

How you can help me:

BE HONEST WITH ME. I can tell when your feelings or actions are insincere.

LAUGH WITH ME, CRY WITH ME. Allow me to express intense emotions.

DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR ME. Your understanding helps preserve my dignity and pride.

LET ME TALK ABOUT MY ILLNESS IF I WANT TO. Talking helps me work through my feelings.

LET ME BE SILENT IF I WANT TO. Sometimes I don't have much energy and I just may want your silent companionship. Your presence alone can be comforting.

SPACE YOUR VISITS AND CALLS. Consistent support is very helpful.

OFFER TO BABYSIT. The children need a break and private times with my spouse are treasured.

SUPPORT MY FAMILY. I may be caregiving, but they too are suffering. Let them express their grieve.

OFFER TO HELP ME WITH THE SIMPLE CHORES. Routine jobs are often difficult to accomplish.

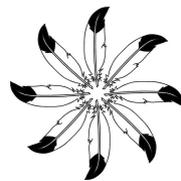
CONTINUE TO BE MY FRIEND. Don't let my illness overshadow all the good times we've shared together. I know this is hard for you too.

Where Can I Find More Information?

For more information, start by talking to your doctor, nurse, Home and Community Care Coordinator, spiritual care provider or any other health care provider. A referral to a palliative care nurse or palliative care volunteer team can be made by anyone, including the person that is ill, a family member, a spiritual care provider, a physician or any other health care provider.

You may also refer to the *Preparing for the Journey: Caring for Indigenous People who are Seriously Ill* resource manual available for free download on the CERAH website: <https://cerah.lakeheadu.ca/resources/indigenous-health/>

This brochure was originally created by: Improving End-of-Life Care in First Nations Communities (EOLFN). Additional resources available on the project website: eolfn.lakeheadu.ca



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Action

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Supporting the Caregiver and the Family



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Challenges brought on by illness or loss affect not only the person who is experiencing it, but also the caregiver, family members, friends, and coworkers.

A person may feel powerless and helpless, and not know what to say. It is common to feel overwhelmed or be scared to say the 'wrong' thing.

These conflicting feelings may lead to avoiding the person or caregivers and begin a terrible cycle of guilt or assumptions.

"I haven't called or said anything in so long, she'll be upset with me if I do it now."

Supporting the Caregiver

Caring from a long distance

Sometimes you may not live close enough to provide care or support. Ways on how you can help from a distance are:

- Arrange for neighbours or friends to drop off dinner, mow the lawn or shovel the snow
- Create and contribute to a 'petty cash' fund for hidden costs associated with caregiving
- Talk with the caregiver or family members about other ways to help

Volunteering your Time

Often the best way you can help is to be specific about what you will do. We may mean well when we ask "Is there anything I can do?", but the person caring for someone may be too stressed to consider how you might help.

Volunteer to do specific things, such as:

- Cooking dinner or taking it over
- Babysitting
- Helping with chores or running errands
- Assisting in caregiving

Follow their Lead

When entering their home, be respectful of the family and their routine. When in doubt, ask how you can best help.

Caregivers may need to talk about their experience and at other times may need to avoid it. Talking "normally" is what they may prefer at that moment.

Give them that space to explore their thoughts, feelings, or decisions they must make. Avoid being judgmental. Share advice when asked, but mostly listen.

Supporting the Family

Family members give and need support at the same time. They may experience several issues both during the person's illness and after the individual has died.

- Health changes - chronic illnesses may worsen; there is an increased risk of illness due to a lower immune system; and people may have difficulty concentrating and sleeping.
- Psychological issues - people may experience feelings of loss, isolation, depression and anxiety.
- Physical care demands - family members may need to assume duties such as providing transportation to treatments and appointments, child care, work demands.
- Costs of caring - Often there are extensive costs with providing care (e.g., renovations, transportation, medical equipment and medications, special meals, taking time off from work).

