

Name: _____

When Someone Has Cancer

Teachers: Use this handout with the story “Cancer Answers” (page 18) or by itself.

The theme song “I’ll Be There for You” from the TV show *Friends* could also be the theme song for the relationship Kaitlin Danisewicz had with her sister Hailey during Hailey’s battle with cancer.

“We had the entire series on DVD and watched our favorite episodes so many times when she was in treatment,” recalls Danisewicz. The sisters also spent countless hours playing card games, doing Sudoku puzzles, watching movies, and just hanging out.

According to experts, those are all great ways to support a friend or loved one who has cancer. In addition, “ask the person if he or she wants to talk about what is happening to them,” says Carla Hart, education director at M. D. Anderson Children’s Cancer Hospital in Houston. “Many times, people want to share what is going on with them but are afraid it will make you uncomfortable or sad. If your friend or relative wants to talk, let them, and ask questions about their treatment, hospital stays, doctors, or their family. If the person doesn’t want to talk about their cancer, that is OK, too—they will let you know what they want to do.”

Here are some more ways you can help:

1. Stay in touch so the person won’t feel isolated. E-mails, instant messages, text messages, blogs, phone calls, and “thinking of you” cards are easy ways to reach out.
2. Visit the person at home or in the hospital. Just check with the family first to make sure it’s a good time to visit. If it’s not, plan to visit another day.
3. Make cards, posters, or banners to cheer up a hospital room or bedroom.
4. Send photos or make a scrapbook of good times together.
5. Play board games, card games, word games, or video games together.
6. Just sit and hold the person’s hand.
7. Provide personal comforts such as getting a glass of water, applying a cool washcloth to the person’s forehead, fluffing pillows, or giving a hug.
8. Help around the person’s house in ways that you can. You may be able to help by cleaning, preparing food, or taking phone calls while the person rests.
9. Babysit or keep young children living in the household amused.
10. Watch movies and TV shows together. Hang out. Even doing your homework in the same room where the person is resting goes a long way in making him or her feel connected and loved.

—By Margie Markarian