

# GENUINE WAYS YOU CAN HELP

If you've ever been in a hard season, you know that advice is a tricky thing. It's well meant, of course. But in their attempt to be helpful, a lot of people can say stuff that's, well, not. So if you're walking with someone who's going through some serious pain, here's are some genuine ways you can help, without giving advice.

- Know that the hurting person will likely always be a hurting person—from now on. Their physical and emotional pain might become less raw over the years. But chronic disease remains with a person his or her whole life. You cannot fix or take away their suffering. But you can sit beside them as they cry or listen while they talk about their loss. You can allow them to scream and fall down crying and say unedited things without correcting them.
  - Suffering people are afraid that you will either forget their pain or forget their illness. Send cards when you think of it. Remind them that you see them.
  - If you are a church leader, offer to host a support group for those with chronic illness in your community.
  - The person in pain doesn't need you to help steer them to the bright side. In fact, they might need the opposite—validation. Assure them that what they are going through is a big deal—and can be a big deal for as long as they need it to be.
  - Err on the side of coming near. Err on the side of being made a fool. Err on the side of saying I'm sorry more than you should, even if you have nothing to do with their pain. Sometimes the suffering person needs space. But mostly they want to be met where they hurt. Practice the ministry of presence. This is after all what the hurting person wants—friends who are near, who minimize nothing, who lament with.
- For the person in chronic pain, it can feel like an imposition to ask for help. But they need help. Here are some practical things to offer:
    - “I made dinner/grabbed a latte for you. It's on your front porch.”
    - “Can I come over and pray for you or with you? I won't linger.”
    - “Choose one of the following and I will do it for you today: (a) take your kids away for a couple of hours; (b) do your laundry at my house; (c) take you out for a night out.”
    - “I paid for a housecleaner to come to your house this week.”
- You get the idea. Generally speaking, practical help and lots of compassion are all you need to offer.

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