

When someone you love has breast cancer

Be understanding

- Her feelings of fear, anger, frustration, vulnerability and helplessness are quite normal.
- You may also have similar emotions. The important thing I think is to be aware of your own reactions, to acknowledge and respect them, but also to be very aware of how your reactions will affect her (the person who has the cancer). Even if she has the best will in the world

Be Supportive

- Be a good listener. She is the only one who can tell how she feels. Being able to listen is step one in good communication. Let her do the talking.
- Share your feelings
- Be there for her
- Allow her to express her emotions. Contrary to what people say, crying is very good to relieve the stress. If she cries, let her cry and give her a shoulder to cry on.
- Continue to provide support when treatment is over

Learn about her condition and the disease

Educate yourself about the disease, its treatment, and impacts of treatment. Share your findings with her. Also, the doctor will be too busy to explain the day-to-day aspects of her illness. If you know what side effects there are for treatment, it will be easier for you to help her.

Ways you can help her

- Go with her to doctor
- Help with the children, shopping, cooking and housework.
- Choose a job that will ease her, and you and your family can do the rest of the work
- Know her treatment schedule and try to ensure support for the bad time.
- Ask her how you can be most helpful – do not assume you know. Do this at different stages, as what she needs may change during the course of treatment and after
- In our attempts to help, we may sometimes “take over” for the other person. She is ill, perhaps very ill, but she is still there – do not cancel her out as a person.
- Be patient – understand that in tailoring your support to what she needs, you are helping her to fight back.