



Ways to Respond to Cancer Patients

Rev. Percy McCray

HEALTH, HOPE & INSPIRATION
WITH REV PERCY MCCRAY

For a person who is battling cancer, feelings of sadness, confusion and anger are commonplace. It's hard for family and friends to know what to say or how to respond in a way that is both helpful and hopeful.

Here are some effective ways you can bridge the gap.



Respond from your heart

While you may not know exactly what to say, you can show interest and concern, express encouragement and support, or you can just listen. Showing you are committed to walk with someone who has cancer can have a positive impact.

- "You're not alone. We'll get through this together."
- "You are strong. You can do this."
- "Where do we start? We're in this together."
- "I'm not sure what to say right now, but I want you to know how much I care."
- "Would you like to talk about what you're feeling? I'm here for you."



Be dependable

It's easy to offer help or say, "Let me know if you need anything." The reality is that many people will never ask for help even though they need it. Instead, take the initiative if you can meet a need. Deliver meals (make sure they're diet-sensitive). Go with them to appointments. Hold their hand. Offer to watch the kids or clean the house. Daily life for a person with cancer can feel overwhelming. Do what you can to ease the burden.



Show your strength

Offering strength to someone with cancer can provide a source of encouragement and ease from fear. It's equally important not to show false optimism or expect the person to always remain positive. Don't focus on your own worries and sadness. Instead, offer spiritual guidance and support, humor (as appropriate), fun and practical help.

And, above all, listen with intent. Listening properly to someone who is battling cancer helps to demonstrate respect and empathy. The burden of cancer is heavy. Moods can shift from day to day. Sometimes just your presence is enough to help carry the load.



Respect privacy

If someone tells you they have cancer, respect the privacy of the individual by not disclosing the information to others unless you have their permission. Allow them to control the flow of information, and adjust to the situation. If someone approaches you about the condition of the individual, graciously thank them for their concern and explain you are not able to discuss the matter.

Sometimes you may hear from other sources that someone has cancer. Be sure to verify that the information is public. If it is not, refrain from making contact with the cancer patient. If it is public information, do not ignore it. To demonstrate your care and concern, you might say, "I heard what is happening, and I am sorry."



Give yourself grace

Learning that someone you know has cancer, particularly if you have a close relationship with the individual, can be difficult to process on many levels. Allow yourself space and grace when you feel deep emotions such as sorrow, guilt or anger. These are all normal responses. If necessary, talk to a friend, pastor or counselor to get the support you need. Do not feel ashamed of your own fears or discomfort. It's okay to be sensitive to your own constraints and limits.

Thank you for your willingness to reach out to someone with cancer. Your friendship can make a lasting touchpoint of courage, hope and strength at every point in their journey.

About Reverend Percy McCray

Rev. Percy McCray Jr. has spent more than 20 years ministering to cancer patients and their caregivers at Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA).



He recognizes cancer care ministry as a special calling from God and considers faith a key, but often overlooked, component of cancer treatment. He now serves as the Director of Faith-Based Programs at CTCA® and provides leadership to the pastoral care staff at all five CTCA hospitals. In addition, Rev. McCray oversees Our Journey of Hope®, a nationwide cancer-care ministry training and support program.

An ordained minister, Rev. McCray is a member of the U.S. Chaplain Association. He has been recognized as one of the “most influential African Americans in Lake County (IL)” by the *Chicago People’s Voice* newspaper for his religious and leadership roles within the community.

Health, Hope & Inspiration is a weekly radio broadcast, sponsored by Cancer Treatment Centers of America®(CTCA), designed to help people find answers to questions about cancer, cancer prevention and overall healthy living. One of the greatest gifts a person can enjoy is good health. A well-rounded lifestyle is the product of physical, emotional and spiritual health. These three things are interdependent, and that is the message of Health, Hope & Inspiration, as well as the basis of the integrative approach at CTCA®.

For more information, visit our website at www.HealthHopeAndInspiration.com.

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Winning the fight against cancer, every day.®

Cancer Treatment Centers of America® is a national network of five hospitals in the United States with expertise in treating patients who are fighting cancer. We combine state-of-the-art technologies with an integrative approach to care in order to reduce side effects and maintain quality of life during cancer treatment. If you or someone you love has cancer, call 866-712-4673 or go to www.CancerCenter.com/Faith.