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2

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WAYS

TO

CARE

WELL



#carewell



Our friend has cancer. Our neighbor is unemployed. Our parent is elderly.

Individuals who need our comfort and care are all around us. The problem, however, arises when our hearts say, "Go," but our heads say, "No." We may tend to avoid these situations because we don't know what to say or do.

Does that sound familiar to you?

That's why Ginger Jurries and I wrote 109+ Ways to Say, "I Care" in our book [The Compassionate Congregation](#). It's my hope that as you read through this menu of ideas some of the suggestions will inspire you to say, "I can do that for my friend who is suffering."

Meladee McCarty in her book [Acts of Kindness: How to Make a Gentle Difference](#) says: "There is a bundle of kindness energy in all of us that can come out, given a focus or a strategy for doing so." I hope that these suggestions will give you concrete ways to express your kindness energy.

Care well,

Karen Mulder  
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# Thoughtful Gifts

- 1 Give the gift of **restaurant coupons** to someone going through a crisis. Going to a restaurant gives the person the opportunity to get “up” and “out.”
- 2 Surprise someone with chocolate. Gifts of **chocolate** might include a hot fudge sundae, one extra special truffle, or a basket filled with chocolate products: hot fudge sauce, chocolate covered potato chips, and so on.
- 3 **Cook a dinner** and offer a choice of two courses. Bring food in disposable containers or include your name on returnable containers.
- 4 For recipes, caring tips, and how to create an online sign-up sheet that makes it easy for friends, family and church groups to provide meals, go to “**Take Them a Meal**” at [www.takethemameal.com](http://www.takethemameal.com).



5

*Bake homemade cookies or brownies for parents and bring them frozen so they can have the delight of sending fresh goodies in their children’s lunch boxes or surprising them with a special after-school snack.*

- 6 Give a grieving person a **bag of hard candies**. Sucking on candy helps to prevent crying in public places.
- 7 On a hot summer day, bring your neighbor a **frosted glass of freshly squeezed lemonade**. This special gift can refresh both body and soul. Even better, bring a whole pitcher and talk while sipping lemonade together.
- 8 Kid's version of the above: Bring tall glasses, vanilla ice cream, cold root beer and straws, and make **root beer floats**. Yum!
- 9 Who can resist a piece of **homemade apple pie with vanilla ice cream** or other extravagant goodies? Not me.
- 10 Homemade **chicken soup** has mysterious healing powers. Bring a pot of this marvelous brew. Try this homemade chicken soup recipe: <http://wisdomofthewounded.com/2016/03/08/chicken-soup-recipe/>
- 11 Bring a **hostess basket** filled with an array of treats, from chocolate kisses to fresh fruit to home-baked cookies. Then they will have something to offer visitors and/or hospital staff.



**12** *For the sports enthusiast, create a sports basket. Include such things as: a coupon for delivered pizza, copy of Sports Illustrated, trail mix, chips and dip, popcorn, favorite team t-shirt, and a good sports movie.*



**13**

Perk up a person's day by bringing a special tea cup with a variety of tea bags or a pretty mug with flavored coffee.



# 14

*Receiving a note or card is like being hugged. Neither the eloquence of the words nor the elegance of the stationery is as significant as the care expressed.*

- 15 Send **sympathy cards** expressing some of **your personal thoughts**: words remembering something that you admired or appreciated about the deceased loved one and personal caring prayers. These personal notes will continue to bring quiet joy and encouragement every time they are read. (A scrapbook in which to save all the notes and cards is also a long-term meaningful gift.)
- 16 Build a **bird feeder** for the outside of a window for moments spent watching and identifying the beautiful visitors. You might want to add a bird book to the gift.
- 17 Who doesn't love **flowers**? They're a wonderful gesture of caring.



# 18

Share some of your favorite CDs, or some favorite instrumentalists and/or vocalists.

