

With a Little Help from My Friends

Category: How Can I Help?

written by Mimi Emig | October 6, 2019

Six years ago, I retired early because of serious health problems. I'd worked for decades as a doctor.

Early on, it was difficult for me to ask for and accept help. I was always the one who stepped in, not the one who needed assistance. Well-meaning friends would say, "Let me know if I can do anything." I was floundering.

I've had multiple setbacks: hospitalizations, surgeries and complex medical problems. I've learned to gradually cede control. There are times when I'm just not able to do everything myself.

I'm grateful for the cadre of friends who've stepped up.

Have someone in your life with serious health problems? You may want to help but not know what to offer. Here are suggestions to get you started:

-Offer to drive them to appointments. When I'm not feeling well, it's a relief not to worry about this and to be dropped at the door.

-Ask if they need you to pick up medication or supplies from the pharmacy. You'll need their date of birth for prescriptions. And of course you won't be allowed to get controlled substances.

-Help with their grocery shopping. Have them text you a list.

-Walk their dog. If it's a longer illness, ask if they would like you to pet sit for a while. If they have a cat, offer to change the cat litter.

-Bring coffee, tea or dinner.

-Phone or text just to ask how their doing. Don't be offended if they don't pick up or reply. They'll appreciate just knowing you're there.

-Help with their kids. If they have young kids, offer to take them out for a few hours. If their kids are older, see if they need help ferrying to activities.

-Help with housework. Change their linens, do their laundry, do their dishes. No, it's not exciting, but for someone who's ill, it's a huge help.

Even if you live far away, you can still help. *Call or text. Send something through the mail. Arrange for delivery of food.*

At some point, each of us will know someone who's going through health problems, or we'll be there ourselves.

Step up. Offer concrete help. People like you are a lifeline for us.

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