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Supporting Loved Ones Throughout Their Treatment

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Living with cancer is a journey that can evolve over time. The support your loved one needs today might be different from what they need next month or next year.

For example, there may be times when you need to learn more about their treatment, side effects, and how your loved one responds physically and emotionally to living with cancer.

As a caregiver, you are an important person in your loved one's life. These **Microsteps** can be taken to help you offer caregiving support at different stages of their journey. As always, consult with your loved one's care team for the management practices that are best for you both.

Starting the conversation about how you'll support your loved one over time.

If you're involved in your loved one's medical care, consider asking them how they'd like you to be involved. Do they want you to take an active role in decision making and advocating, or support them in a different way? Over time, you can check in with them to ask how their needs have changed, and how you can adjust your care to best support them.

Setting regular check-ins to update your caregiver plan.

It may help to have a plan, and checking in with your loved one regularly can allow you to adjust your plan as circumstances change. For example, try having a conversation on the first day of each month to ask your loved one how you can best support them. You can check in more or less frequently as needed.

Documenting the journey by taking notes.

Consider writing down important notes from doctor appointments and conversations. This creates a record you can return to over time, and may ease your loved one's stress, since the amount of information may be overwhelming.

Joining a support group for cancer caregivers.

Connecting with other caregivers at various stages of the cancer journey can provide emotional relief and practical advice. These groups can provide a space to share experiences and feelings with others who understand your caregiving journey – and give you a sense of how the journey may change over time. Check with your loved one's care team for guidance on specific support groups that may be most relevant for you.

Reaching out to a more experienced caregiver.

If there's someone in your network who's further along in their cancer caregiving journey, consider reaching out and asking them to share their experience and

perspective.

Creating a daily joy ritual you both can share.

Try taking a break together to do something lighthearted or fun. It can be as simple as watching a silly video, playing a game, working on a puzzle, or putting on your favorite playlist. When people have friendships and are able to spend time with loved ones, they may experience a positive effect on their feeling of well-being and overall meaning.

Letting your loved one know you’re there for them.

As you navigate changes and uncertainty together, simple statements of loving and caring may give your loved one a sense of security. Telling them “I’m here for you” can be a powerful way to offer reassurance during a difficult time.