- 19 Offer to **alleviate a person's financial crisis** by loaning funds. In many cases, a loan allows the person in crisis to maintain their dignity. Or offer support/assistance with an anonymous gift of money.
- 20 "We had a banker friend who created an account for us at her bank, knowing that our expenses were about to rise and our income could drop." (Brian was diagnosed with colon cancer.) "Then, she let our mutual friends know they could donate anonymously to it." —Brian Mansfield



- 21 Consider the questions: **What does this person enjoy doing during normal/healthy times? Are they able to do that activity now?** Example: For someone who enjoys writing notes and letters, it would be delightful to receive some attractive writing paper or cards, a new pen, some stamps, and maybe even one of those wonderful lap desks.
- 22 If someone is in the hospital, bring them a **comfy new robe** to wear during their stay. It will be a delightful and welcomed surprise.
- 23 Elderly people feel the cold more, so give the person a **cozy lap blanket**, afghan, bed jacket or snuggie.
- 24 Give a **book of prayers**. Richard J. Foster's [\*Prayers from the Heart\*](#) and [\*Get Well Wishes: Prayers and Poems for Comfort and Healing\*](#), by June Cotner are some of my favorites.
- 25 Small thoughtful gifts can mean so very much more than one would think. Examples include: a **fragrant votive candle** to sooth the senses and a **lavender-filled sachet** to place over the eyes for relaxation. Little things do mean a lot!

## 26

Create a basket of beauty or grooming products. Include lotion, perfume, special shampoo, nail polish in a new color. Or create a personalized basket filled with items that the person needs or might enjoy.

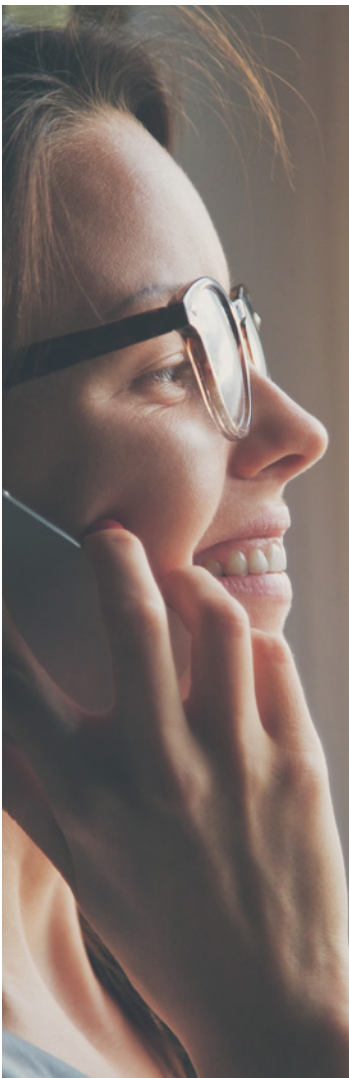
- 27 Hire someone to come to the hospital or the home to give the person a **manicure**, a professional **back rub**, or a **haircut**.
- 28 When it seems a friend's life has been turned upside down, give a **daily devotional** such as [Jesus Calling](#) by Sarah Young.
- 29 Sometimes a **journal** for someone facing a tough time can help that person to dump their emotions and confusion on paper. Joanie Reid, in her book [Life Line](#) writes "I wrote – without editing, without polish – about how I felt, what had happened, questions I struggled with. I wrote each entry to Dustin, the son we had just lost."
- 30 When their son was tragically killed in an automobile and bike accident, some friends started a **memorial scholarship fund** in his name, and have continued to remember their loss each year with a note and a check.
- 31 After the loss of a child, one of the most thoughtful things one can do is to send **pictures** and **videos** of the child, especially if the parent hasn't seen them before.

- 32 **Share a special talent or skill.** Billy Graham, in [Hope for the Troubled Heart](#), writes "A story is told about Beethoven, a man not known for social grace. Because of his deafness, he found conversation difficult and humiliating. When he heard of the death of a friend's son, Beethoven hurried to the house, overcome with grief. He had no words of comfort to offer, but he saw a piano in the room. For the next half hour he played the piano, pouring out his emotions in the most eloquent way he could. When he finished playing, he left. The friend later remarked that no one else's visit had meant so much."
- 33 **The little book [Good Grief](#)** by Granger E. Westberg is a helpful gift. It encourages the person grieving to experience the various emotions of the grief process, and it makes one realize that grieving is a process that takes time – a lot of time.

