



## New England Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

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### Tips for Supporting Cancer Survivors & Family Members

- Stay in touch (cards, notes, phone calls, e-mails, visits, etc.).
- Call if the survivor enjoys telephone conversations. Take cues for the length of the conversation from the patient. Often frequent short calls are better than sporadic lengthy ones.
- Chat with the primary caregiver too! He or she needs and appreciates your support.
- Offer the caregiver a short break from responsibility. A regularly scheduled time is best if possible. This makes it possible for the caregiver to count on that block of time.
- Offer to make phone calls and/or develop a communication chain to/with people the survivor wants information shared with. This helps the survivor and family members to conserve energy while still receiving lots of support.
- Supply a meal. Check dietary needs first and maintain the highest level of hygiene while preparing. Remember bacteria are unwelcome, so if you have a cold or flu, do not visit or prepare food.
- Take the survivor to an appointment (medical or otherwise).
- If you have expertise in surfing the net for information that either the survivor or caregiver might need, then volunteer your services.
- Once a treatment plan is established, be sensitive and support the decision.
- Go for a walk or do something that is purely fun (like going to a movie) with the survivor or the primary caregiver.
- Offer to help with a specific household chore or to run errands, grocery shop, pick up prescriptions, assume car pool responsibilities, walk the dog, etc.
- If there are children involved, volunteer to take them to a specific activity. (movie, school sporting event, play-date, shoe fitting, haircut, etc.)
- Give to a charity in the person's name.
- Give blood or organize a blood drive.
- Register with the National Marrow Donor program or set up a marrow drive. This may be done online at [www.marrow.org](http://www.marrow.org) or by calling 800-marrow-2.
- Be aware that the needs of the survivor and family members will change over the course of treatment (acute vs. long-term)
- Once past initial diagnosis/decision making, there is a world beyond cancer and survivors and their family members don't want or need to be isolated from it. Tell the survivor and family members about what is going on in your life. This is fun, distracting, and great for their immune systems. Take cues from survivor/caregiver.

Sometimes the most helpful thing to do is just listen.