

TOOL 5 – SOME WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Tool for family and friends

When a friend or family member is caring for a seriously ill child, you may not know what to say or do. Your genuine concern and desire to help will be of comfort. Think about some of the following suggestions.

Offer

Support can be offered in practical ways, such as bringing a meal to your friend's house or running errands. Give your friend an idea of what you are able to do.

Respect

When entering your friend's home, be respectful of the family, their routine, and need for privacy. Be prepared that it might not be a good day for visitors

Follow

Your friend will sometimes need to talk about his or her experience, and other times will choose not to. Watch for signs, or ask them whether they want to discuss their experience, be distracted, or just to be quiet.

Ask

When in doubt, ask your friend how you can best offer your help and support. Try to keep on task when providing help and be mindful they may be too exhausted and busy to talk.

Comfort

Sometimes simple gestures like a well chosen card, small posy of flowers, baking, or a basket of treats is a way of showing that you care.

Consider

Be aware of the child's health condition. If you are unwell or have been near another sick person, don't visit.

Remember siblings—if you take a present for the sick child, try to give some special attention or a small gift to the siblings as well.

Help the family maintain their routine whenever possible by providing transport and babysitting.

Provide

Provide ways for the children to keep in contact with their friends or peers.

Find out if there is a roster for home help, meals and transport, or offer to coordinate or set one up. Help to share with others what the family like to eat, and what everyone is cooking. Deliver food for dinner by 5pm and aim for provision of a complete meal that is easy to heat and serve.

Help with general household tasks, such as:

- washing clothes or dishes
- cleaning and tidying up around the house
- walking the dog
- answering the phone or helping answer correspondence
- driving your friend or family member to places they need to go
- mowing the lawn or taking care of the garden
- grocery shopping
- picking up medications or supplies.

Remember—your aim is to support your friend and the key is to provide help which is dependable, sensitive and easy for them to accept.