Article Series Talking About Cancer

Asking For Support, Minus the Guilt

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All Talking About Cancer

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Emotional support and help with everyday activities can be a part of your cancer journey. And if you struggle with the idea of asking for help, you're not alone.

There are different kinds of help, and you may need different kinds at different times. For example, you may need emotional support to lift your spirits or navigate a tough moment. Then there's practical help, which might take the form of household tasks like doing laundry or the dishes, or errands like going to the grocery store.

It’s common for people living with cancer to experience guilt or worry about being a burden. Asking for help may also make you feel like you have less independence. All these emotions are valid, and processing them is part of living with cancer.

So is learning to ask for help — in your own time and in your own way. And when it comes to managing your cancer and making adjustments to your life, learning to reduce feelings of guilt may help you feel more in control. Here are some **Microsteps** that can be taken, and you may find them helpful. You don’t have to try them all, but you may find that some of them are relevant and helpful to you. As always, consult with your care team for the management practices that are best for you.

Recognizing your right to ask for help.

Understand that it's perfectly okay to ask for help when you need it. If something is holding you back from asking for support, getting clear about specific reasons you might need help may help you move forward and ask for what you need. For example, “I live alone” or “I’m going through a very difficult time.”

Saying “yes” to offers of help.

If someone asks “Is there something I can do to help?” be ready to say “yes”! You may find that saying yes gets easier over time. If it helps, consider having a list ready in advance of tasks people can help you with, such as grocery shopping or child care.

Being specific about what you need.

When asking for help, try to be clear and specific about what you need. This may make it easier for others to provide the exact support you require. For example, if your treatment schedule leads to you generally feeling too tired to cook on Tuesdays, you can let someone who wants to help know that Tuesday is the best day for them to drop off a hot meal.

Telling someone how their help makes a difference.

When asking for support, try sharing how that support benefits you. How does it make your life easier? Does it make you feel seen and loved? You don’t need to justify asking for help, but sharing how it helps you can be a powerful motivator for others and may help them understand your situation.

Setting up a regular check-in.

If you have a caregiver network, try setting up a recurring time to update them on your needs — with a group email, group video call or in-person meetup. Regular communication can help keep your needs clear and current without repeated asking.

Sharing your gratitude for someone whose support makes a difference.

Consider ways to regularly acknowledge and thank your friends and family for their support. Showing appreciation can strengthen your relationships and encourage continued support.

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