

Helpful Ideas On Ministering To The Hurting

The following is an article by the daughter of Moishe Rosen, founder of the Jews For Jesus ministry. It was printed in their June 2009 newsletter. In this same June issue of the newsletter her 77 year old father announced that he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. She gives some very good and practical advice on how best to minister to those who are hurting in such times of illness and tragedy. As one whose 14 year old daughter passed away after suffering a life-long illness I can attest to the wisdom of her counsel to those who desire to minister to the hurting.

Douglas L. Crook

Ruth's Ramblings

(title of her monthly article in the "Jews For Jesus" newsletter)

by Ruth Rosen

I'm sure that many of you know from personal experience what we are going through, and your responses would be based on that understanding. Still, for any who might wonder how to be supportive during this time, I offer the following ideas on supporting those who are terminally ill, as well as their family members.

1. Statements usually help more than questions.

When dealing with terminal illness, what seems like a simple question: "How are you?" or "How's your dad?" does not lend itself to a simple answer. It can take a lot to respond, especially if many people are asking. Unless you are asking a close friend or relative who you know is prepared to give a meaningful answer, you might find it better to *tell* of your support, rather than asking questions to show you care. I know that I feel much more supported if people tell me they are praying than if they ask questions. I'm comforted when they acknowledge that this must be a difficult time, and that our family is in their thoughts and prayers. Such statements are meaningful, easily received and don't require a response that might be painful to give or repeat. Along those same lines...

2. Letting people know they are not expected to respond also helps.

This is especially true if you send a note. Your note can really bring comfort and cheer when you make it clear that no reply is necessary. I don't mean to say that a person wouldn't wish to reply, and you might well receive a reply. Still, when you offer comfort or support, it means a lot when the receivers realize they are not expected to do anything in return.

3. If you want to share a Bible verse, it's nice to write out the verse or passage rather than giving the reference for the reader to look up.

Unless they are prepared to look it up at the very moment of receiving your card or note, the verse might go unseen.

4. Prayer is always welcome and effective, but advice or products may not be.

Some people have asked if they can send various remedies for my father while others don't ask, but simply send. We appreciate their generosity and concern, but it is very doubtful that he will use the products. I can't speak for other people, but I know that in our family, we would rather not have to explain why we prefer not to receive such products.

5. When you are with someone who is experiencing the pain of a terminally ill loved one, try to respond with equilibrium if the person becomes teary or begins to cry.

We can't always control the time and place that our emotions come out. It's helpful to be with people who will not be flustered or terribly distressed by a few tears, or sentences that get choked with emotion. If our feelings seem to cause great pain or distress to a friend, we find ourselves needing to comfort that friend, rather than receiving comfort.

The common thread in these ideas is that when you want people to feel supported, comforted and cared for, it helps when they can be free to receive what you have to offer without making an effort in return. Again, they may respond, but may also feel relieved that they don't have to.