

USE YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE TO SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO IS SUFFERING

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Something that we humans cannot opt out of in this life are experiences that involve suffering. Whether you lose a loved one, you're let go from a job, your pet passes away, you receive scary health news, or a marriage ends in divorce—all of us will inevitably face a difficult circumstance that leaves us hanging on by a thread.

When one of your friends, colleagues, or a family member is in this position, your first instinct at a visceral level is to help. While many of us have sincere intentions to show support, oftentimes, it is not helpful to tell the person who you're trying to support, "Let me know what you need."

People who are knee-deep in suffering and navigating extraordinary pain are simply trying to put one foot in front of the other. Asking them to help you figure out how to help is actually giving the person one more task to do, which can be an emotional burden. Instead, try to take thoughtful initiative.

If your love language is Acts of Service, consider offering one of these action-driven ideas:

- I'm going to the grocery store today, send me your list and I'll drop them off on the way home.
- I'll grab your kids from school this week.
- I made dinner for you, what time is best to drop it off?
- I booked a massage for you, the therapist comes to your house so you don't have to leave.
- I'm taking your kids to the movies so you can have the afternoon off.
- I have some time off this week, what is one task that you absolutely do not have the energy to deal with right now?
- I'm coming over tomorrow to do (your laundry, clean your dishes, etc.).

If your love language is Gifts, choose one idea that resonates with you and/or matches their personality:

- When their loved one or pet passes away, frame a special photo of them; plant a tree or flowers in their honor along with a personalized placard; name a star in the sky in their memory with a reputable star registry organization.
- Curate your own gift basket of soothing products such as bubble bath, Epsom salt, fuzzy socks, and eye patches.
- Etsy.com has unique artisan products, including self-care gift baskets for someone who is going through cancer treatments (e.g., a product for dry mouth, satin pillow cases to protect the hair).
- Soothing essential oils (e.g., lavender) and a diffuser.
- A piece of jewelry that represents strength or healing, such as a crystal (e.g., rose quartz).

FUTURE SUPPORT

People who are suffering tend to receive the most support immediately following a tumultuous situation. Then, time slowly passes, and the tangible support tends to fade. When someone loses a loved one, or experiences a divorce, on the anniversary, birthday, or major holidays, reach out to let them know you're thinking of them and/or send flowers.

One common shared experience of grieving individuals is wanting to keep the memory of their loved one alive. Bring up the departed person's name in conversation. For example, "I thought of Eric today and his special smile. Did he inherit his dimples from someone in your family?" Saying their name out loud, and giving the person you're supporting an opportunity to talk about them, is a beautiful way to show you care.

No matter what your primary love language is, know that simply making any effort at all is an invaluable way to support someone who you care about.

If your love language is Words of Affirmation, share these sentiments to express your genuine concern:

- You're doing your best and I love you.
- I'm thinking about you.
- I don't know what to say, but I'm holding space for you in my heart.
- You are not alone, I am here for you.
- I know you're not OK—if you're open to sharing, I'd love to hear how you're feeling about everything.

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