34

*During a crisis, a small gift such as a small cross can act as a constant reminder of God's constant presence.*

# Words that Help or Don't Help



35 Say, **"I know you are hurting, and I really care about that. If you want to talk about it, I'll listen."** Then let the person talk without interruption.

36 Tell them, **"You have been in my thoughts."** That is a greeting which will allow them to choose a response. If they feel a need to share their feelings or thoughts, they can do so, or choose to say simply, "Thank you," and go on to talk of other things.

37 Remember: Any show of concern will help. The following simple sentence says it all: **"I'm so sorry about your trouble."**

38 Say **"I love you!"** often. We all know that the three little words "I love you" can make a powerful difference in another person's life. There are other three-word powerhouses which can make a big impact. Here are eight to try:

"I truly care."

"I'm so sorry."

"I miss you."

"Count on me."

"I appreciate you."

"Let me help."

"It must hurt."

"Thinking of you."



39 Say, **"I can't even imagine how much you must hurt or how lonely you must feel or how devastated you must be!"**

40 During a very difficult decision-making time, it is helpful to say, "Whatever you decide to do—if you need or choose X, Y, or Z, **I will be here.**"

41 Say, **"I'll go with you."** To have a friend go with you when you are facing new and frightening situations (seeing a lawyer, psychologist, or doctor, finding a new apartment, and so on) is a greatly valued gift.

42 Allow them to cry. Cry with them. Say, **"I am so sorry that you are going through this,"** or **"Your pain breaks my heart."** (But do not say things like, "It will be ok.")

## 43

Please do NOT give them advice. Instead ask the person, **"What are your options?"**



## 44

*Pray in person or over the phone. If this is too difficult for you, write a prayer of your own or copy one and give or send it to them. This is helpful because they can read it over and over.*

45 A person usually wants to talk about his or her illness (or crisis) and to tell their story. It's the number one topic on his or her mind. So gently say **"Tell me about..."**

46 As they tell you their crisis story, **you don't have to say anything.** Just **hum along** by making quiet, compassionate sounds like "hmmm...", "ohhhh...", "ahhhh...", "oh noooo..."

47 Don't push someone who is struggling to "get well," or to "get on with their life." Instead, **help the person make an effort to accomplish one simple thing** during the day. It doesn't matter what it is... make a call, pay a bill, keep a dental appointment, get a haircut.



48 **Ask a person who is struggling questions** that will help clarify their thinking and unload a heavy heart. Some questions that have been helpful are:

- What do you feel like talking about today?
- What are you thinking (or feeling) today?
- What worries you the most? This question is especially helpful to ask someone who has cancer or other serious illness.

49 Someone who is elderly or ill or disabled still appreciates when others, especially friends and family, value his opinions, skills, and advice. **So please ask him for help.**

50 **“Be real. Admit your honest feelings to me.** If the news stunned you, say so. If you don’t know what to say, say just that. If you suddenly feel tears coming, cry. If you are overwhelmed with pity and compassion, admit it. When you allow your true feelings to show, you give me permission to also ‘let go’ and express my honest feelings.”  
—Charles Swindol, [Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life](#)

# 51

*Phone regularly to say,  
“I’m thinking of you. You do  
not need to return this phone call,  
I just wanted you to know that  
you are in my thoughts.”*

52 If a friend is angry, **help her ventilate her feelings.** Don’t defend the party in question.

53 In a crisis, please **do NOT say that you understand how they feel!** Even if you have gone through a similar experience, it is not the same as their experience. Although the words, “I understand” may sound comforting, they are not. Please respect the fact that everyone’s experience is totally unique.

## 54

After a tragic death, **avoid asking probing questions** such as “Did she smoke?” or “Was he wearing a seatbelt?” or “Was there drinking involved?” When someone is suffering these questions are beside the point.

## 55

### **AVOID SAYING:**

“You’ll get over it.”

“I’m sure it will be just fine.”

“You look awful.”

“You look great.” (Implying that the person should also feel great.)

“Are you over your loss yet?”

