connecting your loved one to his or her healthcare team:

- Educate yourself so that you can help them understand their diagnosis
- Take your loved one to their doctor appointments
- Encourage your loved one to ask questions and take an active role during doctor appointments
- Be an active listener and take notes during the visit

2. Help your loved one prepare

Familiarize yourself with possible side effects of the medicines your loved one takes. Make sure your loved one knows to share what they're experiencing with their healthcare team. Side effects can be important signals that let your loved one's healthcare team know what's happening in his or her body.

3. Set reminders for taking medicine

You can do a lot to help your loved one remember to take their medicine, including:

- Tell your loved one when it's time to take their medicine, whether in person, over the phone or by sending a text or email reminder
- Add reminders to their online calendar or mobile device
- Place sticky notes around their home
- If your loved one is comfortable with it, ask others to pitch in and send reminders too

Remember to care for yourself

To be a good caregiver, you must first care for yourself. Consider the tips below to help you find a better balance.

- **Every day, set aside some time for yourself**

Maybe it's the peace and quiet of reading a book, the fresh air you breathe while taking a walk or the enjoyment you get from seeing a movie. Whatever it is, take time to recharge so you have the energy to take better care of your loved one.

- **Ask to adjust your work schedule**

If you need to dedicate more time to your caregiving responsibilities, your employer may be able to adjust your work schedule or workload. Ask if your company has a family leave, elder care or other employee benefit policy that can help.

- **Plan healthy meals**

A little planning can go a long way when it comes to eating a healthy diet, so try to prepare meals in advance. When you and your loved one are headed to a long day of appointments, it may help to pack a sandwich, salad or snacks to keep your energy up.

- **Stay active**

Any kind of exercise can help you stay healthy. Walking, swimming and bicycling are all good options. But you can choose something that works for you. Even gardening or cleaning could count; just find 15 to 30 minutes a day to be active.

- **Try to get a good night’s sleep**

If you’re having trouble sleeping through the night, short naps may help you rest. At night, try breathing exercises or soft music to help you fall asleep. If you’re still struggling to get the sleep you need, your personal doctor may be able to help.

- **Don’t be afraid to delegate**

When you feel overwhelmed, ask family, friends, neighbors and even coworkers for help. Some people will say no, and that’s okay. But many will say yes again and again. Think of tasks that may take time but don’t require a lot of skill, such as laundry or grocery shopping.

- **Talk to other caregivers**

It may feel like you’re the only one in the world facing these challenges. But you’re not alone. Through local support groups, you can connect with other people who share the same feelings and are experiencing similar struggles.