

8 Ways to Care for a Loved One With Cancer During the Holidays

Many think of the holidays as a stressful time due to the hustle and bustle of the season. But think about what it's like for those who have been diagnosed with cancer.

Here is how you can brighten up the season for those stricken with the dreaded disease:

1. Devote time to them. Leading up to Christmas, spend the day decorating their home or have a holiday movie night. This could be a lonely and frustrating time for even the strongest person. Just be mindful of their energy levels and needs.

2. Help them with their shopping. They can possibly shop online, but there may be a necessary trip to the store. Offer to pick something up for them so they don't have to brave the crowds and follow that up by wrapping their gifts.

3. Think finances. There may be financial considerations for someone dealing with cancer, so suggest homemade gifts or letters to loved ones as a replacement for purchased gifts.

4. Treat them. Whether it is a new outfit, a trip to the salon or a day at the spa, most cancer patients don't feel they look their best. Giving them a boost of confidence will go a long way!

5. Take them to their place of worship. Holiday services may be difficult to get to with winter storms and excessive traffic. Offer to take your loved one to their place of worship. If they are uncomfortable with seeing people, make arrangements with their pastor for a special viewing location to easily come and go and serve as the spokesperson for them.

6. Change it up. If your loved one typically hosts over the holidays, suggest a new tradition. Eating out at a restaurant, ordering in, a pot luck or even someone else hosting can help ease their stress and take significant items off their checklist.

7. Be aware. Your loved one may be more emotional and sentimental than usual, wondering if this could possibly be their last Christmas. Help to give them hope, walk with them through these fears and make it a special and meaningful time together.

* **8. Pray with them.** This is a no-brainer. The patient will certainly be grateful if you take the time to petition God with them and on their behalf.

* Number eight was an add-on.

Rev. Percy McCray *is the national director of spiritual/faith-based programs for the Cancer Treatment Centers of America.*