How to show up for your loved ones in times of need

"Please let me know if there's anything I can do."

There is **always** something you can do. However, for the person who is sick, recovering, grieving, taking care of a new baby or an elderly person, coming up with a list of tasks, wants or needs adds to their already stretched mental load.

Your intent is true—you want to help and offer support. Figuring out how to lighten the load for your loved one is part of the job. Asking them wide-open questions may be more than they have the capacity for at any given moment.

Offer specific care and help

The more specific the better—being vague puts the burden on your person. Chores don't stop when life already feels full. Daily tasks quietly add to the weight. Make an offer and give options so it's easier for them to say yes. Let them know what days you are available to walk the dog, mow the lawn, run errands locally or wash and fold a couple loads of laundry. Offer to take the kids to the park or drive your person to their next appointment. Bring dinner over, or better, organize a meal train delivery.

Create a care package to drop off

Think about what would provide a little pick-up for a friend who needs extra care and support. Collect an assortment of hydrating drinks, lip balms, a picture book or magazines, flowers (in a vase) or a low-maintenance plant, face masks or hand lotion.

Or drop off the most useful items—paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes.

If there's a new baby in the house, diapers and wipes are always welcome. Remember the new parents by including comfort items like snacks and drinks. Even just a basket of fruit and a case of water helps.

Be mindful with visits

Always ask before visiting. Visiting and socializing, even with family or an old friend, may take energy not everyone has to give. Keep your visits on the short side: 20, 30 or 60 minutes maximum. Read the room when it comes to conversation. They may or may not want to talk about their situation. Come prepared with other topics that may interest them. Watch a movie together or simply offer companionship, supporting your loved one by sitting in silence.

Stay in touch

Consistency is key. When your loved one hears from you regularly, they know you can be counted on. Send a low-stakes text, mail a card or call if they're a telephone person.

Steer clear of...

Stay away from discussing medical cures and treatments that pertain to your loved one. Unless asked, offering advice to new parents is a no-no. Do not be the one who needs comforting—if you're not in the right mindset to put your person first, visit later after you've had more time to deal with it.

Take care of you

Having a loved one who is sick, hurting or in need can be stressful. It may make you feel better to help those directly impacted. You may also need time to process what's happening before you can help. Practice self-care—meditate, do deep breathing exercises, journal or take walks in nature. You need to be strong to be strong for others.

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