“My uncle had the same disease and died (or lived).”

“Well, here’s what I think you should do...”

“God doesn’t promise us a rose garden.” (Or other trite sayings.)

“What have you learned from this tragedy?”

“Well, you know what the Bible says: ‘Forgive 70 times 7.’” (Or some other pulverizing verse.)





# Special Services



56 **Make your offer specific.** Say, "I would like to come over Monday at 3:00 to bake cookies," "...read you a book," "...clean your kitchen," "...wash your windows," or whatever. If you say, "Call me anytime for anything," they won't know what you want to do or when you are free, so they probably won't ask.

57 **Ask the person if there's someone they might like to visit them.** Sometimes people are just too tired or too shy to initiate these contacts.

## 58

*Present them with a list of DVDs (or audio books or CDs) with a coupon attached that says: "I will call on the next four Saturdays for your DVD order," or, "You may call me to place your order." Or design your own coupon.*





# 59

*For a friend who is ill, a wonderful gift of a maid for a month goes a long way. Hire someone to clean the house and to handle other domestic duties once a week. Or if housework is something you enjoy, offer to do it yourself!*

- 60 Offer to **do something for the person's children**: play with them, tutor them, or take them to the park or to see their grandparents.
- 61 Offer to **take children overnight**, or offer to **baby-sit** even if the parents stay home. This allows for some time together or alone.
- 62 Offer to **drive your friend where he needs to go**. He may be too tired or too distracted to drive.
- 63 Offer to **decorate the house** for Christmas or for a birthday party.
- 64 Ask if there are any **gifts, cards, or wrapping paper** that you could pick up.



# 65

*Phone when you go to the grocery store to see if anything is needed. They might be feeling helpless when their family needs or wants something.*

- 66 Help children attend birthday parties by bringing some **pre-wrapped children's birthday party gifts** to the home for future use. Indicate the contents with a post-it note.
- 67 When a parent who is suffering must miss a special program or event in which their child is participating, please **take photographs or a video**.

## 68

Offer to do **personal errands and chores:**

- Water plants
- Tidy up house or apartment
- Drop off/pick up dry cleaning
- Wash car and/or fill up gas tank
- Bring mail to the hospital
- Ask for a list of errand needs



## 69

Volunteer to  
make or return  
phone calls  
during their  
crisis.

## 70

Offer to **write thank-you or other types of notes** for them. They may want to show gratitude to those who have helped their family and them, but might be too tired and weak.

## 71

Offer to **read their favorite sections of the newspaper** to them. Even though they are ill and do not have the strength to hold a newspaper. For example, if they are a Detroit Tigers fan, read to them what the paper said about yesterday's game.

## 72

**Help the major caregiver in their life.** He or she needs some uplifting too! Help him or her wash the car, mow the lawn, drive the kids to activities, vacuum the house, or do the laundry. Invite him or her out to a movie or for dinner or to play tennis, and so on.



# Outings

73

*Everyone has times during the week when they tend to feel most alone. Evenings and weekends, in particular, can be tough. Make a standing date to go to a movie or out for dinner, or extend an invitation to join you in taking a fun weekly class.*



- 74 They're lonely. **Extend an invitation to your house for lunch or dinner or coffee regularly.** The companionship, not gourmet food, is what matters most.
- 75 Surprise someone with a one-month **membership to an athletic club** to help them de-stress and "get out." This gift becomes even more special if you join them.
- 76 **Buy tickets** in advance to a play, symphony, or sporting event that you can enjoy together.

77 Instead of lecturing a couple to “get out of the house and do something fun” after a tragedy such as a miscarriage, send them dated **coupons for a dinner** at their favorite restaurant and **movie coupons**.

78 Invite a person who is suffering to **walk and talk** on a regular basis—great therapy for the mind, body, and soul.



79

*When a friend is too weak to walk but still enjoys getting out, take them for walks, to lunch, and shopping via a wheelchair.*



80

Giving **gift cards** is wonderful way to get people out and a mini-vacation from suffering. Some suggestions include cards to: movies, dinners, sporting events, bowling certificates, museums.

