

Ministering to Those with Physical Health Challenges

We can be the Savior's hands to comfort and help.



Illness, allergy, disability, or age can affect a member's ability to worship or serve. If ministering brothers and sisters are sensitive to these needs, there are many ways to help members who have physical challenges to better enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

After a young mother was diagnosed with cancer, she felt alone and filled with fear. But as the news of her illness spread throughout her ward, she was soon surrounded by the love and concern of her fellow sisters. As her difficult treatments began, sisters drove her to her appointments and sat with her during long chemotherapy sessions. They prayed with her, encouraged her, brought her the few treats she could eat, and brought meals to her family week after week. Other sisters took time away from their own busy lives to clean her house. One sister knew certain treatments would make it hard to fall

asleep, so she planned late-night visits to watch comedy movies. Instead of tossing in bed, the young mother was able to turn away from fears for a while and feel the healing power of laughter and friendship. Through these ministrations, priesthood blessings, and ward fasts, she was carried through an extremely difficult time, and strong bonds of love grew between all who were involved.

Ministering to those with health challenges isn't always easy. But we can follow the Savior's example in reaching out to our brothers and sisters in love when health challenges occur. We can be His hands to comfort and help those around us, including those whose challenges aren't readily visible to our physical eyes.

Ideas to Consider

1. Respect their privacy. Some people are embarrassed about health

issues that might not bother you at all. Always ask if it is OK to share their situation with others before you do.

2. Encourage standard medical care. Avoid recommending health products or services that are unproven or outside of standard medical care. Share ideas and experiences as you feel prompted, but encourage others to do their own research and to counsel with trained medical professionals.

3. Serve them and pray for them. When people face occasional, short-term health problems or predictable situations like childbirth or surgery, your service, meals, kindness, and prayers show you care. In an emergency, your immediate willingness to help can be invaluable.

4. Help empower them. Especially when people face serious or long-term health problems, they need more than your help or service,



as crucial as those are. They may also need help learning to do the following for themselves:

- a. **Identify their needs.** What do they know so far about their condition? How do they feel about it? What are their immediate and future worries and needs? Listen with compassion and without judgment to help them honestly face what is real.
- b. **Remember their strengths.** Ask about other kinds of adversity they have faced and what they learned from those experiences. Point out positive qualities, values, and skills you've noticed they have. Ask what personal values are most important to them to live in this new situation. How could they live those values?
- c. **Create a plan.** What decisions need to be made soon, and what additional information do they need to make those decisions? What immediate help or resources do they need, and what will they need long term? What options do they see? What are the pros and cons of each?
- d. **Organize their team.** Who can help? Immediate family have the first responsibility to help, but extended family, friends, other ward members, health professionals, available public services, you and your companion, and the Holy Ghost can all be part of their team. As appropriate and with their permission, involve the Relief Society president and elders quorum president in helping them explore how you, other members, and Church resources could realistically help.
- e. **Invite the Spirit.** Pray with and for them, inviting the Lord to confirm and guide their decisions and help them feel His love. ■

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- To find ideas for caregivers, read "Bearing One Another's Burdens," *Ensign*, June 2018, 24–29; or *Liahona*, June 2018, 26–31.
- Learn more about caring for aging family members in "Finding Answers for Family Caregiving," *Ensign*, June 2018, 46–51.
- How can you help those with food allergies? Read "Managing Food Allergies at Church," *Ensign*, June 2020, 40–45; or *Liahona*, June 2020, 22–27.
- Read about "Ministering to Those with Disabilities," *Liahona*, Apr. 2021, 30–31.
- For more resources on maintaining or improving physical health, see "Health" at [topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/health).