

How to Help People Survive Suffering

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How few of us know how to walk with others through the valley of the shadow of death....

Since most words, advice, opinions, and fear-driven behaviors offer little help, let's begin to practice what does help....I pray the following tools help you help others.

Tangible Tips for Helping People Survive Suffering:

1. Pain is not about you. You can't fix or change what God has allowed, so just be present.
2. Provide a meal in containers that are disposable or don't need to be returned.
3. Don't expect recognition or a "thank you" for your comfort. Give without expectation.
4. Offer to help with daily tasks. Fill the car with gas, wash or fold laundry, mow the lawn, clean the house, help get kids to and from school, or pick up groceries.
5. Don't judge when the person is questioning their faith, doubting God, or when he or she has emotional outbursts.
6. If there's a diagnosis, learn all you can about the illness/disability/diagnosis so you are equipped to help.
7. If possible, pull a group together to help pay for a house cleaner or service provider.
8. Watch funny videos together; laughter is healing.

9. Join the person on a walk or get outside in God's creation.
10. Pay for the person to get a massage, get their hair done, or get a manicure or pedicure.
11. Make an "I care" basket. Fill a basket (or other container) with restaurant coupons, a journal, flowers, a blanket, CDs, movies, or a few of the person's favorite things: food, drinks, candles, oils and bath goodies, cozy slippers, etc.
12. Don't put a "timeline" on the person's healing. Practice reflective listening.
13. Put something on the calendar; planning an event helps the person look forward to something.
14. Without interrupting, listen to what they share: memories, sorrows, wishes, or lost dreams.
15. Send a text message saying you are thinking about them.
16. Watch for signs of clinical depression, anxiety, or trauma that may go unnoticed.
17. Attend doctor appointments, school meetings, or therapy sessions with the person.
18. Keep a list of doctors/therapists/emergency phone numbers in a visible place for the person.
19. Offer to pick up and organize the medications.
20. Help put medical records together in a notebook.

If you have suffered additional pain and been wounded by those who didn't understand, I am so very sorry; I understand. Let's call upon the One who understands the most – Jesus Christ.

In what way can you show the kind of care Jesus offers as you step into another person's life in the weeks, months, or years ahead?

Additionally, what has helped you through difficult seasons in the past?