81

The loneliest day of the week of those who are alone is Sunday. So offer to **meet the person at church or offer to pick him or her up.**



# Special Spirit Lifters



82 **Join them for a meal.** When they are critically ill and confined to their home, it can light up their day when friends not only bring dinner, but also join them for dinner and conversation. (Go one step further and organize a dinner-guest schedule.)

83 If she is very ill and in pain, offer a **foot massage**. You don't have to know how. Just start massaging. One caregiver said that she imagined waves of quiet, soothing peace flowing throughout her body.

84 Type **favorite Bible verses** in large print and post one verse in each room of their home. Then when they walk into a room, they have something positive to read and think about. God's Word gives hope and courage. Ask for a list of favorite verses or use these favorites: [Proverbs 3:5](#), [Psalm 91:4](#), [Psalm 115:1](#), [Isaiah 41:10](#), [Isaiah 49:15-16](#), [Jeremiah 29:11-14](#).

85 There is a rich variety of perpetual **daily flip calendars** available. Pick the one that most appeals to you and to the person's situation. Some examples are: [Grace](#), by Max Lucado and [Small Blessings Perpetual Calendar: Hope & Encouragement for Each Day](#).

86 **Frequent visits** are treasured, but it is best to call before you visit to arrange the best time.

87 When visiting, **encourage your spouse to join you to visit with their spouse**.

88 **Suggest books, support groups, organizations and therapists** who can help with their problem. However, don't try to solve their problem for them, and don't be hurt if they don't take your advice. Just walk with them during this difficult time.

89 Offer to **link them up with someone you know and trust who has gone through a similar crisis**. That person may be able to answer some of their questions and concerns.

90 **Watch a television program or a movie with them**. This gives them the satisfaction of enjoying your company without the responsibility of entertaining you.

# 91

*If you have been with them during a difficult time, please, before parting, make a date to get together again. It offers them another planned time when they know someone will listen and care. It helps relieve the threat of desperation.*



92 Children are so refreshing, honest, and real. **Encourage your children to care for others** by suggesting that they draw a picture, write a poem, learn a song, make up a skit, buy a little gift, and so on. Here is an example: "When my eight-year-old son died, one of his friends came to my door with a present. It was a picture of a horse. I don't know why he chose that picture, but it must have been very special to him, and for twelve years it has been special to me. It still is displayed in my guest bedroom."



# 93

Hug them often.

They need the physical touch as well as the affirmation!

# 94

They need to laugh. There is such healing in laughter. So, tell them a joke or tell them about something funny that happened to you, or bring them a funny cartoon from the newspaper.



95 **Think of ways to make them smile.**

"My friend Pat hired a clown to come to the hospital with bright colorful helium balloons. Half of them had 'Amy' on them. The other half said, 'I love you.' Those joyous balloons were a wonderful, blatant denial of the automatic doom and gloom associated with the diagnosis of cancer. They added a welcome contrast to the sterility of the hospital décor. I tied the balloons to the night stand where they could blow in the vent, a bright streamer of color."

—Amy Harwell, [\*When Your Friend Gets Cancer\*](#)

96 Make them smile by giving them one of the following **"just for fun" gifts**: foam dart gun, ["The Honeymooners" DVD](#) (a la Jackie Gleason), ["Lake Wobegon" CD](#) by Garrison Keillor, checkers, or a hand-held electronic game.



97 **Give them a humorous book** to jog their innards. Someone has said that one hundred good belly laughs are the cardiovascular equivalent of ten minutes of rowing. Ask a librarian or the manager of your local bookstore for suggestions. Some of our suggestions are:

- Garrison Keillor's [Pretty Good Joke Book, 6th Edition](#)
- Patrick McManus's books: [Never Sniff a Gift Fish](#) and [The Grasshopper Trap](#) (especially for hikers/hunters/outdoors people)
- Any book by [Jim Unger](#) or [Erma Bombeck](#)
- Cartoon books such as [Calvin and Hobbes](#) or [Dilbert](#)

98 Bring them an **inspiring book or gift**. Consider what books have been helpful to you during a crisis or in everyday living. Three great possibilities are:

- Lynn Gordon's deck of cards called [52 Ways To Mend a Broken Heart](#)
- Canfield and Hansen's [Chicken Soup books](#)
- A subscription to Guideposts magazine [www.guideposts.org](http://www.guideposts.org) or write to Guideposts, P.O. Box 856, Carmel, NY 10512-0856).

