



## New England Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

30 Speen Street – Framingham, MA 01701

Phone: (508) 655-3329 e-mail: [info@neccs.org](mailto:info@neccs.org) [www.neccs.org](http://www.neccs.org)

### **Tips for the Work Environment:**

#### **How to be Supportive to Cancer Survivors or Family Members**

- Respect the confidentiality of the survivor/family member. Be aware of which co-workers know of the situation. Do not discuss with other co-workers without specific permission.
- Identify a point person to relay information to people the survivor wants information shared with. This helps the survivor and family members to conserve energy while still receiving lots of support.
- Once a treatment plan is established, be sensitive and support the decision.
- Supply a meal. Identify a point person to check dietary needs and develop a meal schedule. You can make a meal or send a meal (find a restaurant local to the family). If you are making the meal, 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.
- Stay in touch (cards, notes, phone calls, e-mails, visits, etc.).
- Call if the survivor or family member enjoys telephone conversations. Take cues for the length of the conversation from the patient. Often frequent short calls are better than sporadic lengthy ones.
- If permissible – organize services such as:
  - taking the survivor to an appointment (medical or otherwise)
  - car pooling
  - assisting with work load
- “Adopt the family” and take care of things that require energy such as:
  - buying supplies for the start of the school year
  - offering to wrap at the holidays
- Donate sick time if allowed by company policy.
- Give to a charity in the person’s name.
- Give blood or organize a blood drive.
- Register with the National Marrow Donor program or discuss organizing a marrow drive in your company or business. This may be done online at [www.marrow.org](http://www.marrow.org) or by calling 800-marrow-2.
- Provide a cancer education meeting. This can help to allay fears and provide an opportunity to co-workers to ask questions in a safe environment.
- Be sensitive to the person’s emotional status.
- Be aware that the needs of the survivor and family members will change over the course of treatment (acute vs. long-term).

(over)

- 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. Normal daily work activities are distracting, and great for their immune systems. Take cues from survivor/family member.

Sometimes the most helpful thing to do is just listen.