Share the Load: Meaningful Ways You Can Offer to Help

Here are some ways concerned friends and family can offer to share the load by helping. Ask if you can:

✧ Sit with the patient for a day, giving the caregiver a little time off or time to work.
✧ Go grocery shopping and put up groceries.
✧ Cook food that can be frozen—soups, casseroles, cookies, bread, pies or cakes.
✧ Send upbeat cards or notes and call or e-mail just to stay in touch.
✧ Arrange for a manicure, pedicure, massage or lunch out.
✧ Give theater tickets or a gift card.
✧ Give gift certificates to the restaurant (even if it is fast food) nearest the hospital.
✧ Help with the yard or hire a lawn service.
✧ Take mail to the post office.
✧ Help with laundry while visiting with the family.
✧ Take the patient to a doctor’s appointment or to chemotherapy.
✧ Fill up the car with gasoline and have it washed.
✧ Give cards for sending thank-you notes.
✧ Take the caregiver and patient for a drive to see spring blooms, autumn foliage or a nice park.
✧ Send a roll of stamps.
✧ Offer to call other friends and family members to give them updates.
✧ Create a blog or website updating the events regarding the patient and helping to eliminate the need to take or make phone calls at night.
✧ Buy appropriate videos to entertain both patient and caregiver.
✧ Buy a journal and send it to the caregiver.
✧ Pick up a fruit basket or fresh fruits in season. Fresh flowers are nice, too.
✧ Buy a certificate that can be used at their pharmacy.
✧ Help the caregiver keep a sense of humor. Don’t think all your conversation has to focus on the situation.
✧ Give crossword puzzles, magazines and/or novels to read.
✧ Give games two can play, such as dominoes or Chinese checkers.
✧ Send a bag of hard candy.
✧ Don’t hesitate to call and talk for just a minute to let both patient and caregiver know you’re thinking about them.
✧ Short visits are always welcomed; don’t assume the family wants to be alone. Come and share happy thoughts.
✧ Create little love boxes for the patient. Include happy sayings or inspiring notes for encouragement and items the patient can use, like packets of tissues.
✧ If there are children, offer to help with carpools, sports, lessons or medical and dental appointments. Or give kids a break for a movie or sleep-over.

Note: This is not a comprehensive list, but it gives you and the person you offer to help a place to start.
From Chaos to Control: A Survival Guide for the Cancer Caregiver by Betty Garrett
www.Caregivers4Cancer.com