99

*Send them one note a week or call them once a week for a couple of months. It's the friends who keep visiting, calling, and sending notes who give hope for the future and the courage to work toward it.*

100

*If you have been with them during a crisis, follow up your visit with a note of reassurance that you value them (especially when they have shared very angry, hurtful, painful things).*



# 101

Give them a CD that has been especially soothing or inspiring to you.



- 106 They may not remember what words people said during the first weeks after the death of their loved one, but they will remember you **holding their hand, patting a shoulder, and hugging them.** Never underestimate the power of a touch.
- 107 **Suggest doing something new with them** like having a facial or a massage, going to a hockey game or taking an aerobic dance class.
- 108 **Call daily** to check on them, especially during a particularly hard time.

- 102 **Allow them to feel sad.** One of the most difficult problems of serious illness is that everyone wants to encourage the patient. However, sometimes having a good cry with a friend allows the tension to escape. You encourage them by letting them talk about their feelings.
- 103 **Read** their favorite Psalm to them or read your favorite Psalm to them.
- 104 **Encourage them to call you** when they feel sad or lonely or ready to give up. By the time they finish dialing your number and hear you say, "Hello," their fear might dissipate.
- 105 If their family lives far away and they need their emotional support, give them a generous **gift certificate to help pay their phone bill** for six months. Or give them a prepaid cell phone. What a thoughtful gift.

# 109

*Offer to call their church to request prayers and/or visitation.*



# 110

*Give them a list of people to pray for. Praying for others does not take the pain away, but it does change their attitude toward it. By reminding them that others are also suffering, they may better tolerate their situation.*

- 111 **Suggest working on a service project** in the community. Problems minimize for people when they concentrate on another person's need, and they may find reaching out to help someone else energizing.
- 112 **Invite them to participate in projects** that can be done at home (stuffing envelopes, folding programs, cutting/gluing projects) for churches, schools and charitable organizations.
- 113 Offer to start a **Bible or book study group** in their home. (An added touch would be if various members took turns coming early to tidy up the house and to make coffee.)
- 114 **Be the kind of caregiver who visits, calls, or sends a note or flowers each year** on the date when their loved one died. What a loving gift to know that someone else remembers too!
- 115 Ask them what food they crave today. One day it might be pizza and another day a turtle sundae. (As an added bonus, stay and eat with them.)

# 116

Say, "I love you, I care."

# 117

Ask, "What's going to be the hard part for you?" Brian Mansfield says, "this question bypasses all the small talk and gives the person the opportunity to express what concerns them most about their illness."



118

Suggest [www.365promises.com](http://www.365promises.com)  
for another gift of hope.



119 Give her the **gift of hope**. That gift might be tulip or daffodil bulbs planted for her with the hope that she will enjoy them when they blossom in the spring.

120 Invite the person to participate in a **"2 to 1 Ritual."** Every time you talk or text, each of you shares 2 highs and 1 low for the day or the week. This helps both of you look for highs or blessings and yet also acknowledge the struggles and disappointments.

121 Remember that children grieve, too. Encourage them to **think of ways they can remember their friend or relative**. Ideas include: drawing a picture, writing a story or poem, making a memory book and planting a flower or tree.

122 To help a child learn to cope with grief, consider purchasing one of the **books** by Marge Heegaard from the list below:

[\*When Someone Very Special Dies\*](#)

[\*When a Family is in Trouble\*](#)

[\*When Mom & Dad Separate\*](#)

[\*When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness\*](#)

123 Caring for those who are suffering means always **asking about the crisis, not avoiding it**. The crisis is the most important thing in their lives. Normally, they will want to talk about it and perhaps cry about it. Offer them an opportunity to do both in the presence of someone who loves them. If the person does not want to talk about the crisis, he will let you know.

